

Full Length Research

Female Undergraduates' Information Behaviour in Private Universities of Osun State

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Undergraduates' information behaviour is the totality of behaviour (active or passive) that undergraduates engage in to gain access, organize and use the information to meet their information needs. This study explored the information seeking behaviour of female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State. The descriptive survey design was employed in the study. A total of 120 female undergraduates were randomly selected from two private universities in Osun State using simple random sampling technique. A structured validated questionnaire was used for data collection. Data analysis involves the use of descriptive statistics. Specifically, data analysis was done using the mean and standard as well as relative importance index. The findings revealed a low level of information need (mean = 1.70), low seeking (mean = 1.93) and low use (mean = 1.92) on the scale of 4 points. Overall, findings from this study revealed a generally low level of information behaviour among female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State. The study concluded that there is a need for more awareness creation both on the part of the parents and the university on the importance of balance information behaviour among the female undergraduate students in the selected private universities in Osun State

Keywords: Female, Undergraduates, Information Behaviour, Private Universities, Osun State

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INTRODUCTION

Undergraduates' information-seeking behaviour is an explicit explanation of the processes they use to select, secure and dispose of information services or ideas to satisfy their information needs and the impact these processes have on them and the society. Undergraduates' information behaviour can be described as the totality of behaviour (active or passive) that undergraduates engage in to gain access, organize and use the information to meet their information needs. Information behaviour thus encompasses the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including active and passive

information seeking and information use. Health information-seeking behaviour of undergraduate female students can include their ability to identify, search, discover and use information related to diseases, health-threatening factors and health care. Information behaviour includes face-to-face communication with others, as well as the passive reception of information from different sources such as watching TV advertisements with the intention to act on the information given (Ojo & Popoola, 2015).

Adolescent information behaviour can be influenced by a number of factors such as those related to the kind of health information services sought; those related to the information sources such as parents, churches, schools,

peers, media, mosques, family life, teachers, counselors and mentors as well as those related to the messages presented in each source such as clearness or vagueness of the message and personal characteristics of the information seeker such as his or her understanding regarding the disease. Such myths can lead adolescents to engage in behaviour that put their health and development at risk.

Statement of Problem

Close observation and preliminary investigation have indicated that the information behaviour of female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State is relatively poor. However, it is alarming to note that, despite increased information sources, many female students still demonstrate low levels of health literacy; that is, they still show signs of difficulty locating and understanding the basic health information needed to solve health issues and make informed health decisions. This leads them to pre-marital sex, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, suspension and expulsion from school and worst of all, untimely death. The likely role of the underlying and inevitable factor of self – esteem of these students in the modern day cannot be underestimated.

Objective of the Study

The major objective of this study is to identify the level of information behaviour of female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State. This will be achieved through the following specific objectives which are set to:

1. assess the socio-demographic characteristics of female undergraduates of Private universities in Osun State
2. determine the level of information need among female undergraduates of private universities in Osun State
3. ascertain the level of information seeking among female undergraduates of private universities in Osun State
4. determine the level of information use among female undergraduates of private universities in Osun State

Research Questions

In specific terms, this study was designed to address and find answers to the following research questions.

1. What is the socio-demographic characteristics among female undergraduates of Private universities in Osun State?
2. What is the level of information need among female

- undergraduates of Private universities in Osun State?
3. What is the level of information seeking among female undergraduates of Private universities in Osun State?
4. What is the level of information use among female undergraduates of Private universities in Osun State?

Review of Related Literature

Information behaviour is inherent in people of all ages regardless of social status. Information behaviour refers to the study of individual's need for information, how he or she seeks, gives and uses information in different contexts such as the workplace, school and everyday living. It involves cognitive, physical and affective factors. Information seeking behaviour is the purposeful seeking for information as a consequence of a need to satisfy some goals. Although there are divergent views on the concept of information behaviour, nonetheless, 'information behaviour' has been conceptualized from three main dimensions namely, information seeking, information searching and information use behaviour.

