

Perceptions and Use of Library Resources Among Students in Selected Junior High Schools in Accra, Ghana

Silas Adjei

Senior Assistant Librarian, Pentecost University, Accra, Ghana

E-mail: sadjei@pentvars.edu.gh

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Abstract - Library use in Ghana is found to be poor, especially among junior high students. The limited use of the library mostly stems from the fact that students' decisions to utilize the library or not are largely influenced by their opinions of libraries, in addition to the availability of library resources. Perceptions people hold are very powerful because they affect how they relate to and use particular objects. However, research examining junior high school students' perceptions about libraries in Ghana is limited. The current study explores perceptions and use of library resources among 150 students selected from 2 junior high schools in Accra. Findings showed that the students use the school library very frequently, with the majority indicating usage during break time. Additionally, visiting the school library to read remains the dominant purpose of using school libraries among the students. They also reported a high level of satisfaction and a positive perception of the staff in their school library.

Keywords: Perceptions, Library Resources, Junior High Schools, Student Attitudes, Information Literacy, Reading Habits, Access to Information, Academic Performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Libraries have been argued to be one of the key resources for ensuring academic excellence at all levels of education. Libraries have been defined as buildings or rooms containing collections of academic books, periodicals and recently other digital resources that people go there to access for different purposes, key of the purposes being academic (Satija, 2017). According to Namugera (2014), libraries are mainly classified into school libraries (those situated in educational institutions usually reserved for students) and public or community libraries (those situated in communities and open to the public). Research shows that school libraries constitute a major academic resource for students and Students (Satija, 2017). In low and middle-income countries (LMICs), there are inadequate library resources both in schools and communities (Neuman & Celano, 2018). This has created a situation where the usage of library resources is very low in LMICs across all age categories (Namugera, 2014). This situation is also reflected in Ghana where there are inadequate library resources in most educational institutions. Even in institutions where there are libraries in Ghana, there are inadequate resources such as current books and other electronic resources that encourage people to use the libraries (Buabeng-Andoh & Issifu, 2015). There have been several studies that have

sought to examine the various ways of encouraging library use, especially among students in LMICs to improve their academic performance. The upsurge in interest in library use research is mainly due to the consistent decline in academic performance among students, especially at the lower levels of education such as basic and secondary levels (Neuman & Celano, 2018).

Educational standards at the Junior High level in Ghana are reported to be falling (Ampiah, 2008). This is apparent in the constantly subpar performance of middle school students in their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE). The problem has persisted for decades, almost since the inception of the BECE (Mereku, 2003). The problem of low academic achievement at the junior high level is reported to be worse in public schools compared to their private school counterparts. Consistently, students in the public junior high schools in Ghana perform poorly in their final year BECE exams, with a large proportion barely making it to the senior high schools (Folson, & Awuah, 2014).

Several factors have been found to account for this problem. One key problem which has been identified is the issue of resources in terms of textbooks and other stationery for academic purposes (Ampiah, 2008). There have been several attempts both at the national, regional and community levels to remedy the problem (Ampiah, 2008; Folsom, & Awuah, 2014). One popular response to this persistent academic underachievement is the provision of libraries where students in junior high school can access academic resources such as textbooks and other reading materials. Currently, in Ghana, public libraries are springing up, with every region having its regional library. Apart from this, some districts and communities have their libraries. Most public junior schools also try to create libraries and reading rooms for their students.

Most of the studies in Africa for instance concentrate on adult populations and undergraduate students (e.g. Namugera, 2014; Nzivo, 2012). The focus on Students at the lower levels of education is therefore not well-researched in Africa. Meanwhile, most of the problems of poor academic performance in Africa happens at the basic level of education, especially in public schools

(Ampiah, 2008). This study aims to investigate the attitudes and utilization of school libraries among students in certain public junior high schools in Accra, Ghana. Studies suggest that the utilization of library resources by individuals is influenced by various aspects, such as the availability and accessibility of resources, as well as their perceptions of the quality of library resources and services (Cook & Heath, 2019).

