

## **Study Habits of Postgraduate Students in Selected Nigerian Universities**

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### **Introduction**

Reading is an attempt to absorb the thought of the author and know what the author is conveying (Leedy 1956). Studying is the interpretation of reading materials. Study habits and skills are particularly important for postgraduate students, whose needs include time management, notetaking, Internet skill, the elimination of distractions, and assigning a high priority to study. Fielden (2004) states that good study habits help the student in critical reflection in skills outcomes such as selecting, analyzing, critiquing, and synthesizing. Nneji (2002) states that study habits are learning tendencies that enable students work privately. Azikiwe (1998) describes 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. Study habits help students master their areas of specialization.

The objective of this study is to examine the study habits of postgraduate students in selected Nigerian universities, looking at duration, place of study, materials used for study, and their main motivators. This study will help to establish whether postgraduates are on par with their peers in other countries in the acquisition of intellectual skills.

### **Literature Review**

Study habits may be taken for granted, particularly in developing countries. In Africa, there is widespread reading in all scholarly fields, but less is being achieved in writing and publication. Efficient study habits can strengthen writing. Professors in the developing countries, such as those in Nigerian universities, should attempt to “equip graduates with high level of analytical skills, the capacity for critical reasoning, self-reflection and conceptual grasp and ability to learn autonomously and exercise flexibility of mind” (Simmons 2003). Study habits are actually improving because of the advent and wide use of the Internet, hypertext, and multimedia resources (Liu, 2005). Karim and Hassan (2006) also note the exponential growth digital information, which changes the way students perceive study are reading and in how printed materials are used to facilitate study. Liu (2005) and Ramirez (2003) report that students print material from the Internet in order to study and read later on. Igun (2005) also found that Nigerians study from materials downloaded from the Internet.

Simmons (2002) notes that “good writing spawns from a close understanding of text and great writing result from an interactive analysis and fluency with our reading.” He adds that inadequate writing is

a direct result of inadequate reading and studying. Postgraduate students are scholars in training and have the responsibility of becoming prolific and critical writers in their disciplines and careers. The spirit of responsibility and integrity are vital to the study habits of postgraduate students.

### Methodology

Forty questionnaires were distributed to five Nigerian university postgraduate schools, for a total of two hundred. Thirty-eight questionnaires were returned from Delta State University, thirty-four from Benin, and thirty-two from University of Port Harcourt. Twenty-seven and twenty-five questionnaires were returned from University of Nigeria Nsukka and Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, respectively. Therefore, a total of 156 (78%) questionnaires were returned and used for this study. The results of the findings were presented in tables using percentage.

### Postgraduate Study Habits

**Table 1. Time of Serious Study**

Time/Period of Serious Study	Number	%
Only on weekend	50	32.0
Only on weekdays	39	25.0
Only free period	41	26.3
Weekend and weekdays	17	10.9
Weekend, weekdays, and any free period	4	2.6
No response	5	3.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Postgraduate students study more at weekends, although some study on weekdays and during any free period they can find.

**Table II. Duration of Study**

Hours of Study per Day	Number	%
Not more than one hour	11	7.0
Not more than two hours	43	27.6
Three hours to four hours	80	51.3
Five hours and above	13	8.3
No response	9	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Table II reveals that most postgraduate students study between three and four hours per day.

**Table III. Best Ways of Assimilating Knowledge**

<b>Ways of Assimilating</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Summarization	57	36.5
Self test	53	34.0
Memorization	25	16.0
Summarization and self test	4	2.6
Self test and memorization	1	0.6
Summarization and memorization	4	2.6
Summarization, memorization, and self test	5	3.2
No response	7	4.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Summarization, self test, and memorization are the most successful methods for assimilating knowledge for the students in the population.

**Table IV. Study Plan**

<b>Reading Plan</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Use of reading timetable	66	42.3
Reading the subject of choice	35	22.4
Reading the subjects that appeal to me at the time of studying	40	25.7
Use of reading timetable and reading subject of choice	3	1.9
No response	12	7.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Most postgraduate students use a reading timetable. Student prepare their own timetable, which indicates the course or subject to read at any particular time.

**Table V. Place of Study**

<b>Place of Study</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Library	25	16.0
Classroom	12	7.7
Hostel/my room	47	30.1
Quiet place	54	34.6
Hostel/my room and quiet place	4	2.6
Library and hostel/my room	2	1.3
Library and quiet place	1	0.6
Library, hostel/my room, and quiet place	3	1.9
In the library, classroom, hostel/my room, and quiet place	4	2.6
No response	4	2.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Most students read in a quiet and in their hostel or individual rooms. Only 25, or 16%, say they use the library.

**Table VI. Materials Used for Study**

Type of Materials	Number	%
Textbook only	30	19.2
Textbooks, lecture handout/notes	52	33.3
Any relevant materials	74	47.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

The majority of postgraduate students read any relevant materials that come their way, while some read only textbooks, lecture handouts, and notes.

**Table VII. Motivators for Study**

Main Drives for Study	Number	%
Pass examination	23	14.7
Interview	2	1.3
Personal knowledge and skills	96	61.5
Pass examination and for self development or actualization	35	22.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>

Nearly two-thirds (96, 61.5%) of postgraduate students are motivated primarily by the desire for knowledge and skills, while 35 (22.5%) study mainly to pass their examinations and tests and for self development.

### **The Importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to the Study Habits of Postgraduate Students**

Adapting study habits to ICT is very important for Nigerian postgraduate students. The Internet has channels of communication that can improve study habits. It can:

- facilitate information access
- enhance study/reading habits
- accelerate academic success by making information easily available
- improve managerial and professional skill

Problems affecting postgraduates' study habits in Nigerian universities include:

- Funding: Dwindling funding affects the development of postgraduate schools in Nigeria. External overseas assistance and scholarships are hard to acquire.
- Lecturers/Academic Staff: The lack of funding has created a problem with retaining instructors, who find better positions elsewhere
- Frequent Strike Actions and Closure of Universities: This delays postgraduate programmes. Even serious students are delayed from graduating on time as a result of this problem.
- Technology infrastructure: Many postgraduate school in Nigeria still lack proper computers and Internet connectivity that would facilitate study and better reading habits

- Other Infrastructure: laboratory and chemicals, library resources and equipment, buildings, lecture halls, and electricity need to be improved.

Solving these problems and giving proper orientation to all Nigerian postgraduate students on study/reading habits would ensure that graduates will be prepared to manage the affairs of the country and beyond.

### Conclusion

There are still barriers to creating a study environment that will inculcate good study habits in postgraduate students. The library is still the best place for quiet study. There should be privacy and reading materials, computers, printers, reference materials, email stations, comfortable lighting, and a quiet atmosphere. A serious postgraduate student should give priority to studying in the library.

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