USERS' CHARACTERISTICS AND CHALLENGES: A STUDY OF USE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL LIBRARIES IN ONITSHA NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The study investigated library users' characteristics and challenges as they relate to the use of school library in Onitsha North Local Government Area. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 3,468 students from 16 governments owned secondary schools. 346 students were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire. Percentage and mean ratings were used to answer research questions while Chi-square was used to test hypotheses. The major findings of the study as it relate to library users' characteristic shows that majority of students whose parents are traders and civil servants use the school library more than others; the students are mostly day students; the students' residents are geographically spread. that occupations of the parents actually influenced their children's use of school library and students' subject of study does not seriously influence their use of library. The challenges to use of school library among others include issues relating to library location, collections, and environment. Based on the findings it was recommended among others that librarians should recognize that students share many characteristics, and as a result, all students irrespective of their parental background and occupations should be encouraged to make massive use of school library since it is a requisite to their life-long learning abilities.

Introduction

Education in the 21st century is considered the key to the development of all nations. The National Teachers' Institute (2009) described education as the process of teaching, learning and training in schools and colleges for the

development of knowledge and skills so as to prepare individuals to live happily. Education is an information intensive endeavour hence libraries are established in schools to cater for information needs of pupils, students and staff. Every successful educational programme in any society depends on certain variables among which is the availability of books, non-book materials and other educative sources which the library can provide.

Library has been described as a collection of records of human Endeavour's in different formats and languages, preserved, organized and interpreted to address broad and different needs of individuals for information, knowledge, recreation and for aesthetic purposes (Oti, 2010). The five major types of libraries which include; academic, school, public, national and special libraries are expected to contribute to all round education of man in varying capacity(Ekeh,2009). Some of these contributions as noted by Bosah (2011) include: encouraging reading, expanding learning process, developing learning skills; developing critical thought; developing appreciation, attitude and values; and assisting with developmental task.

School library which is the focus of this work is a library in the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. School libraries according to Gojeh (2004) are libraries established in primary and secondary schools with trained personnel, organized book and non-book materials that are provided for use by students and staff of the school. The school libraries as presented by Frantsi, Kolu and Saliem (2002) are expected to have three functional areas. These areas are managing the collection, information retrieval and reading. Apart from the functional areas, an effective school library is expected to provide resources which may include books, periodicals, magazines, newspapers, pictures and audio visual and others (Aina, 2004).

The school library is very important to the students in every school because it provides information and ideas that are fundamental to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge based society. Odo (2004) opined that the school library equip students with life-long learning skills and develop the imagination that enables them to live as responsible citizens. School library offers learning services, books and resources that help all members of the school community to become critical thinkers and effective users of information in all formats and media.

Furthermore, comprehensive education involves classroom teaching and learning as well as independent studies. Though teachers provide students with learning resources in form of class notes and textbooks, independent studies are needed to consolidate and enhance already acquired knowledge. This independent study is often achieved with resources outside the confines of the teachers and students. Hence, a need arises for the availability of other

information sources. Mba (2004) noted that homes generally have failed to give our children the needed facilities with which educational activities can be achieved, hence the need to establish good libraries and provide skills for using them effectively within the school time table most especially at the secondary school level. In view of this, the Federal Republic of Nigeria in the National Policy on Education (2004) laid emphasis on the importance of functional libraries for students and teachers. The policy stated that the school library must be stocked with adequate resources, manned by adequate staff in order to render adequate services to support the teaching and learning of the school curriculum. Hence school libraries or a school media centre are indispensable resource centre for the improvement and success of any educational system. They assist in the process of teaching and learning by storing and providing instructional materials for the students as well as the teachers (Mba, 2004).

Based on the foregoing, every secondary school is expected to have a library with spelt out goals of operation through which the teachers and students will be helped in their educational process. Such library services should provide students with stimulating and rewarding experience in mode of learning and make them better library users in later life (Petters & Ottong, 2012). Library utilization formed an indispensible arm in the teaching learning process especially at the secondary school level which is a vital foundation level in the whole education cadre. Students are supposed to study regularly to cope with numerous assignments, tests as well as their examinations by making use of the library. The use of library is one of the information handling skills the students need to have, in order to enable them utilize resources of the library. Okiy (2004) stated that the inculcation of the habit of using school libraries will act as catalyst to ensure that the education obtained by these students is of high quality. Adebamowo (2011) opined that neither a good book nor a good library can make an individual educated but a successful use of books and library that makes one a well-informed, stable and well-adjusted / learned individual.