Wilson (2000) defined information behaviour as "the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of Information including both active and passive information seeking and information use". Thus, it includes face-to-face communication with others as well as the passive reception of information, for example, watching TV advertisements without any intention to act on the information given.

Opele, Iyanda and Asubiojo (2015) reasoned that information behaviour encompasses ignorance of the need for information and avoidance of information as well as active information seeking by using a variety of media, print and non-print resources once an information need has been recognized. Hence, information behaviour can thus be described as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including active and passive information seeking and information use. In addition, in spite of the increasing availability of various types of information sources, research has found that teens show low health literacy levels; that is, they have difficulty locating and understanding the basic health information needed to solve health issues and make informed decisions (Ghaddar, Valerio, Garcia, & Hansen, 2012 & Skopelja, Whipple, & Richwine, 2008).

In undergraduate information behaviour studies, the sharing of information through interpersonal communication has been reported more frequently (Opele et al, 2015). Most of these activities are often found among those who have a high interest in the complex informal social networks. In some instances, however, students seek information with the sole purpose of satisfying curiosity while others may seek information to maintain wellbeing and manage daily pressures and anxieties.

The type of information need for health information students is diverse in nature as they come from a diverse cultural and ethnic background. The emotional and psychological makeup of each student differs from person to person. The information need of health information management students may be influenced by factors such as the individual information seeking behaviour orientation, an understanding of the reason for seeking particular information, individual preferences for information derives, and a host of other factors.

Sonnenwald and Lievrouw (1997) highlighted four levels of information seeking of any user group: (1) the identification of a visceral need or vague short of dissatisfaction that is unexpressed; (2) the formulation of a conscious need that is expressed as an ambiguous and rambling statement and which sometimes results in communicating the need to another person; (3) the construction of a formalized need, expressed as a qualified and rational statement of the need and (4) the establishment of a compromised need expressed in terms that fit the organization of the information system. Each of these levels affects reproductive health practices of undergraduate students. Sonnenwald and Pierce (2000) studied information behaviour qualitatively in a dynamic military work context of command and control, where they highlighted the phenomenon of interwoven situational awareness, defined as an individual, intra-group and inter-group shared understanding of the situation. The authors identify the need for "dense social networks" of frequent communications between participants, the work task they are involved with and the situation. They further identified a continuing necessity for information exchange during work operations. They also defined contested collaboration as a phenomenon where team members maintain a sense of cooperation while they actually work to further their own personal interests, which sometimes would challenge the nature of cooperation.

Because the health information behaviour of teens has been studied in various disciplines, including medicine, nursing, psychology, information science and education, findings of the studies have spread out to journals in multiple disciplines. Therefore, researchers in one discipline may have difficulty in recognizing and locating relevant studies that have been conducted in other disciplines. In addition, the field of health informatics is quickly evolving with the development of technology, which makes it even more challenging to grasp the trends and characteristics of the field in a prompt manner. Although analysis of relevant literature from various disciplines involved could effectively contribute to further development of information services and research in

teens' health information behaviour as little attention has been paid to understanding trends and interdisciplinary characteristics in the literature.

In spite of the importance of the topic, it has been difficult for researchers to aggregate and understand the common knowledge base of adolescent's reproductive health information behaviour for a number of reasons. Because the health information behaviour of teens has been studied in various disciplines, including medicine, nursing, psychology, information science and education, findings of the studies have spread out to journals in multiple disciplines. Therefore, researchers in one discipline may have difficulty in recognizing and locating relevant studies that have been conducted in other disciplines. In addition, the field of health informatics is quickly evolving with the development of technology, which makes it even more challenging to grasp the trends and characteristics of the field in a prompt manner.

