

Gender Analysis of Library Use by Pupils of Graceful Oaks Nursery and Primary School.

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ABSTRACT

The school system is a foundational platform through which meaningful development can take place and thus the use of the school library as a source of information is imperative in knowledge transfer. But this is gradually becoming forgotten in schools with most schools not providing enough reading materials or not having a library at all. This study used ex post facto research design to investigate the library use of pupils over a period of six months to the school library. The types of books and number of books consulted were recorded by the school librarian along gender lines in order to reveal gender influences in reading materials and library patronage so as to help the Management develop strategies to maximise library benefits for the pupils. The data collected showed that pupils visited the library 365 times and 683 books were borrowed by pupils in primaries one to five and the children were aged 5-11 years. The highest visit was recorded in the month of January with 296 books borrowed and lowest visit was in May when only 18 books were borrowed. The result further showed that pupils in primaries two and four visited the library most and girls mostly visited the library. The implication of this to the school curriculum and policy were discussed.

KEY WORDS: Library use, primary school, books, early reading.

INTRODUCTION

It is often said that no society can develop beyond the quality of her people, thus making it imperative for every nation to begin to look at developing the people. The best time to start any process is to start early. Education plays an important role in the well-being of any nation that wants to sustain its prominence in the global scene. It is broadly viewed as a lifelong process spanning the years from infancy to adulthood. Education not only liberates, it is a vital tool for empowerment that allows meaningful contributions to society (Balogun 1999) and education is the catalyst of development which must start at the basic level.

According to Usoro and Usanga (2007), each nation has a policy on education which provides guidance on the type and quality of education that citizens should acquire. Primary education presents the earliest system for the development of people in any society and it is the foundation upon which other learning platforms are built. This stage of development is crucial for the development of future adult citizens and workers. Just as a child cannot stand up and walk from birth, likewise one cannot develop without primary education. It is the foundation upon which

the rest of our educational system is built and where the thirst for knowledge and the desire to seek for knowledge can be birthed.

We live in the Information Age, as such information literacy has become a universal currency, the single common denominator required for success at any stage of life. Information plays a central role in education in terms of their availability and utilization. This is especially true for our children who, now more than ever, must be equipped to access, use, and evaluate information competently in both print and electronic formats (Scholastic Research and Result, 2008). This can only be enhanced if libraries are established alongside the learning institutions (primary schools) that are meant to inculcate these habits in our children. The place of the library in any school cannot be overemphasized as it has great effect on children's learning ability.

Libraries primarily serve as information centres for both teachers and pupils in schools. The school library is one that is established in a primary or secondary school (Edoka 2000). In modern times these libraries have evolved into school library resource centres. According to Fayose (1995), a school library is that part of a school where a collection of books periodicals, magazines, and newspapers, films and filmstrips, videotapes, recording of all types, slides, computers, study kits, and other information resources are housed for use by teachers and pupils for learning, recreational activities, personal interest and inter personal relationships of children in school. According to Elaturoti (1998) learning resources for school libraries consist mainly of print and non print media. The print media includes books (fiction and non-fiction), periodicals, pamphlets, brochures etc. Books constitute the bulk of printed materials in school libraries. Non print comprises of photographs, films, slides, audio-visual material etc. Utor (2001) opined that school library resources must include beginners' books, books in the curriculum, encyclopaedias, atlases, magazines, story books, picture books and audio-visual materials like radio sets, television sets, objects, computer etc. In addition, Ogbebor (2011) defined a school library as a library that serves elementary schools, middle schools, junior high schools, and high schools. According to Dike (2000), school library is defined as the learning laboratory for excellences where teachers and students find the world of knowledge and interact directly with the resources, acquire information literacy and develop research skills for lifelong learning.

The main function of a school library is to support various educational programs and to develop students' skills in locating and using information. Teachers use school libraries to access information needed to augment, develop and support their classroom instruction. Students use the materials in school libraries to perform their class work and personal development.

The information resources in a school library are the nucleus of the library's function. This is buttressed by Arua (2011) who asserted that range of information resources is necessary to enable the school library fulfill its functions, among which are: to systematically provide information resources required for the school's educational programmes and to assist in improving and increasing the reading skills and learning habits of students. The school library can also serve as a place of opportunity where all students can strive and achieve success, have equal access to print and online information resources, work as an individual or a group on a project.