Despite these efforts, library use in Ghana is found to be poor, especially among junior high students (Folson, & Awuah, 2014). The limited utilization of libraries is primarily attributed to students' views rather than the mere presence of library resources (Maxwell & French, 2016). Perceptions people hold are very powerful because they affect how they relate to and use particular objects. In Ghana, research examining junior high school students' perceptions of libraries is limited.

The few studies that explore perceptions and use of libraries in Ghana have largely focused on undergraduate students (e.g. Larson & Owusu-Acheaw, 2012). The research done at the pre-tertiary level in Ghana specifically targets adolescents in senior high schools. These investigations, carried out by Buabeng-Andoh and Issifu in 2015, aim to examine the adolescents' perspectives on the integration of information communication technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process. Although these studies have generated intriguing and perceptive results, they cannot be considered representative of the overall situation among students in junior high schools, especially in public schools where there is typically a lack of sufficient library facilities and resources (Ampiah, 2008). Because of this, there is a lack of in-depth understanding of the various ways of boosting library use among Students in public junior high schools. This study specifically targets this group of students to gain a comprehensive comprehension of their perspectives and utilization of library resources and services inside their educational institutions.

The current study contributes to building knowledge on this problem by empirically assessing the perceptions that Students in public junior high school students hold about libraries and how it affects the way they use libraries. This provides in-depth knowledge into the various perceptions that the students hold about libraries so that measures can be put in place to encourage library use among them which will invariably contribute to raising their academic performance.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To find out the extent of library use by junior high school Students in Accra.
2. To examine the purpose for which junior high school Students patronize their school libraries.
3. To examine the perceptions that junior high school pupil has about their school library staff.

III. THEORETICAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on what has been done concerning library perceptions and usage among students. The theoretical framework that organizes the study is first presented. After that, previous empirical studies in the subject area are presented.

A. Theoretical Framework

Studies that examine perceptions and use of library resources use the Library Service Quality (LibQual) model as a framework for explaining why people use library resources and services (e.g. Cook & Heath, 2001; Wei, Thompson & Cook, 2005). The LibQual model assumes that different factors influence people's use of library resources, the most important being their perceptions (Cook & Heath, 2001). The perceptions usually border on the resources in the library as well as the services they reserve from librarians (Wei *et al.*, 2005). The argument is that when people have positive perceptions about library resources, their frequency and intensity of usage of library resources increase (Cook & Heath, 2001). The LibQual model has been used to study library use and perceptions among adults. In this study, the model was used to study the phenomenon among Students in selected public junior high schools in Accra.

In addressing the first research objective, the LibQual model's component of "Tangibles" plays a pivotal role. Tangibles encompass the physical aspects of library services, including the accessibility of resources and facilities. By applying the LibQual model to this objective, we can assess the tangible elements of the library that influence the extent of its use by junior high school Students. Questions related to the availability of resources, ease of access, and overall comfort within the library environment will be crucial in understanding how tangible factors impact library utilization.

The second objective aligns with the LibQual model's "Responsiveness" component. Responsiveness refers to the willingness of library staff to help users and their ability to provide individualized attention. To explore the purposes for which Students patronize their school libraries, it is essential to delve into the responsiveness of library staff. Questions focusing on the assistance provided by library staff, their ability to address specific needs, and the overall responsiveness to the diverse purposes of library visits will shed light on the alignment between library services and the varied needs of junior high school Students.

The third objective directly relates to the LibQual model's overarching goal of assessing "Reliability." Reliability in this context involves the dependability and consistency of library services. Examining the perceptions junior high school Students have about their school library staff involves exploring the reliability of the staff in meeting the expectations and needs of the Students. Questions focused

on the consistency of service, trustworthiness of information provided, and overall satisfaction with the reliability of library staff will contribute to understanding the perceived reliability of the school library staff.