The review also shows that information behaviour of undergraduates is still an emerging research area. Available literature examined information behaviour from the perspectives of library use and academic exercises. That is, there are studies on the level of library use among undergraduates in general. The current study intends to bridge this gap with a view to contributing to the existing general body of knowledge.

METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was utilized in this study. A survey research design provides a quantitative description of a population by studying a sample of that population. The sample result provides the researcher with data that were used to draw inferences to the population.

The study was conducted by the researcher and seven (7) research assistants who were recruited from each university. The research assistants are individuals who have been thoroughly trained on the conduct of the survey. The research instrument was jointly administered by the researcher and the research assistants. Approval to administer the copies of the questionnaire was obtained from relevant authorities. At each study location, efforts were made to acquaint the target audience with the overall objectives of the study. The data generated were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as simple percentage and frequency distribution, mean and relative importance index (RII). At the second stage, the researcher used random sampling technique to select only female undergraduates from the participating schools covering 100 level to 400 level students for the study.

RESULTS

Table 1. Respondents Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Parameter	Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16 - 18	50	41.7
	19 – 21	53	44.2
	22 – 24	11	9.2
	>24 years	6	5.0
	Total	120	100.0
Religion	Christianity	113	94.2
	Islam	7	5.8
	Total	120	100.0
Ethnic Background	Yoruba	55	45.8
	Hausa/Fulani	6	5.0
	Ibo	54	45.0
	Kalabari	4	3.3
	Ibibio	1	0.8
	Total	120	100.0
Department	Software Engineering	5	4.2
	Computer Science	3	2.5
	Public Health	5	4.2
	Microbiology	4	3.3
	Anatomy	18	15.0
	Nursing	9	7.5
	Business Administration & Marketing	4	3.3
	Political Science	13	10.8
	Public Administration	8	6.7
	Language and Library Studies	5	4.2
	Social Work	5	4.2
	Nutrition	5	4.2
	History	9	7.5
	Accounting	4	3.3
	Economics	5	4.2
	Mass Communication	13	10.8
	Music and Creative Art	3	2.5
	Agriculture & Industrial Technology	1	0.8
	Medical Lab Science	1	0.8
	Total	120	100.0
Level of Study	100	38	31.7
	200	28	23.3
	300	28	23.3
	400	26	21.7
	Total	120	100.0
Course of Study	Software Engineering	5	4.2
	Computer Science	4	3.3
	Public Health	4	3.3
	Microbiology	4	3.3
	Anatomy	18	15.0
	Nursing	9	7.5
	Marketing	2	1.7
	Political Science	13	10.8
	Public Administration	8	6.7
	English Studies	5	4.2
	Social Work	5	4.2
	Nutrition	5	4.2

Table 1. Continuation

	History	9	7.5
	Accounting	4	3.3
	Economics	5	4.2
	Mass Communication	13	10.8
	Business Administration	2	1.7
	Music and Creative Art	3	2.5
	Agriculture Economics	1	0.8
	Medical Lab Science	1	0.8
	Total	120	100.0
Nationality	Nigerian	120	100.0
	Total	120	100.0

Table 1 revealed that the highest percentage of the respondents (44.2%) were between the ages of 19 – 21 years, strictly followed by 41.7% who were between the ages of 16 – 18 years, 9.2% were between the ages of 22 – 24 years, while 5.0% of the total respondents have the lowest age percentage greater than 24 years of age. It was further gathered from the study that majority of the respondents involved were Christians who accounted for 94.2% of the total respondents while 5.8% of the total respondents were Muslim students. As per their ethnicity, it was indicated that 45.8% of the respondents were Yoruba, 45.0% were Igbo, 5.0% were Hausa/Fulani, 3.3% were Kalabari whereas 0.8% were Ibibio.