School library reflects and encourages collaborative learning and sharing of ideas, Alemna (1988) stated that school libraries contribute to the total imaginative, critical and creative facilities of teachers and students. He also points out the main purpose of the modern school library is to support the educational aims of the school, supplement students' classroom or broaden their horizons.

For there to be a functional school library whose resources are utilized by teachers and students alike, there needs to be a school librarian or a teacher librarian that helps to organize the information resources for effective usage. School librarian or teacher librarian plays a vital role in working with teachers and students in achieving academic success. The school librarian/teacher librarian collaboratively plans units and lessons with subject teachers to integrate the skills taught in the library with the work in the classroom. They are keenly aware of the curriculum frameworks and seek to provide relevant resources for teachers and students to support teaching and learning (Dimmick, 2014). Effective libraries and good patronage by both teachers and students have the potential of impressively boosting the quality of education in our schools.

In order to enhance the effectiveness in library services delivery and library patronage by primary school pupils, considerations must be given to the factors that affect the attraction to libraries and the preferences of libraries materials, as these would help design policies and strategies to encourage and enhance library use among the pupils.

One of such factor that has been highlighted in several literatures is gender. The attitude and preferences of pupils towards reading could be influenced by whether they are boys or girls, and an understanding of the peculiarities and attractions or preferences along this gender divide will be critical in the explanation of reading trends in schools, designing of appropriate policies to address the reading needs and preferences of everyone, and the adoption of effective strategies to deliver useful and preferred library services and resources to primary school pupils, enhance their patronage and enrich their learning experience at that critical tender stage.

Early years and reading

The early years of a child is very crucial, it is the period when the brain is develop and getting ready to learn. The experiences and relationships a child has, plus nutrition and health, can actually affect this enormously. Positive experiences help the brain to develop in healthy ways and early stimulation to books and literacy programs do have lasting effect on the child's cognitive development especially language skills.. So the experiences a child has in the early years can either support learning or interfere with it. In addition, books make a great and strong start to developing a wide vocabulary and literacy skills. Speech development is one of the first tools that a child will demonstrate in his/her lifelong education. The early years and reading books plays a vital role in the development of children's vocabulary and their ability to reading. The more books children read, the faster their vocabulary is expanded. Books help them to learn new words and new ways of using the words that they already know.

The library plays a crucial role in encouraging reading culture in children and the development of reading ability; this is because libraries provide materials that offer more extensive and varied information than classroom study alone. Voluntary reading helps develop reading skills and mastery of language, extends students' knowledge, and assists them in their academic work, Aina, Ogungbeni, Adigun, and Ogundipe, (2011).. They further asserted that the role of the libraries in promoting reading is especially crucial in developing scientific, reflective thinking and creativity. Librarians can help children and youths develop critical and independent thinking through their exposure to a wide variety of instructional resources and learning opportunities. Apart from the development of creative and critical thought, the role of the library in the promotion of reading culture can be seen in the readers' development of values, attitudes, and appreciation.

For there to be a functional school library whose resources are utilized by teachers and students alike, there needs to be a school librarian or a library assistant staff that helps to organize the information resources for effective usage. School librarian or teacher assistance plays a vital role in working with teachers and students in achieving academic success. The school library teacher collaboratively plans units and lessons with classroom teachers to integrate the skills taught in the library with the work in the classroom. They are keenly aware of the Curriculum Frameworks and seek to provide relevant resources for teachers and students to support teaching and learning (Dimmick, 2014).

At Graceful Oaks Nursery and Primary School up until last year (2013) the school did not have a staff in the position of a school librarian even though it had a lot of books in the library that had been opened since 2005. At the beginning of last academic session a full time librarian was employed and she was able to put in place structures and organization to help in the use of the library as it is supposed to be. This research therefore developed from the attempt by the school management to review the impact of the librarian and to further help us in the acquisition of more books into the library and to assess the benefit of the library to the pupils.

Statement of the Problem.

The school library was without a librarian for several years which affected the usability of the books. During the last academic session a librarian was employed to fully run the library. There was also the need to ensure that the library is fully maximized to the benefit of the school pupils; and in order to do this, there was a need to understand the reading and library patronage preferences along gender lines so as to design appropriate strategies to enhance library services delivery. The study was an attempt to evaluate the impact of the school library and an assessment of its use by school pupils over a period of six months along gender lines. (January to June 2014).