B. Review of Related Studies

This subsection of the literature review examines the results of prior research that has investigated individuals' attitudes and usage of school libraries. The review is structured based on the underlying themes of the research inquiries. Nevertheless, according to the theoretical framework, the examination of perceptions and utilization of libraries is always conducted in conjunction. Thus, the theme of 'Perceptions and Utilization of School Library' is used to examine the objectives, perceptions, and utilization of school libraries. Furthermore, the subsequent obstacles encountered by kids in utilizing the school library are also outlined.

C. Extent and Purpose of Library Use among Students

The current literature exhibits a notable dearth of research studies focusing on the viewpoints and utilization of library resources from the standpoint of children. Among some of the earlier studies involving children's library use, Morrow and Weinstein (1986) in an experimental study of different dynamics of encouraging voluntary readings by increasing children's use of library centres through the use of literature programs. They found that free-choice time in school encouraged the use of the library more both at home and in school. Also, girls were found to engage in more library reading and activities than boys. Neuman and Celano (2001) have also reported that children in low and middle-income countries have very minimal use of library facilities both in school and at home.

During the early 1900s, studies on the way people perceive and utilize library resources primarily concentrated on adults, particularly college students. The majority of this research predominantly indicates that individuals' perceptions of libraries significantly impact their utilization of library resources. Dahan, Taib, Zainudin, and Ismail (2016) conducted a study to examine the attitudes toward academic library services among 382 undergraduate students in Malasia.

In a study conducted by Namugera (2014), the author interviewed a total of 94 persons to evaluate their awareness, perceptions, and utilization of Makere library services in South Africa. She discovered that the bulk of the users were undergraduate students who expressed that the services provided there are of exceptional quality. Consequently, individuals with elevated consciousness and favourable attitudes indicated a greater frequency of library usage.

In 2012, Nzivo was surveyed to assess the perception of Kenyan users on the services and information resources

offered by public libraries. A total of 112 people were included in the survey. He found that the participants had a positive view of public library services, which exceeded their perception of school libraries. The participants reported greater usage of public library and information resources services in comparison to the ones offered at their universities.

Ekere, Omekwu & Nwoha (2016) assessed the perceptions towards the facilities, resources, and services offered by the MTN digital library in Nigeria. A sample of 196 persons, who were registered users of the digital library, participated in the study. Questionnaires were distributed to these individuals. Participants reported increased satisfaction with the library due to the availability of diverse resources, including books, computers, and internet access.

In Ghana, Larson and Owusu-Acheaw (2012) did a study to examine the degree of contentment among undergraduate students at the University of Education about the materials available in the library. The study included a group of 454 students from 9 different departments. It was found that although students expressed contentment with library services, additional enhancements were required in terms of resources. The students observed that the issue of inadequate resources impeded their capacity to efficiently utilize the library.

Buabeng-Andoh and Issifu (2015) conducted a study in Ghana to examine the students' perception of the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) in their learning at senior high schools. The study included a total of 3380 students from 24 different public and private schools located in four geographical regions of Ghana. The study revealed that while students had a positive perception of ICT, they expressed concerns about the financial implications of utilizing ICT in their academic performance. Consequently, they indicated a lack of willingness to engage in ICT-assisted learning. Male students exhibited a more favourable perception of ICT compared to their female counterparts.

D. Perceptions and Challenges of Using School Library

Research has focused on the issues encountered by library users, particularly in developing nations. The results from multiple sets of research reveal that the limits involve a diverse range of challenges, including structural considerations, resource constraints, and behavioural barriers.

