



Full Length Research Paper

Study habits of undergraduate students in selected federal universities in South-west Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the study habits of third year undergraduate students in three federal universities in Nigeria with the objectives of ascertaining their study habits in relation to time management, methods of knowledge assimilation and preferred study environment. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population consisted of two thousand and eighty six (2086) respondents from eight (8) different departments. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Data collected were analysed using frequency and percentage counts. Findings from the study revealed that 326 (51.5%) of the respondents spend their free period studying and normally organise their studies. Note-taking during lectures was also found to be the most used method for knowledge assimilation followed by memorisation as affirmed by 350 (55.3%) and 324 (51.2%) respondents respectively. Respondents totalling 420 (69.4%) were found to study in quiet places, followed closely by 352 (55.6%) who study in the hostel rooms. Based on the findings, the study concluded that it is the responsibility of undergraduate students to work towards the achievement of academic success. It is recommended that students pay more attention to planning their study activities using time tables for study and setting of specific goals for each study session. Although memorisation can aid retention, the study however, recommends other knowledge assimilation methods like self-test and summarisation as they can lead to better internalisation of what has been studied.

Keywords: Academic success, Undergraduate students, Federal universities, Study habits, Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Successful completion of university education has always been the concern of students, parents, teachers and the government alike. To this end, most parents do their best to ensure that fees are promptly paid. Teachers work hard developing effective teaching strategies while the government ensures the provision of schools and learning facilities. The student, on the other hand, is left with the sole responsibility of studying to ensure academic success. To this end, many students develop studying habits or routines that would enrich their academic pursuit. Although several factors have been associated with academic success (Nuthana and Yenagi, 2009), Yoloye (1999) argues that successful achievement is based upon study, interpretation and application. Corroborating this view, Salami and Aremu (2006) opine that the internalization of effective study habits would be of immense benefit to both failing and passing students.

While passing students maintain their grades, failing students, would no doubt, have their grades and self esteem improved.

Considering the importance of studying to academic success, it is, therefore, important to investigate the study habits of undergraduates as a study of this nature would not only create awareness but propel students to evaluate their individual study habits.

Statement of the Problem

Effective study habits are vital to student's future, not just academically but in everyday life. However, literature and observation reveal that some students may not have developed study habits necessary for academic success, thereby, leading to failure in class examinations, participation in examination malpractice and sometimes,

failure to complete the university education. It is in the light of this, that the present study investigates the study habits of undergraduates in selected federal universities in South-West Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of this study is to ascertain the study habits of undergraduate students in federal universities in Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

- 1 determine students study habits in relation to time management;
- 2 ascertain the methods of knowledge assimilation utilised by students; and
- 3 identify the preferred study environment of students.

Scope of the study

Third year students in three federal universities in South-West Nigeria were investigated. These are University of Ibadan, University of Lagos and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife. The scope was limited to third year students only since it is expected that most students at that level would have taken their major courses. It is also expected that third year students are likely to have fully developed their study habits.

Literature review

Study habits according to Nneji (2002) are learning tendencies that enable students work privately. Azikwe (1998) puts it more succinctly by describing study habits as the way and manner a student plans his or her private reading outside lecture hours in order to master a particular subject or topic. Crede and Kuncel (2008) went further to state that study habits denote the degree to which the student engages in regular acts of studying that are characterized by appropriate studying routines (e.g., reviews of material) occurring in an environment that is conducive to studying. Study habits in the view of Patel (1976) is the summation of several factors which include home environment and planning of work, reading and note taking habits, planning of subjects, habits of concentration, preparation for examination, general habits and attitudes as well as school environment. The importance of some of these factors have been noted by other researchers. Ozsoy, Memis and Temur (2009), for instance, argued that deciding the amount of time required for the learning/studying, helps learners to monitor their learning process while also making decisions regarding the extent to which items have been learned as well as controlling the amount of time allocated to activities. Ogoemeka (2013) equally noted that orderly, labelled, and legible notes written in a student's own words and the use of key words for

supporting detailed notes have been correlated with positive academic outcomes. In line with this, Eliot et al., (2002) concurred that students who use proper study habits can preserve knowledge for longer time.

Maryland Community College (2002) discussed the four effective tips that can be used in remembering while studying. These tips which can also be considered as habits are listed below as follows:

1. Visualize - Trying to see what is being read by getting a feel for the subject and making it come alive through thoughts and application to daily living.
2. Highlights - Highlighting, marking, and underlining important phrases. Writing questions or making comments on the margin.
3. Discussion - Talking about what you are studying helps students to remember the more especially through group discussions.
4. Reviewing your notes and outlining all highlighted areas. Doing this regularly by defining terms, summarizing and memorizing.