The following questions were raised:

1. How many times did boys and girls in the primary classes visit the library voluntarily?
2. Is there any difference in the frequency of use according to gender?
3. Which class visited the library most among all the primary classes?
4. What types of books did the children read or borrowed?

Sample and Sampling procedure:

The sample size was children from intact classes from Primary One to Primary Five that visited the school library voluntarily. Their ages ranged from 5 to 11 years. The school librarian recorded the number of visits by each student per class and this was the source of the raw data used in this study, the school operate a library period each of 40 minutes per class on a weekly basis. In addition children are free to go to the library on their own during their free period to read or take a book home. The data used was collected from the records kept by the school librarian on the daily request of pupils. Descriptive statistics mean and simple percentages were used to analyse data collected.

Results:

Research question 1: How many boys and girls visited the library during the period under review? (January to June 2014)

Table 1: Frequency of use of Pupils to the Library.

| Class | Jan B | Jan G | Feb B | Feb G | Mar B | Mar G | April B | April G | May B | May G | June B | June G |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|---------|---------|-------|-------|--------|--------|
| Pry1 | 3 | 10 | - | - | 4 | 7 | 17 | 4 | 4 | 19 | 1 | 15 |
| Pry2 | 2 | 20 | - | 3 | - | 12 | - | - | - | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Pry3 | 5 | 28 | 6 | 1 | - | 8 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 1 | 2 |
| Pry4 | 30 | 18 | 4 | 8 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 12 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| Pry5 | 30 | - | - | - | 4 | - | 13 | - | 1 | - | 2 | - |

From Table 1 both boys and girls used the library 365 times. This record gives us the fact that pupils do visit the library apart from the library time and it covers all categories of pupils even though the frequency varies. It is obvious that once the librarian was employed and the children could readily approach the library they were free to go and pick a book. This according to Aina et al (2014) and Dumninck (2014) will encourage reading skills of children, creative thinking and improved academic progress.

Research Question 2: Is there any difference in the frequency according to gender?

The analysis in table 1 showed that there was a difference between the frequency of both boys and girls. The boys used the library 141 times (39%) while the girls used the library 225 times (69%). This is further illustrated class by class as shown in figure 2