Agyekum and Filson (2012) conducted a study in Ghana to investigate the difficulties encountered by school libraries after the implementation of the New Educational Reforms. The study identified substantial structural barriers that impede the effective utilization of school libraries. There has been no notable progress in the delivery of school library services in Ghana after the implementation of the new educational reforms. Ghanaian libraries have

substantial challenges, such as insufficient financing, unqualified library staff, and subpar facilities, among other concerns. Similar outcomes have been recorded in other African countries. A supplementary investigation conducted by Benard and Dulle (2014) explored the accessibility and usage of library information resources among secondary school students in Morogoro Municipal, Tanzania. Evidence demonstrated that secondary school students face multiple constraints when utilizing the school library. The issues mentioned encompass the absence of contemporary and recently updated reading resources, limited reading hours, insufficient seating arrangements, and the absence of an informed professional or librarian to handle the processing of materials.

In Nigeria, the obstacles are indiscernible. Owate and Iroha (2013) investigated the availability and utilization of school library resources among secondary school students. The study involved a collective of eight high schools located in Rivers State, Nigeria. The selection of schools was based on their performance in external evaluations and their proximity in terms of location. The survey indicated that library services in all schools were inadequate, and none of the secondary schools met the necessary standards for creating libraries at the secondary level. The allocation of spaces for the library resulted in restricted resources, both in terms of number and inadequate arrangement, which hindered the efficient delivery of library and information services.

The survey found that instructors do not use the school libraries because of several barriers to the delivery of library services. Several challenges mentioned include spatial constraints impeding the libraries' capacity to provide pertinent information services, antiquated and inadequate information collections, books that are inadequately catalogued or organized, inconvenient operating hours, and a dearth of funds and networked computers.

IV. METHODS OF THE STUDY

A. Research Design: The study used a quantitative approach. The adoption of quantitative research design was because it allows one to collect data in large numbers so that results can be generalized. Specifically, a cross-sectional survey (a research tool used to capture information based on data gathered for a specific point in time) was used to collect self-reported data from participants. The use of the survey method provides an advantage of capturing a large sample of employees for the study which helps to generalise the findings.

B. Selection of Cases: The two schools that were used for the study were selected based on two reasons. The first reason was that each of the two schools had access to libraries. The second reason for the selection of the schools was based on the willingness of the schools to participate. Most of the schools visited either turned down the request or were still constructing their libraries. The University of

Ghana Basic School and the Kwabeya Cluster of Schools were willing to be part of the study and also had libraries. These two reasons informed why the two schools were selected.

C. Research Setting: The study was conducted among Students in Junior High Schools in the Accra Metropolitan Assembly of the Greater Accra region. Specifically, the study was conducted among Students in the University of Ghana Basic School and Kwabenya Cluster of Schools.

D. University of Ghana Basic School: The University of Ghana Primary School is located on the campus of the University of Ghana. It was established in 1955 to educate the children of university faculty and staff. The school has a population of about two thousand two hundred (2,200) Students (University of Ghana Annual Report, 2012).

My interactions with the head teacher showed that the school is organized into four houses; Primary (P), J.H.S., Secondary (S), and University (U). There is a broad curriculum at all levels in the school. Students in the lower school study about ten subjects including a local language and French and students in upper school can expect to study at least twelve subjects including a local language and French. The school is in Ghanaian terms a relatively old school and as a result has many traditions such as Friday morning spelling bees and math quizzes for Students in the lower school. At the end of every academic year, students with the strongest results are awarded prizes at a ceremony held in the school's great hall. My interactions with the teachers revealed that the school library is well structured and it is available to serve all levels of classes in the school. It holds enough materials to support academic work. Students are encouraged to make use of the library all the time. The library was established by the school itself. They acquire materials for the library through purchasing, donations, and sometimes from their Parent University.

E. Kwabenya Cluster of Schools: The school library is regarded to be one of the best libraries in the Dome Kwabenya municipality. The library is a modern type of library constructed in the year 2013, by the minister of communications and Member of Parliament for Dome Kwabenya district, Professor Mike Oquaye. According to the Librarian, Mrs Tetteh, Professor Mike Oquaye had to set aside GH¢ 600 million from his share of the MPs Common Fund to start the project. The library also contains a well-equipped ICT laboratory that most students also make use of to have a practical feel of their class lessons. The library contains well-selected materials and I understand the source is from Belgium by Mr. Agyako William who shared an interest in the success of the library. He is a librarian in Belgium.

