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Learning Problems among Male and Female First Year Undergraduate Students (Pp. 372-381)

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Abstract

There has been the observation that fresh students in their first year in the university encounter some learning problems. Specific problems investigated in this work include those of concentration ability, memory ability, study time management ability, attention problems, ability to join other students in study group work and problems of self concept. The problem before the researcher is the effects of these study problems on the students. The purpose of the study is to investigate the effects of each of the problems on male and female students. One research question and one research hypothesis were formulated to guide the study. A descriptive designed was adopted. The percentage method of data analysis and analysis of variance were used. The findings show that the problem is the same on concentration and group work for male and female student but they differ on memory, attention and self concept. After an extensive discussion two recommendations were made.

Key Words: Ability, Concentration, Investigate, Learning, Management, Memory, Problems, Research.

Background to the Study

Various research findings have established that fresh undergraduates encountered certain study problems in their first year in the university. Such problems include those of concentration ability, memory ability, study time management ability, attention problems, ability to join other students in study group work and problems of self concept. These problems of fresh students are seen in the study of Richards, Tolia, Squoros, and Bowery (2003), Buzan (1989), Simeon (2004), Sierra & David (2007), and Sierra (2007).

Available literature indicates that university students have certain attention problems. Nellie (2003) states that students in universities have such problems as paying attention. He states that the reasons for this may include – boredom, sleep deprivation, a cold, poor nutrition, to name a few. That attention can also be affected when students are experiencing depression, anxiety or chronic illness. He also stated that some students with attention problem may be diagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) which involves consideration of the many factors that can cause attention difficulties, also that students with ADHD report severe difficulties remaining focused on the task at hand unless they are very interested or need to stay focused is great (e.g paper due the next day). That they may be impulsive, acting before thinking, blurt out ideas or say thing without thinking. He also says that interventions for students with ADHD include some of all of the following (i) increasing self-awareness, (ii) coaching for support with organization and time management, (iii) learning metacognitive strategies, (iv) using accommodations and taking medication.

Ajayi and Osiki (2008) carried out a research on procrastination among the undergraduates and implication for time management. Their findings included the following: that students find it difficult to follow their work schedules, that they are fond of delaying their assignment till a more convenient time and so often submit their assignment at the dying minute. They feel reluctant in performing tasks that ought to be done urgently, and would always wait for last minutes to study for examination. Ajayi and Osiki gave reasons for these poor time management as evident from their findings. These include feeling that there is still time, laziness and sluggishness, postponement of tasks because they want to see others do it first, fear of making mistakes and because poor time management has become a habit. Other reasons for poor time management as seen from the research include tendency to gain more knowledge and experience, leniency of a lecturer, fear of not performing well and lack of self confidence.

They also gave some effects of poor time management on the students as seen from their findings. These include (i) that poor time management is a time killer, promotes poor academic performance, produces anxiety and its effects on ones nervous system that it could hinder achievement in life endeavour. That deadlines are not often met due to postponement of tasks that may lead to lost of opportunities, so delays success generally in life. They concluded that this issue of poor time management among students may not guarantee effective learning and good academic performance.

On the aspect of memory as a study problem Wynne (2010) Little (2010) and Jones (2010), gave some major categories of memory functions as learning problems; as given where these problems lie, that the problems lie in receptive memory, sequential memory, role memory, working memory or what is also called short-term memory and long-term memory. In their various research works, they explained these.

That receptive memory has to do with ability to note the physical features of a given stimulus to be able to recognize it at a later time. Sequential memory as the ability to recall stimuli in their order of observation or presentation while role memory is the ability to learn certain information as a habit pattern; working memory or short-term memory as one that lasts from a few seconds to a minute; and long-term memory as ability to retrieve information of things learned in the past. They explain how each of these becomes a problem to the learner.

For receptive memory, they say the child has receptive processing difficulties invariably fails to recognize visual or auditing stimuli. The child who has sequential memory has poor auditory sequential memory and may be unable to repeat longer words orally without getting the syllables in the wrong order for example words like “preliminary” and “statistically”. On aspect of rote memory, there is a problem when the child is unable to recall with ease those responses which should have been automatic such as alphabets, the number systems multiplication tables, spelling rules, grammatical rules and so on.

In the aspect of problems in working memory or short-term memory, there is a problem when the child can not recall a telephone number that was heard a few seconds earlier, the name of a person who has just been introduced or the substance of the remarks just made by a teacher in class and so on. There is a problem in long-term memory when there is inability to retrieve information of things learned in the past.

In these works, the aspects of the effects of these problems on male and females were not specified. This researcher therefore wants to compare the effects of these problems on the male and female undergraduate students during their first year. The study will be carried out at the Delta State University Abraka. It is the thinking of the researcher that effects of the problems on males may differ much from those of the females. Also that the motivational and reinforcement factors may differ among the genders thus influencing the effects of these study problems on each of the genders as seen in the work of Sierra and Baker (2006). Research has also indicated that the home backgrounds of students and parental expectations may affect the ability of the different genders to cope with these problems.

All these problems may be very demanding. If they are as demanding as such, they could overwhelm the individual student. This may result in exhaustion and if this situation continues and becomes repetitive, they may become boring. Sierra, Baker, Medford et al (2006) have also pointed out some other factors that may cause these problems.

All these are established facts by researchers. What this work focused upon is the effects of these problems on male and female students.

Statement of Problems

The main problem that has made this research necessary is the effects of these study problems on undergraduates during their first year in the university.

In the Delta State University, the researcher has observed that students fail several courses during their first year and so carry over these to the second year. In this way, they build very poor foundation from the onset. This is the situation across the various faculties of the university. Specifically the research will address the following by finding out:

- i.) the effects of concentration problems on male and female first year undergraduates.
- ii.) the effects of memory problems among male and female undergraduate in the first year of study in the university.
- iii.) the problem of management of study time among male and female undergraduates in the first year.
- iv.) the problem of attention to study among male and female first year undergraduates.