Regarding the department each of the respondents has been studying in the institutions, it was indicated that Anatomy department has the highest percentage rate of students who accounted for 15.0%, strictly followed by 10.8% and ...% of the students studying Political Science and Mass Communication respectively. Other departments where the research was carried out include Nursing and History students who accounted for 7.5%, Public Administration students who accounted for 6.7%, Software Engineering, Public Health, Language and Library Study, Social Work, Nutrition and Economics students accounted for 4.2% respectively, Microbiology, Business Administration & Marketing and Accounting students accounted for 3.3% respectively, Computer Science and Music and Creative Art students accounted for 2.5%, while 0.8% of the total respondents study both Agricultural & Industrial Technology as well as Medical Lab Science. The study further revealed that majority of the respondents who accounted for 31.7% are 100L candidates, this was closely followed by 23.3% of the respondents who were in 200L and 300L respectively, while 21.7% of them are 400L students.

Pertaining to their course of study, it was discovered that majority of the students who accounted for 15.0% chose Anatomy as their course of study, strictly followed by 10.8% and...% of the students in Political Science and Mass Communication respectively, 7.5% of the respondents were studying Nursing and History, 6.7% in Public Administrations, 4.2% in Software Engineering, English Study, Social Work, Nutrition and Economics respectively, 3.3% study Computer Science, Public Health, Microbiology and Accounting respectively, 2.5% study Music and Creative Art, 1.7% in Marketing and Business Administration, while 0.8% of the total respondents were in Agriculture Economics and Medical Lab Science as the course of study. The table finally showed that none of the respondents are from outside the country where the research exercise was carried out. This means that all the respondents/students used are all Nigerians.

Table 2. Information Need among female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State

Information Need	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	\bar{X}	RII	Ranking
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)			
I need information about my Academics	66(55.0)	49(40.8)	1(0.8)	4(3.3)	1.53	0.87	1st
I need information on sources of health Information	55(45.8)	56(46.7)	4(3.3)	5(4.2)	1.66	0.84	2nd

Table 2. Continuation

I need information about my personal growth and changes about my system	58(48.3)	49(40.8)	10(8.3)	3(2.5)	1.65	0.84	3rd
I need Health Information about danger of having pre metal sex	47(39.2)	58(48.3)	14(11.7)	1(0.8)	1.74	0.81	4th
I need information about STIs & HIV/AIDS	51(42.5)	46(38.3)	22(18.3)	1(0.8)	1.77	0.81	5th
I need sexual information about my relationship with opposite sex	44(36.7)	44(36.7)	31(25.8)	1(0.8)	1.91	0.77	6th
Weighted Scores					1.70	0.83	

Source: Researcher's field result (N = 120).

Key: Strongly Agree = (4), Agree = (3), Disagree = (2), Strongly Disagree = (1), \bar{X} = Mean, RII = Relative Importance Index

Table 2 showed that RII of all information need is clearly greater than the threshold of 0.5. It was further revealed by the study that the need for information about academics (RII = 0.87) was ranked 1st; ranked 2nd was the need for information on sources of health information with (RII = 0.84), need for information about personal growth and changes about system (RII = 0.84) was ranked 3rd, ranked 4th was need for information on health information about danger of having pre-marital sex (RII = 0.81), ranked 5th on the table was the need on information about STIs & HIV/AIDS (RII = 0.81). The table further shows that need for sexual information about relationship with an opposite sex was ranked last among information need (RII = 0.77). Overall, the level of information need among female undergraduates in private universities was equally high, indicating that none of the entrepreneurs was rated below the RII of 0.77 on a 4 - point scale.