F. Population of the Study: The population for this study therefore consist of all junior high school Students in these two specific schools that were selected for the study. Information from the head teachers of the two selected

schools shows that the University of Ghana Basic School has a population of about 120 junior high school Students and the Kwabenya Cluster of Schools of schools also has a population of about 300 junior high school Students. Therefore, putting the two schools together, the estimated population of the study was about 420 Students.

G. Sample Size and Sampling Technique: A total of one hundred and fifty (150) JHS Students were selected for the study. In selecting the targeted sample size, the non-probability sampling technique was used. Specifically, the convenience sampling technique was used to select the participants for the study. Participants were selected based on their availability and voluntary participation. This sampling technique was used for the study because it was easy to carry out with few rules governing how the sample was collected.

H. Measures for Data Collection: Data for the study was gathered using standardized questionnaires. The questionnaires used for data collection contained questions that covered different areas such as the purpose of library use, perceptions of the school library, etc. The questions were measured on a five-point scale which mainly 1= Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Somehow 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree.

V. SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The scope of study encompasses library use and perceptions in general. However, the current study is limited to Students in junior high schools in Ghana. The study was limited to only public junior high schools in the district. The study examines the perspectives and opinions of these Students concerning the perceptions they have about their school library, their usage of the library and the problems they face when using the school library.

A. Procedure for Data Collection: The study began by first obtaining an introductory letter from the Department of Information Studies to the selected schools to seek permission to conduct the study. After that, the questionnaire for the study was distributed to the students.

VI. DATA ANALYSES

The responses that were provided on the questionnaire by the 150 Students served as the data for the study. The data was analyzed with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. In each of the research questions, the data was analyzed by ranking the factors based on the scores. The factors that are examined were ranked to identify the factors that the Students consider as most important to those they consider as least important. In order to do this, the data was analyzed using the Friedman test. It does so by comparing the mean scores and the standard deviation to rank the variables. The test is used when the intention is to arrange several variables based on their importance or rank (Pallant, 2010).

A. Ethical Consideration: The ethical standards of privacy, confidentiality and informed consent were strictly adhered to by the ethical principles governing the use of human participants for research purposes. Permission was first sought from the management of the schools before data collection began. Informed consent was also sought from participants before being included in the study. The researcher also ensured a high sense of confidentiality and anonymity by making sure the data was collected in such a way that the identities of the respondents were protected at all times and that no information was directly traced or associated with any individual participant. With this, no names or codes traceable to the respondents were used.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings derived from the inquiry. The initial presentation centres on the demographic characteristics of the individuals. Following that, the results obtained from the analysis carried out for each of the study's goals are presented.

A. Demographic Characteristics: This section provides an overview of the demographic traits of the 150 students who were chosen for the study, as shown in Table I. Table I indicates that the respondents were predominantly female (66.7%), with the balance being male (33.3%). In terms of distribution, the majority (62.7%) of the Students were from the University of Ghana Basic School and the rest (37.3%) were from the Kwabenya Cluster of Schools. The majority of the children (60.7%) were in JHS 2, while a smaller proportion (33.3%) were in JHS 1. A small percentage (6.0%) were in JHS 3. The students' ages ranged from 10 to 18 years. The bulk, comprising 78.7%, fell between the age range of 10 to 14 years.

B. Frequency and Time of Library Use

The primary aim of the study investigate the frequency and duration of library utilization by the students. Neuman and Celano (2001) contend that children in poor and middle-income nations have limited access to library resources, both in educational institutions and within their households. However, the frequency of library use among children in sub-Saharan Africa for instance is rarely examined. This objective was therefore examined to give empirical evidence about the frequency and the time of library use among basic school Students in Ghana. The findings of the analyses are presented in Table II.