A study on undergraduate students' study habits by Nneji (2002) pointed out that 65% of the respondents studied mostly during the weekdays while 35% studied mostly during weekends. Furthermore, 29% adopted the memorisation techniques, 25% summarised while only 6% used self-testing. Also, 45% preferred to study mostly in the classroom, 37% studied in their rooms, while only 15% made use of library facilities. Memorisation and self-test were found to be the least used methods for knowledge assimilation. In the aspect of organising their studies, only 8% planned their reading to cover all subjects by using the time-table.

In a related study Igun and Adogbeji (2007) found out that most students studied during weekends and free periods. Methods of assimilating knowledge were, however, found to be mostly summarisation and self test. Although majority of the respondents claimed to study in quiet places, few respondents were found to make use of the library. The study by Effiong, Aakege and Anthony (2012) also revealed that respondents use mainly summarisation and self-test as methods of knowledge assimilation and did most of their studying in their rooms.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The descriptive survey research design was used for this study. The population was made up of two thousand and eighty six (2086) third year students from eight (8) departments in three selected federal universities in Nigeria. These are University of Ibadan (UI), University of Lagos (UNILAG) and Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (OAU). Purposive sampling was used for selecting 643 respondents from eight departments common to the faculties of Science and Humanities in the three universities. Questionnaire instrument was used for data

collection. Out of 643 copies of the questionnaire sent out, 633 were successfully retrieved, indicating a response rate of 98.4%.

Presentation of Findings

Figure 1 shows the percentage of respondents in each of the universities selected for the study. UNILAG respondents comprised of 33.8 %, UI comprised of 31.6% while OAU constituted 34.6% of the total number of respondents.

Figure 2 reveals that 50.3 % of the respondents were from the faculty of science which comprises of departments of Biochemistry, Microbiology, Physics and Geology. Forty-nine. seven (49.7%) were from the Faculty of Humanities which is made up of Departments of Communication Arts, English, Linguistics and History.

Findings in Table 1 indicate that respondents spend their free periods studying and normally organise their studies as indicated by 326-(51.5%) in the case of time management. However, when it comes to having a fixed time for study, less than half of the total respondents confirmed that they do have fixed studying times 282-(44.6%). Although 218-(34.5%) either disagreed/strongly disagreed when joined with those who were undecided, it was obvious that more than half of the study respondents 351-(55.5%) do not have fixed study periods. The scenario was almost the same in the case of preparing time table for study, as those who positively confirmed to doing so were a little below average 310-(48.9%). When the number of disagree, strongly disagree and undecided were also pulled together, it was obvious that a little above average 323-(51%) obviously do not prepare time table for studying. Even though most of the respondents were found not to have fixed study period, majority of the respondents 385-(60.8%) were either non-decisive in affirming that they do much study at one time or totally rejected the statement.

Findings from Table 2 reveal the methods of assimilating knowledge utilised by respondents. It is obvious that taking notes during lectures was the most used method for knowledge assimilation followed by memorisation as affirmed by 350-(55.3%) and 324-(51.2%) of the respondents who either agreed/strongly agreed to the statements. The least used methods were found to be administering self test and setting specific goals for studying which were used by 306-(48.3%) and 282-(44.5%) respectively, who either agreed/strongly agreed to the statements.

From Table 3, it is clear that students prefer a quiet environment for study with 420-(69.4%) indicating that they do study in quiet places. This was followed closely by studying in the room/hostel 352-(55.6%) and engaging in group studies 344-(54.4%). A number of respondents, 282-(44.5%) indicated preference for the library as a place of study. However, only 240-(37.9%) respondents

study in classrooms after lectures, while 212-(33.5%) enjoy studying in the open.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study show that respondents do spend their free time studying and usually organise their studies. A little below average (48.9%) prepare time table for studying and majority did not have fixed periods for studying. The implication of this is that studying is left to chance even though a good number of respondents claim to organise their studies. The reality, however, is flawed by not having stable study periods. As noted by Ozsoy, Memis and Temur (2009), time management is crucial to studying because it helps learners decide the amount of time required for studying while also acting as a control measure on time allocated to different activities.

The findings also affirmed that note taking during lectures and memorisation were the most used methods for knowledge assimilation while the least used were administration of self-test and setting specific goals for studying. This is in partial agreement with the findings of Nneji (2002) whose study revealed that memorisation and self-test were the least used methods for knowledge assimilation. The findings do, however, disagree with Effiong, Aakege and Anthony (2012) whose study revealed that respondents used mainly summarisation and self-test as methods of knowledge assimilation. The disparity could be attributed to the fact that respondents in this study were made up of undergraduate students, while the study of Effiong, Aakege and Anthony (2012) utilised postgraduate students who are presumably more matured and as such would go beyond mere memorisation of notes to internalise their studies.