Library use has been identified to vary based on users' characteristics such as social, economic, demographic and subject area of interest. Maliki and Uche (2007) noted that the type of home background from which students come from determines their awareness of library facilities, how to use them and their external value. Ajayi and Ogunyemi (2008) agreed that socio-economic and demographic factors have impact on students' use of library. Odo (2004) observed that choice of subjects can affect students' use of library. Furthermore, Gardener (2006) included that home background affects the attitude of students in their use of libraries. In addition, Sin (2012) presents

information environment and home computer as factors affecting students' use of the library. Omehia, Okon and Obi (2008) survey established the differences among students' characteristics and their use of library services and concluded that socio-economic status (high, middle, and low) has a significant effect on students' use of library services. Furthermore, Maliki and Uche (2007) study showed that the background of the learner has a tremendous influence on their tendency to utilize the various resources available in the library, also their parents and the circumstances of their existence and place have considerable impact on the learners' ability to utilize library resources.

Many scholars have identified a number of challenges to students' use of the library. Valentine (2003) noted that unfamiliar library surrounding and lack of resources can impose a threat to students' use of the library. Hellsten (2009) included socio-economic factors (such as level of education, geographical location, economic and income). Contrary to the views of Valentine, Ampka (2006), Hellsten (2009), Abimola (n.d) presented the impediments as lack of interest, poor ventilation, poor lightening, poor seating arrangements and lack of convenience. As a follow up, Udoh-llomechina (2008) noted that time of opening and closing of the library are impediments to the use of library. In contrast, Francotti, Levenseler and Wengarten (2007); Uche and Chinaka (2011) listed the impediments as poor accommodation, lack of professional teachers/librarian for the processing of library materials, poor library orientation and also restricted library hours. Odo (2004) study examined challenges faced by junior secondary students in using school library in Nsukka, Enugu State and highlighted lack of accommodation, space and insufficient textbooks. Furthermore, Oti, (2012) study revealed that students encounter problems in using the library, such as the teacher / librarians not being conversant with the operation of the library facilities.

No matter the challenges students face, the most important thing is there are ways of enhancing the use of school library. Abubakar (2004) posits that the school library must be stocked with adequate resources, manned by adequate staff. Furthermore, Bello, Isaac and Jimoh (n.d) included the following elements, making provision for library period on the school time-table, giving assignment to students. As a fellow up, Ahmed (1996) and Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) suggested that school library be equipped, maintained and staffed. While Zaid (2003) recommended the following for the improvement of school library system: adequate attention to the development of library collection, school structure, employment of professional librarians to manage such libraries and its acquisition, well arranged library catalogue and students should be taught how to use the catalogue, up-to-date resources

should be acquired by the library, there should be library period on the school timetable and use of information technology in the library. Ekeh (2009) recommended that government should set a compulsory benchmark for every secondary school as a condition towards having a functional, current, and well stocked library. When the aforementioned ways of improving school library are put in place, students will perform better in their studies.

The performance of students can improve considerably if they use the library regularly. The students need to be encouraged to use the school library, which will greatly help in raising the standard of education. The foremost objective of the school library is to improve the quality of each students learning experience. Effective library media program provide opportunities for students to learn to appreciate literature and other art forms and give them access to information in many forms. Ideally, a school library media center is an integral part of the schools instructional program, providing a climate that stimulates challenges, provokes and expands thinking among students.

Although researches have carried out studies on characteristics and challenges to use of school library by secondary school students, to the researcher's best of knowledge; little has been done to ascertain users' characteristics and challenges of school library use especially in Onitsha metropolis. As a result of this gap in knowledge, this study is designed to determine users' characteristics and challenges of school library use in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra state, Nigeria.

The following research questions and hypotheses were formulated to guide the study:
-   What are the characteristics of students using school library?
-   What are the challenges to students' use of school library?
-   What are the strategies to overcome the challenges to students' use of school library?
-   There is no significant difference in the percentage of students using school library based on parents' occupation.
-   There is no significant difference in the percentage of students' using school library based on subject of study.

Method

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 3,468 students from 16 governments owned secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government Area in Anambra State, Nigeria. The study employed sample size of 346 students who were in senior secondary two (SS2) from 16 secondary schools in Onitsha North Local Government and

were selected through proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Data was collected using structured questionnaire. Data obtained from the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Percentage and mean ratings were used to answer research questions while Chi-square was used to test hypotheses.