According to the data presented in Table II, the study's findings indicate that the students utilize the school library regularly. The biggest percentage was comprised of individuals who utilize the library daily, accounting for 29.3%. They were followed by those who use libraries weekly (28.7%), monthly users (18.0%), and termly users (20.0%). Only a small minority of the students (6.0%) reported never utilizing the school library.

TABLE I DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	50	33.3
	Female	100	66.7
School	University of Ghana Basic School	94	62.7
	Kwabinya Cluster of School	56	37.3
Class	JHS 1	50	33.3
	JHS 2	91	60.7
	JHS 3	9	6.0
Age	10 TO 14	118	78.7
	15 TO 20	32	21.3

Regarding library usage patterns, the vast majority of students (91.6%) reported utilizing the library during their designated break periods. A majority of the students (51.3%) reported utilizing the library during the first break, while 39.3% mentioned using it during the second break. Only a few of them (9.3%) indicated that they use the library in the early mornings.

TABLE II FREQUENCY AND TIME OF LIBRARY USE AMONG THE STUDENTS

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Frequency of Library use	Never	6	4.0
	Once A Term	30	20.0
	Monthly	27	18.0
	Weekly	43	28.7
	Daily	44	29.3
Time of Library Use	Early Morning	14	9.3
	During First Break	77	51.3
	During Second Break	59	39.3

C. Purpose of School Library Use

The study’s second objective investigate the reasons why students frequented their school libraries. Prior research has indicated that kids have varying motives for using school libraries, and some students do not properly utilize the library. Moruf (2015) has documented that kids did not make efficient use of school libraries. However, the reasons for which Students in basic schools use the library have not been empirically examined in Ghana. This objective of the study therefore fills this gap in literature.

The students were instructed to evaluate, using a five-point Likert scale that spans from strongly agree to strongly disagree, the factors that motivate their frequent visits to the school library. The smallest attainable score for each was 1 (indicating significant disagreement), while the greatest attainable score was 5 (indicating strong agreement). The findings are succinctly presented in Table III.

As shown in Table III, the mean scores concerning the reasons for which the Students use school libraries differed. Visiting the school library to read library books recorded the highest mean score (M = 2.41, SD = 1.14), followed by visiting the school library to read their books (M = 2.24, SD = 1.26). Borrowing books from the library (M = .92, SD = 1.18) and reading newspapers at the library recorded the lowest mean scores (M = .38, SD = .83) respectively.

The investigations indicate that the primary motive for students utilizing the school library is to engage in reading the books available inside its premises. Subsequently, one engages in activities such as perusing the library’s collection, consulting reference materials, utilizing the library for recreational purposes, completing assignments, borrowing books, and sequentially accessing newspapers.

TABLE III DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF SCORES ON PURPOSE OF SCHOOL LIBRARY USE

Purpose	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Visit the library to read books at the library	150	2.41	1.14
Borrow books from the library	150	.92	1.18
Visit the library to read your books	150	2.24	1.26
Visit the library to use reference materials	150	1.77	1.26
Go to the library to do your assignment	150	1.37	1.37
Visit the library to read newspapers	150	.38	.83
Visit the library for leisure	150	1.63	1.47

D. Perceptions of School Library Staff

The study’s third purpose focused on analyzing the children’s perceptions of their school library workers. Previous studies indicate that perceptions of library staff constitute a very important reason why people choose to either patronize libraries or where they have options, which libraries to patronize. In low and middle-income countries, there is a shortage of professional librarians, so people’s perceptions of library staff are found to be less positive because non-professional librarians are not able to provide good services (Sandhu *et al.*, 2014). However, empirical

studies have not examined the perceptions of basic school Students about their school library staff. The students were instructed to assess their happiness with various features of the school library’s staff using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

The lowest attainable score for each item was 1 (indicating significant disagreement), while the highest attainable score was 5 (indicating strong agreement). A greater score denoted an elevated degree of contentment, whereas a lesser score suggested a diminished level of pleasure with the library personnel. The findings are succinctly presented in Table IV.