Table 3. Information seeking among female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State

Information Seeking	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	\bar{X}	RII	Ranking
	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)	F (%)			
I seek relevant information for my academics	76(63.3)	36(30.0)	6(5.0)	2(1.7)	1.45	0.89	1st
I ask my Parents about information on my health	56(46.7)	54(45.0)	5(4.2)	5(4.2)	1.66	0.84	2nd
I seek health information from Health Workers, Doctor, Nurses, Pharmacy etc.	56(46.7)	49(40.8)	9(7.5)	6(5.0)	1.71	0.82	3rd
I seek information on the internet, social media etc.	59(49.2)	42(35.0)	11(9.2)	8(6.7)	1.73	0.82	4th
I seek health information from my peers/colleagues	41(34.2)	61(50.8)	14(11.7)	4(3.3)	1.84	0.79	5th
I seek Health Information from my Counsellors, Social Workers	23(19.2)	37(30.8)	44(36.7)	16(13.3)	2.44	0.64	6th

Table 3. Continuation

I seek health information from my Pastors, Imams, Religious Leaders	26(21.7)	18(15.0)	55(45.8)	21(17.5)	2.59	0.60	7th
Weighted Scores					1.93	0.77	

Source: Researcher's field result (N = 120).

Key: Strongly Agree = (4), Agree = (3), Disagree = (2), Strongly Disagree = (1), \bar{X} = Mean, RII = Relative Importance Index

Table 3 revealed that the RII of all items clearly surpasses the threshold of 0.5. As indicated, information seeking entails seeking relevant information for academics (RII = 0.89), ranked 2nd was asking parents about information on health (RII = 0.84), seeking of health information from health workers, doctors, nurses, pharmacy, etc. was ranked 3rd (RII = 0.82) and ranked 4th was seeking of information on the internet, social media, etc. (RII = 0.82). Others among information seeking on information behaviour include seeking health information from peers/colleagues (RII = 0.79), attending clinic/hospital in seeking information relating to reproductive health (RII = 0.74), seeking health information from counsellors, social workers (RII = 0.64). It further shows that seeking health information from pastors, imams and religion leaders was ranked last among the information seeking behaviour (RII = 0.60). Overall, the perception on the level of information behaviour under information seeking was equally high, indicating that none of the respondents was rated below the RII of 0.60 on a 4 - point scale.

Table 4. Information Use among female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State

Information Use	Strongly Agree F (%)	Agree F (%)	Disagree F (%)	Strongly Disagree F (%)	\bar{X}	RII	Ranking
I regularly check my breast against breast lump	48(40.0)	55(45.8)	15(12.5)	2(1.7)	1.76	0.81	1 st
I use information about menstrual safe period	46(38.3)	60(50.0)	10(8.3)	4(3.3)	1.77	0.81	2 nd
I use information about abstinence from pre-marital sex	43(35.8)	57(47.5)	14(11.7)	6(5.0)	1.86	0.79	3 rd
I use information about cervical cancer	28(23.3)	56(46.7)	34(28.3)	2(1.7)	2.08	0.73	4 th
I use information about prevention of pregnancy	28(23.3)	58(48.3)	27(22.5)	7(5.8)	2.11	0.72	5 th
Weighted Scores					1.92	0.77	

Source: Researcher's field result (N = 120).

Key: Strongly Agree = (4), Agree = (3), Disagree = (2), Strongly Disagree = (1), \bar{X} = Mean, RII = Relative Importance Index

Table 4 depicts that ranked 1st among the level of information use can be ascertained through regularly checking of breast against breast lump was ranked 1st with (RII = 0.81), ranked 2nd was use of information about menstrual safe period (RII = 0.81), ranked 3rd was use of information about abstinence from pre-marital sex (RII = 0.79) and ranked 4th was use of information about

cervical cancer (RII = 0.73). It further shows that use of information about prevention of pregnancy was ranked last among the level of information behaviour (RII = 0.72). It can further be deduced that information use among the level of information behaviour was equally showing that none among the use of information was rated below 0.72 on a 4 - point scale.

CONCLUSION

Overall, findings from the current study revealed a generally low level of information behaviour among female undergraduates in private universities in Osun State. That is, while there was a generally understanding about the various information sources, the extent to which the students are making use of these sources is generally low. Thus, there is a need for more awareness creation both on the part of the parents and the university on the importance of balance information behaviour among the female undergraduate students in the selected private universities in Osun State

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