Result

Table1: *Percentage Scores on Students' response to Characteristics of Students base on their use School Library*

Items	Number	%
1.Parents' occupation		
Civil Servants	123	35.9
Trader	149	43.4
Farmer	2	0.6
Doctor	14	4.1
Contractor	15	4.4
Lawyer	23	6.8
2.Types of Residence:		
Day Student	280	81.6
Border	63	18.4
3.Subject Area of Interest:		
Arts	156	45.5
Science	187	54.5
4.Geographical Location:	129	37.6
Inland Town		
G.R.A	37	10.8
Out	24	7.0
Odoakpu	28	8.2
"33"	17	5.0
Omagba	74	21.6
Awada	6	1.7
Owerri Road	28	8.2

The results in table 1shows that majority of parents of the students who use school library are traders (43.4%) and civil servants (35.9%). Less than 10% of other students who use the library have their parent's occupations as doctors, lawyers, importer/exporters and contractors. 81.6% of the students are day students. The students' subject areas of interests are almost of equal strength with 45.5% and 54.5% interested in arts and sciences respectively.

Though their place of residence is generally urban, 37.6% reside in Inland Town while the remaining day students were scattered among the location of GRA, Odoakpu, Omagba, Awada and Owerri Road. 18.4% of the students' lives in school hostel.

Table 2:*Chi-square test for Difference in the proportion of students' using the school library based on parents occupation*

Occupation	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Df	X^2	P-Value
Civil Servant	123	49.0	74.0			
Trader	149	49.0	100.0	6	444.20	.00
Farmer	2	49.0	-47.0			
Doctor	14	49.0	-35.0			
Contractor	15	49.0	-34.0			
Lawyer	23	49.0	-26.0			
Exporter	17	49.0	-32.0			
Total	**343**	**49.0**				

Table 2 shows that there is a significant difference in the proportion of students using the school library based on their parental occupation as shown by the large calculated chi-square(X^2=444.20) and the P-value of .00 which was less than stipulated 0.05 level of significance. Therefore the null hypothesis was rejected.

Table 3: *Chi-square Test for Difference in the proportion of Students' using School Library based on subject of study*

Subject of study	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	df	X^2	P-value
Arts	156	171.5	-15.5	1	2.80	.09

Science	187	171.5	15.5
Total	343		

Table 3 shows that there is no significant difference in the proportion of students using the school library based on subject of study as indicated by the calculated chi-square (X^2=2.80) and the P-value of .09 which was greater than the stipulated 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis of no significant difference was therefore accepted.

Table 4: *Students' Mean responses on Challenges to their Use of School Library*

Item	Mean	Remark
Location		
The school library is located in the office of the principals thereby preventing the students from having access to the library materials	1.43	Disagree
The environment is not conducive due to the noisy and busy condition of the location of the school library	2.35	Disagree
The school library is located far from the classroom	2.89	Agree
Mean of means on Location	**2.23**	**Disagree**
Collection		
Most of the books are written in foreign languages	2.74	Agree
Collections are not relevant to my subject of study	2.03	Disagree
Some of the library materials are not current (old)	2.75	Agree
There are no multimedia materials like video and tapes	3.28	Agree
Mean of means on Collection	**2.7**	**Agree**
Infrastructure		
The needed books are limited in copies	3.37	Agree
The space provided in school library does not accommodate enough students	3.29	Agree
The library building is old and not attractive	2.68	Agree
The library has no convenience for users	2.94	Agree
The chairs and tables in the library are insufficient	3.12	Agree
Poor lightening condition has effect on the eye	3.13	Agree
The library is poorly ventilated	2.99	Agree
Mean of means on Infrastructure	**3.07**	**Agree**
Social-Economic Factors		
If the staff are not motivated they will not give their best to the students	3.40	Agree
The parents' level of education affects students' use of library	3.18	Agree

Students help their parents in the shop during break and there is no time to use the library	2.81	Agree
Mean of means on Socio-Economic Factors	**3.13**	**Agree**
Library Services		
There is insufficient staff to attend to students	3.15	Agree
Students are not allowed to borrow resources from the library	2.99	Agree
The libraries close too early that students don't have enough time to study	3.03	Agree
Students find it difficult to locate the library materials because of lack of library orientation	3.06	Agree
The materials in the library are not well organized.	**2.87**	**Agree**
Mean on Library Services	**3.02**	**Agree**
Students/Environment		
Distance of my home to school prevents students from using the library even when it is open during the holiday.	3.29	Agree
There is no provision for library use in the school time table	3.32	Agree
Staffs in the library are not friendly	3.03	Agree
Use of library is meant for those who have used it before.	2.77	Agree
The use of library will not contribute to student's success in school work and examinations	2.76	Agree
Lack of knowledge on how to use the library hinders students' use of library.	3.33	Agree
Students were not introduced to the importance of using library in the primary school.	3.18	Agree
Mean on Students' Environment	**3.09**	**Agree**

The results in table 4shows that students agreed with the issues relating to the location of the library, collection in the library, school/library infrastructure, socio-economic issues, library services and students' environment as challenge they faced in use of school library with their mean of means ranging between 2.7 and 3.13. However the issues relating to location of the library does not challenge the use of library by the students as indicated by mean of means of 2.23.