Table IV illustrates that there were variations in the average scores regarding many areas of perceptions of school library

workers. The librarians who provided instruction on efficiently utilizing library resources achieved the highest average score (M = 3.35, SD = 1.53), followed by the librarians who consistently demonstrated a willingness to assist (M = 2.95, SD = 1.41), and those who were prepared to answer students’ inquiries (M = 2.90, SD = 1.43), among others.

The results suggest that students are more content with the willingness of their school librarians to instruct them on the proper utilization of library resources. This is followed by the librarians always being willing to help Students, the staff being consistently courteous etc. Even though aspects like the librarian dealing with students in a caring fashion ranked last, the score on the mean rank is not all that low.

TABLE IV DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL LIBRARY STAFF

Particulars	N	Mean	SD	Min.	Max.
The workers in the library are consistently courteous	150	2.81	1.43	1.00	5.00
They are always ready to respond to students’ questions	150	2.90	1.43	1.00	5.00
The library staff instil confidence in the students	150	2.75	1.34	1.00	5.00
The librarians are always willing to help students	150	2.95	1.41	1.00	5.00
The librarian deals with students in a caring fashion	150	2.57	1.36	1.00	5.00
Librarians teach me how to effectively use the resources at the library	150	3.35	1.53	1.00	5.00

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

According to the data presented in Table II, the study reveals that the students utilize the school library regularly. The biggest percentage of library users consists of those who utilize the library daily, accounting for 29.3%. They are followed by individuals who visit libraries weekly (28.7%), monthly (18.0%), and once each academic term (20.0%). Only a small minority of the students (6.0%) reported never utilizing the school library. Regarding library usage patterns, the vast majority of students (91.6%) reported utilizing the library during their designated break time. A majority of the students (51.3%) reported utilizing the library during the first break, while 39.3% of them reported using the library during the second break. Merely a small fraction (9.3%) reported using the library throughout the early hours of the morning. The current study’s findings challenge the arguments put out by certain researchers (e.g. Neuman & Celano, 2001).

The increased frequency of library utilization among the current sample of students could be attributed to the schools chosen for the study. The University Oo Ghana Basic School is a department of the prestigious University of Ghana, specifically designed to provide primary education. The Kwabenya Cluster of Schools is also located right in the centre of the Ga East Municipality. Because of these, the schools are patronized by Students whose parents have a high level of educational background. Each of the schools therefore has school libraries, which is not the situation of basic schools in the country (Agyekum & Filson, 2012).

Therefore, the assessment of the frequency of library use among Students in Ghana in particular, and in sub-Saharan Africa, in general, might depend on factors such as where the school is located, as in urban area or rural areas, availability of libraries in the schools assessed and more importantly, educational level of the parents of the Students in question.

The study examined the purpose for which the Students patronized their school libraries. Some previous studies have reported that the reasons for which students utilize school libraries differ and that some students do not utilize the library effectively. Moruf (2015) for instance have reported that school libraries were not utilized effectively by students. However, the reasons for which Students in basic schools use the library have not been empirically examined in Ghana. This objective of the study therefore fills this gap in literature.