- v.) problems of participation in study group, assignments among male and female undergraduates during their first year of study.
- vi.) the problems of self concept among male and female undergraduates in their first year of study in the university.

Purpose of the Study

The study aimed at comparing the effects of some study problems that confront flesh first year undergraduate male and female students.

The purpose of this study is to specifically investigate the differential effects of each of the study problems among male and female first year undergraduates. The problems to be investigated include:

- i.) concentration problems
- ii.) problems of memory
- iii.) problems of management of study time
- iv.) problems of attention during periods of study
- v.) problems of working in groups during group assignment
- vi.) problems of self concept among students.

This research is guided by one research question and one hypothesis.

Research Question

What is the effect of study problems on male and female students during first year undergraduate studies in the aspects of concentration, memory, time management, attention, group work and self concept?

Research Hypotheses

One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study:

Ho: There is no significant difference in the effects of study problems on male and female first year undergraduates in the Delta State University, Abraka.

Methodology

The design for this study is descriptive and specifically it is a descriptive comparative study. The researcher tried to find out how much concentration problems, memory problem, time management problems, problems of attention during period of study, problems of working in group assignment

and problems of self concept among fellow students as they affect male students compared to female students. The researcher compared how those variables affect these different genders separately.

The population for this study is the 2,500 fresh students in one hundred level at the Delta State University, Abraka in 2009 session. They are drawn from four faculties out of the seven faculties at the Abraka campus of the university. These faculties were science, education, social science and arts.

The convenience method of sampling was used to select the four faculties out of the seven in Abraka. To get the study subjects, the stratified method was used with students in a discipline as a strata. Sixty seven respondents were thus sample in each of the four faculties giving a total of two hundred and sixty eight respondents.

The instrument for this study is questionnaire. The questionnaire is made up of seven items, with each item eliciting responses about each of the six variables studied (see appendix I) the researcher administered the questionnaire in a class setting, and the responses were collected from the respondents immediately they had responded.

In order to ensure content validity, the researcher ensured that each variable is represented in the questionnaire. To do this, a question is asked so that when a response is given it will lead to answer to the research question and the testing of a hypothesis. All of the independent variable are in this way represented thus ensuring content validity for the research.

The collection of data for this research was through questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to elicit responses from respondents on their behaviour towards difficulties of concentration during studies, memory problems, problems of managing their study time and difficulties during studies. Other responses required from the respondents were difficulties in taking part in group work during compulsory training assessments and those of self concept. The questionnaire is attached as seen in appendix I.

Two methods of data analyses were used in this study. This includes the percentage methods and the analysis of variance. The percentage method was used to analyze data for the research question and analysis of variance for the research hypothesis. The results obtained showed the relative effects of the incident variables on each of these genders. This will enable us make a convenient and acceptable comparison.

Presentation of Result

Research Question

What is the extent of male and female students study problems?

Table 1 presents the percentage value of male and female students study problems of concentration, memory, time management, attention, group work and self-concept. The problem is the same on concentration and group work for male and female students with 25%. The problems differ on memory where the effect is more on female and time management where the effect is more on male; attention where the effect is more on female; and self concept where the effect is more on male students.

Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between male and female students learning problems.

The table 2 shows the calculated χ^2 value of 12.00 is more than the critical χ^2 value of 11.07 at .05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

The result reveals that there is a significance difference between male and female students learning problems.

Discussion

The research was carried out to investigate problems of studying among male and female undergraduates in their first year in the universities. The study location is the Delta State university Abraka, Delta State Nigeria. The research question formulated to guide the study was based on the aspects of concentration problems, memory problems, time management problems, attention problems, group work problems and problems of self concept.

One research question was formulated to guide the study. The research question was based on each of the independent variables identified above.

The percentage method of data analysis was used to answer the research question. The finding here shows that the effects were the same on concentrations and group work for the male and female first year undergraduate. But the effects on problems of memory, time management, attention and self concept differ for male and female students.

One hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. This was tested using the chi-square method of data analysis. The result as shown in table II above indicate that there is a significant difference between male and female student

on the effects of these study problems. The hypothesis was therefore rejected. This shows that problems of concentration and self concept were the same but those of memory, time management, attention and group work showed significant differences.

Conclusion

The researcher can conveniently conclude that difficulties experienced by first year undergraduates male and female on study problems of concentration and self concepts are similar. But there are differences on problems of memory, time management, attention and ground work. The research question “what is the extent of male and female students learning problem” has been answered. The extent is that in concentration and self concept problems the effects are the same. On the other study problems of memory, time management, attention and group work the extent of the effect differ. This is why the hypothesis was not accepted.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the research, the following recommendations are made.

- a. The university needs to provide handbooks to first year students on study problems. This may be given as a separate handbook or part of students handbook issued to all university new entrants.
- b. Orientation to fresh students should be given at the beginning of every session. Study difficulties should be a major aspect of the orientation programme,

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Table 1: Percentage analysis of male and female students study problems.

Learning Problems						
Variable	Concentration	Memory	Time Management	Attention	Group work	Self concept
Male	25	18.75	43.75	16.67	25	16.67
Female	25	26.36	20.91	26.82	25	14.55

Table 2: Chi-square analysis on the difference between male and female students study problems.

Learning Problems											
Variable	Concentration	Memory	Time Management	Attention	Group work	Self concept	Total	Df	Cal. X ² value	Cri. X ² value at .05	Decision
Male	12	9	21	8	12	8	70				
Female	55	58	46	59	55	32	35	5	12.00	11.07	Rejected
Total	67	67	67	67	67	40	375				