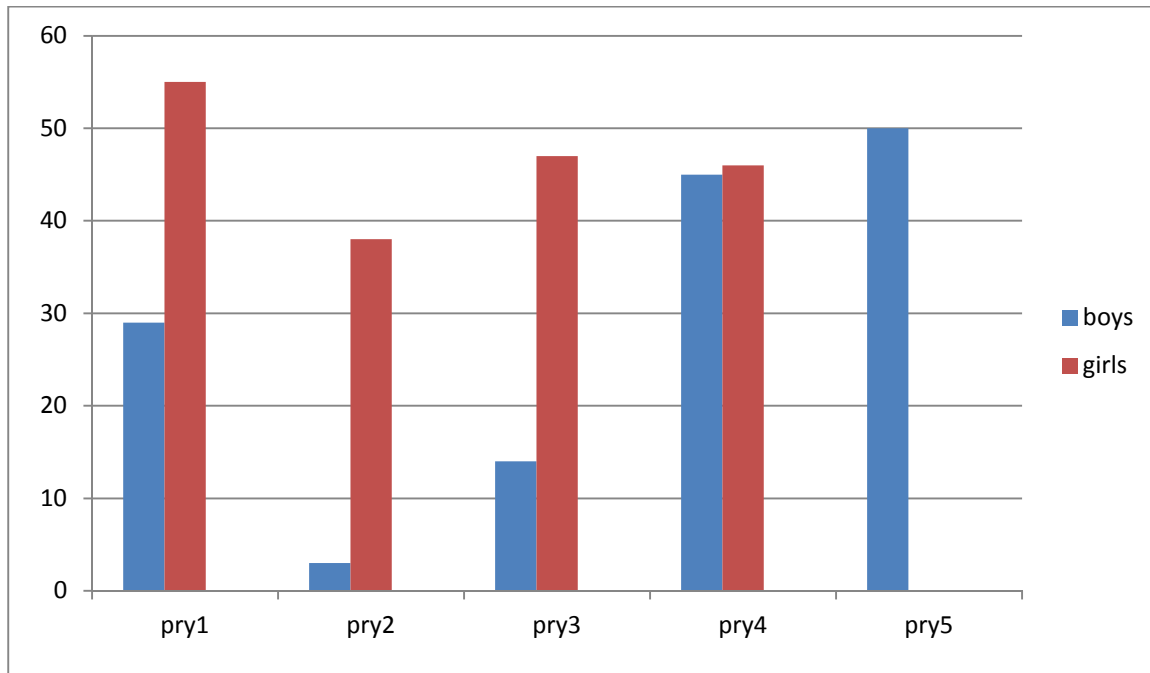


Figure 1: Gender difference according to class

The difference between the genders is significant especially in all classes except in primary 5 where the only girl in the class did not even attempt to visit the library even for once. The probable question in our minds is that could visiting the library be a function of the friends pupils keep or peer group? The girl in Primary five is the only girl in the class and all through the 6 months she did not enter the library. Generally more girls visited the library in the lower primary classes while in primary four there was no statistical difference between the two sexes. It is interesting too to note that in primary one, the boys attendance was far better than in other classes. What could have led to the decline in the number of books borrowed and number of time visited? This could be the basis for an in depth research on gender differences and library use.

Research Question 3: Which class visited the library most among all the primary classes? As shown in figure 3 Primary 4 pupils visited the library most with them recording 90 visits

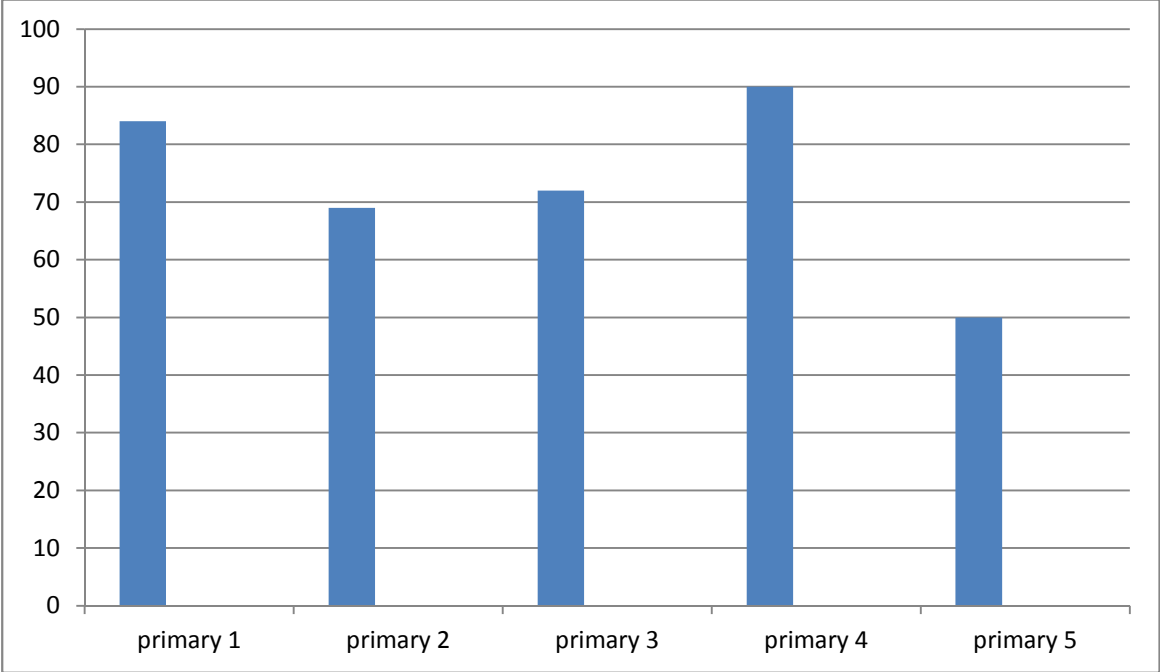
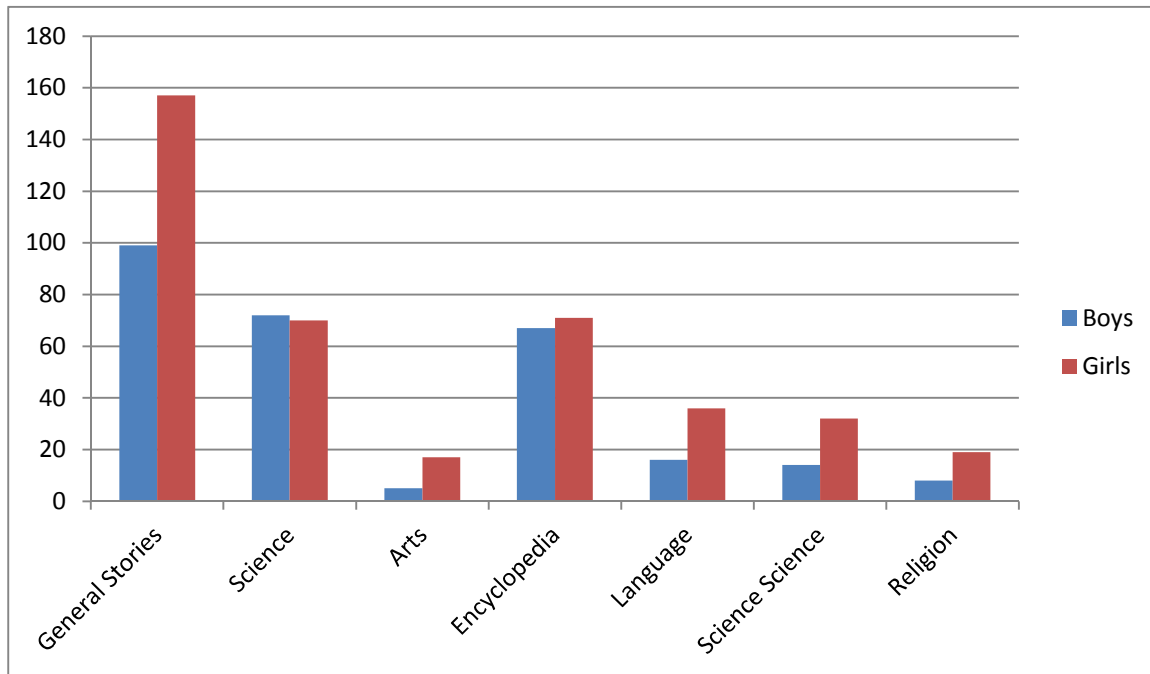