As shown in Table III, the mean scores concerning the reasons for which the Students use school libraries differed. Visiting the school library to read library books recorded the highest mean score (M = 2.41, SD = 1.14), followed by visiting the school library to read their books (M = 2.24, SD = 1.26). Borrowing books from the library (M = .92, SD = 1.18) and reading newspapers at the library recorded the lowest mean scores (M = .38, SD = .83) respectively. Some studies (e.g. Buabeng-Andoh & Issifu, 2015; Ekere *et al.*, 2016) indicate that visiting school libraries to use internet services is the topmost purpose for going to the library among university students. However, findings from this

study show that visiting the school library to read remains the dominant purpose of using school libraries among basic Students. The reason might be because, in Ghana, there are hardly school libraries connected to the internet in basic schools. Therefore, the fundamental functions served by school libraries in basic schools are to offer opportunities for reading and doing other academic work like school assignments. Thus, reading constitutes the dominant purpose of school library use among junior high school Students.

The third objective of the study examined the perceptions the Students have about their school library staff. Previous studies indicate that perceptions of library staff constitute a very important reason why people choose to either patronize libraries or where they have options, which libraries to patronize. In low and middle-income countries, there is a shortage of professional librarians, so people's perceptions of library staff are found to be less positive because non-professional librarians are not able to provide good services (Sandhu *et al.*, 2014). However, empirical studies have not examined the perceptions of basic school Students about their school library staff. The students were instructed to assess their happiness with various features of the school library's staff using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. As shown in Table IV, the mean scores concerning different aspects of perceptions of school library staff differed. Librarians teaching them how to use library resources effectively recorded the highest mean score ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.53$), followed by librarians always being willing to help ($M = 2.95$, $SD = 1.41$), being ready to respond to Students' questions ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.43$) etc. Thus, the findings mean that the Students largely have very positive perceptions about the staff in their school libraries.

These findings confirm some earlier studies (e.g. Dahan *et al.*, 2016) that show that some students are very satisfied with the services provided by the staff in their school library. However, other studies that are largely conducted among the general public or university students mostly show that there are less favourable perceptions about library staff in their schools. Nzivo (2012) has documented a decrease in satisfaction among university students in Kenya on the services offered by the workers at their school libraries. The findings being observed in the current study might be explained by the fact that the Students did not want to evaluate the staff in their school library negatively. Or that the library staff treats the Students very well and so the Students have very positive perceptions about the staff. Either way, the positive perceptions of the Students about the staff in their library means that the Students will develop a high interest in using the school library.

IX. RECOMMENDATIONS

The current study suggests that the next research should prioritize investigating library utilization among students in primary schools in Ghana. This discrepancy arises mostly

due to the conflicting results observed in the present study compared to previous research on library utilization among university students, high school students, and the general population. For example, contrary to the report of some studies (e.g. Buabeng-Andoh & Issifu, 2015; Ekere *et al.*, 2016) visiting school libraries to use Internet services is the topmost purpose for going to the library among university students. However, findings from this study show that visiting the school library to read remains the dominant purpose of using school libraries among basic Students.

A research focus on library use at the basic school level is important because it constitutes the formative years of education and therefore their library use and experiences are more likely to have lasting consequences on them even when they reach the university level. More studies are therefore recommended to look at basic schools in rural and pre-urban areas.

It is necessary to undertake comparative research on library utilization and views among students residing in both urban and rural locations. Such comparative studies would help to provide an understanding of the library needs among Students in rural and urban areas. When deeper understanding is provided based on empirical data, then more effective interventions can be developed to target library use at the basic school level. It is also recommended that policymakers take a very critical consideration in the outcomes of research being conducted in the areas of education. This in one way or the other will contribute to effective decision making leading to the formulation and implementation of good policies.

Librarians especially at the school libraries are encouraged to build their libraries with adequate and current materials to serve the needs of students in the use of the library which is to read materials. School librarians should have a good relationship with the Students so that they feel comfortable when they visit the School library.

X. CONCLUSION

On the whole, the current study has provided some level of understanding concerning library perceptions and use among students in junior high schools in Accra, specifically, and by extension, in Ghana. The study has shown that the students have a high level of library use and hold very positive perceptions about their librarians. Reading at the library constitutes a dominant reason for which students utilize their school library. This reading includes reading library books, their own books at the library, and/or reference materials in the library.

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