With regard to study environment, it was clear that respondents have the habit of studying in quiet places, which is in agreement with the findings of Igun and Adogbeji (2007). The need for a quiet place is important considering the fact that concentration is necessary in order to interpret and internalise what is being studied. Nearly half of the respondents in this study also affirmed that they make use of the library for studying which is in contrast to the findings of Igun and Adogbeji (2007). Even though respondents in both studies were found to have the habit of studying in quiet places, the disparity in their library use may not be unrelated to the noise level associated with their university libraries.

CONCLUSION

The university environment is one that demands dedication to studies. Students must, therefore, endeavour to cultivate study habits that would ensure their academic success. Although it is the responsibility of

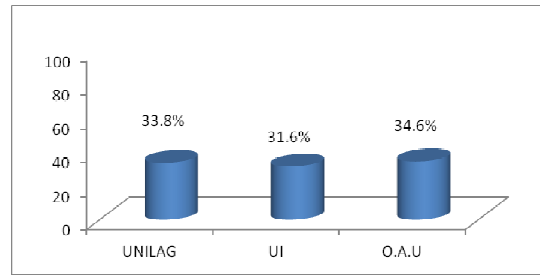


Figure 1. Institutional distribution of respondents

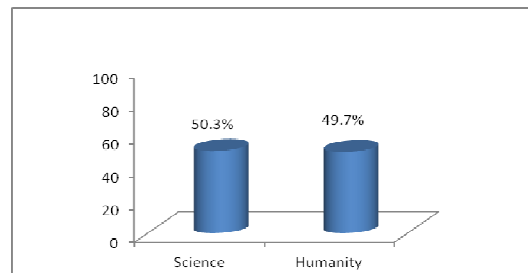


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by faculties

Table 1. Time management

| Time management | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| I spend my free period studying | 124(19.6) | 202(31.9) | 197(31.1) | 76(12.0) | 34(5.4) |
| I normally organise my study | 98(15.5) | 228(36.0) | 185(29.2) | 108(17.1) | 14(2.2) |
| I prepare time table for my study | 144(22.7) | 166(26.2) | 95(15.0) | 144(22.7) | 84(13.3) |
| My time of study is fixed | 110(17.4) | 172(27.2) | 133(21.0) | 122(19.3) | 96(15.2) |
| I do much study at one time | 104(16.4) | 144(22.7) | 103(16.3) | 164(25.9) | 118(18.6) |

Table 2. Methods of Knowledge Assimilation

| Knowledge assimilation | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| I administer self test while studying | 188(29.7) | 118(18.6) | 143(22.6) | 122(19.3) | 62(9.8) |
| I set specific goals for studying | 166(26.2) | 116(18.3) | 171(27.0) | 96(15.2) | 84(13.3) |
| I take notes during lectures for study | 124(19.6) | 226(35.7) | 77(12.2) | 82(13.0) | 124(19.6) |
| Memorising helps me during study | 132(20.9) | 192(30.3) | 97(15.3) | 102(16.1) | 110(17.4) |

Table 3. Environment of Study

| Study environment | SA | A | U | D | SD |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| I like studying alone in quiet places | 296 (49.8) | 124(19.6) | 63(10.0) | 102(16.1) | 48(7.6) |
| I like to study in the room/hostel | 194 (30.6) | 158 (25.0) | 63 (10.0) | 150 (23.7) | 68 (1.7) |
| I enjoy studying in groups | 144 (22.7) | 200 (31.7) | 117 (18.5) | 76 (12.0) | 96 (15.2) |
| I like studying in the library | 152 (24.0) | 130 (20.5) | 145 (22.9) | 130 (20.5) | 76 (12.0) |
| I study in the classrooms after lecture | 82 (13.0) | 158 (25.0) | 165 (26.0) | 130 (20.5) | 98 (15.5) |
| I enjoy studying in the open | 82(13.0) | 130(20.5) | 213 (33.6) | 42 (6.6) | 166 (26.2) |

students to work towards achieving academic success, the enabling environment should also be provided by other stake holders such as schools and the government by ensuring the provision of necessary facilities such as well equipped libraries that can accommodate the different study habits exhibited by students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1 There is need for undergraduate students to pay more attention to planning and organising their study activities. Merely studying on occasions that one considers “free periods” portray an indifferent attitude towards studying and this can be detrimental to the whole learning process. Students should, therefore, plan reading time tables as well as set specific goals for studying in order achieve academic success.

2 The act of note taking, no doubt, aids students in the process of recalling what has been taught. However, memorisation may not enable deep internalisation and as such the use of other knowledge assimilation methods such as setting self-test and summarisation should be utilised more often as those would lead to more understanding and internalisation of what has been studied.

3 Though a little below average of the total number of respondents use the library for studying, the library should be utilised more often as it offers not just a quiet place of study but has the advantage of providing information resources and assistance that can aid learning.

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