Table 5: *Students' mean responses on ways to overcome impediments*

S/N	Strategies	Mean (X)	Decision
1.	Adequate resources	3.05	Accepted
2.	Up-to-date resources	2.87	Accepted
3.	Provision for library period in	2.52	Accepted

the table

| 4. | Maintenance of School library | 2.54 | Accepted |
| 5. | Improved library services | 3.05 | Accepted |

The students from the table 5 are of the view that provision should be made of adequate library resource and library period in the school time table. Resources should also be up-to-date, well maintained as well as focus on the provision of state of the art library services to attract and sustain use of library.

Discussion
The result on the characteristics of students using school library showed that the students' parents who use the library in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra state are mainly traders and civil servants. In other words, students whose parents are traders and civil servants in Onitsha North Local Government Area use school library more than students whose parents have other occupations. Great proportions of students were day students and this could be attributed to the fact that Onitsha residents are predominantly traders and that student's live closer to their schools. This finding is in line with that of Maliki and Uche (20006) who found that the background of the learner, their parent's occupation and the circumstance of their existence place tremendous influence on their tendency to utilize the various resources available in the library. Although the students' subject areas of interests are almost of equal strength with 45.5% and 54.5% for arts and sciences respectively, greater percentage are science students. That they are more of science students or almost the same contradicts the findings of Omelia, Okon and Obi (2008) who found in their study that students of arts use library more than those in science and that socio-economic stature (high, middle and low) has a significant effect on students' use of library services. Also, that most of the students' live in the inland town is in line with the findings of Maliki and Uche (20007) who found that not only learners but also the parents and the circumstance of their existence and place have a considerable impact on ability to utilize library resources. Therefore, the result that characteristics of students affect their use of school library is not misleading.
The result for hypothesis one reveals that there is a significant difference in the proportion of students using the school library based on their parental occupation. This implies that occupations of the parents actually

influenced their children (students) use of the library. The result of hypothesis two also reveals that there is no significant difference in the proportion of students using the school library based on subject of study. This is of indication that students' subject of study does not actually influence their use of library.

The result of various impediments to students' use of school library revealed different challenges emanating from different places which hinder students' use of school library. These impediments to use of school library as they relate to location, collection, infrastructure, social-economic factors, library services and students/environment include; the school library is far from the classroom, inadequate library materials, lack of library infrastructures, poor orientation, no provision for library use in the school time table, and others. It confirms the finding of Odo (2004) who concurred that these factors constitute an impediment to students' use of school library.

There sulton the strategies to overcome challenges show; that adequate resource, up-to-date resources, provision of library period, maintenance of school library and improved school library services need to be employed, and it is in line with that of Ekeh(2009) who concurred that the strategies will improve the use of school library.

Conclusion

From the interpretation and discussions of the results of this study as they affect purpose and hypotheses, the following conclusions were made

The study has shown the characteristics of students using school library in Onitsha North Local Government Area of Anambra state to be students whose parents are mainly traders and civil servants. This implies that occupations of the parents actually influenced their children (students) use of the library. Great proportions of students were day students. Although the students' subject areas of interests are almost of equal strength, greater percentages are science students. This is an indication that students' subject of study does not seriously influence their use of library.

Also, senior secondary 2 (SS2) in Onitsha North Local Government Area faced many challenges emanating from different places which opposed their use of school library. They include challenges as they relate to location, collection, infrastructure, social-economic factors, library services and students/environment.

Finally, the strategies to overcome the challenges include; up-to-date resources, provision of library period, maintenance of school library and improved school library services.

Recommendations

The recommendations that are proffered with regards to the findings and conclusion drawn from the study are as follows.

The librarians should recognize that students share many characteristic. And as a result, all students irrespective of their parental background and occupations should be encouraged to make massive use of school library since it is a requisite to their life-long learning abilities. School library services should be designed to meet the range of information needs that arise in the students' subject area of interest.

Students need to be encouraged to use the school libraries: one way of doing this, is for the school management to make provision for library period on the school timetable while teachers should try to give library centered assignment to students.

Secondary school teacher/librarian and management should come together in order to device a means of strengthening the use of library in secondary schools.

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