Figure 2: Number of visits per class.

The expectation of the class with the highest traffic showed an interesting pattern. Pupils in primary one at the beginner level had more time in the library. The question is was this because of their new found ability to read and communicate well? The frequency of visit of primary 5 pupils was the lowest and the librarian attested to the fact that the period under review happens to be the peak of the external exams for primary 5 and 6 pupils due to a lot of external exams. Would it be possible to assume they had less time to read because of the examination?

Research Question 4: What types of books did the children read?



From figure 3, the pupils read general stories most with total of 254 books and girls having the highest number of 155 (52.7%) while boys 99 (33.7%). The sciences are the next most read books with a total number of 142 books with girls having 70 (49.3%) and boys 72 (50%) this shows that there is no significant difference between genders. Encyclopaedia been the next widely read books also shows no significant difference between genders, as boys that read encyclopaedia was 67(48.6%) and girls 71(61.4%) The study shows that girls read more books than boys expect for the science books that shown a no significant difference between genders. This shows that the children generally wanted to have knowledge about various issues and concepts.

Implication of findings:

The school policy: As a school this result will help us intensify our efforts in equipping our library with adequate number of books to cater for more readers. Also a further investigation will be made to see what type of books boys like to read and provide them to increase the patronage of the boys in the library. In addition the librarian will be trained and empowered to render more effective service to the school community at large.

For the curriculum: Up until the time of the research, the library period is only once per week in each class, the curriculum will be looked into to enable pupils connect library time to class learning either in the form of assignment or project work. This will go a long way to help develop interest in reading outside the classroom environment in the pupils..

For pupils: The perceived difference between boys and girls will help the school management to have seminars and talks on the effective use and benefits of the school library to all so they will

find time to visit the library frequently. Also, incentives may be added to encourage boys visiting the library.

Conclusion and Recommendation.

The employment of a full time staff has benefitted the school and helped in providing a platform for pupils to do independent studying and reading. The study has confirmed that girls are verbal learners and do have flair for literary studies and thus enjoy reading more than the boys. The school management should continue to upgrade the library and provide for more volumes and more boys friendly books.

Recommendation: Further studies should be done in collaboration with their class teachers to see the relationship between reading and cognitive development. Also, an analysis of the type of books read according to gender and class can be looked into.

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