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Lilli-Anna Baca
John Brown University

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The Effect of Library Orientation on Library Knowledge



Lilli-Anna Baca, Student
John Brown University

ABSTRACT

Previous research shows that the anxiety of not knowing how to use the library is a major factor in the decline in library attendance. In this study, the hypothesis was that the knowledge and attitude of students who participated in the library orientation would positively increase. A survey was emailed to 150 students of John Brown University (JBU) measuring their pre and post library orientation knowledge and attitudes of the library. The results of the study showed an increase in library knowledge, $t(53) = -10.01, p = 0.007, d = 7.33$, an increase in confidence in using the library, $t(53) = -8.73, p < .001, d = 1.71$, and increased comfort in asking library staff for help, $t(53) = -4.97, p < 0.001, d = 1.81$. The results of this study confirm previous research showing that with greater library knowledge comes more comfort in the library and a stronger perception of the helpfulness of library staff.

For some, the library is a quiet place to study and seek out resources for learning. Although the library serves many academic purposes, there seems to be increasing anxiety associated with library use. The term *library anxiety*, coined by Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1998), describes a condition of students who lack a working knowledge of the library.

The recent development of the library anxiety phenomenon has caused researchers to look into the components of such a theory. As Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1998) discovered, there are five main components to library anxiety. There are “barriers of staff, affective barriers, comfort of library, knowledge of library, and mechanical barriers” (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1998, p. 365). Each component deals with the student’s perception of the library. If students feel ignored by the staff or they feel incompetent in using the resources, they will have a greater sense of anxiety. The more inviting the atmosphere of the library is, the less anxiety the student feels. The most important component of library anxiety is knowledge of the library. The more students know about the library, the more comfortable they feel (Carlile, 2007). With greater confidence, students will frequently visit the library and take advantage of the resources.

Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1998) found a correlation between perfectionism and library anxiety. The significant result found in their study was the influence of socially prescribed perfectionism on library anxiety. Those driven by social pressures tend to have great anxiety when it comes to using the library (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1998). The student perceives pressure from peers, superiors, and staff to have a working knowledge of the library. When students lack knowledge, they tend to avoid using the library as an act of evading failure. The most common group that deals with social pressure to succeed is younger students with less experience in the library (Carlile, 2007).

The trend of general library anxiety along with lower library use among students led Haddow and Joseph (2010) to look at library use and dropout rates among incoming students. They compared the online login rates, use of library resources, and school attendance of a group of university students (Haddow & Joseph, 2010). They found that those who frequented the library or its online sources tended to stay in school longer. One of the most significant aspects of their study is the effectiveness of early programs to educate students on the library (Haddow & Joseph, 2010). Being better equipped seems to relate to higher success in the classroom along with investment in a prolonged academic career.

In a study by Fatt Choy (2010), the solution to the lack of library use and heightened anxiety is a four-part model. The four components to library success are “convenience, attention, awareness, and perception” (Choy, 2010, p. 71). The first aspect of library use is the convenience of materials. In the world today, students expect instant gratification. The more available the resources, the more likely people will be to seek them out (Hardesty, 1982). For convenience to be known there has to be attention given to the resources. Sadly, as Choy remarks, “it is not uncommon to hear users expressing surprise at the wealth of library resources and services after their first instructional class;” hence, a “comprehensive strategy for the promotion and marketing of resources and services is essential to every academic library” (2010, p. 68). The last two components are interrelated. A student not only needs to be aware of the materials available, but also needs to perceive them as helpful.

Research points to a need to promote the library to prevent library anxiety among incoming students. The more knowledge students possess, the more confidently they will use the library (Cleveland, 2004). One way to proactively increase library knowledge is by requiring a library orientation class for all students. The current study looks at the pre and post knowledge and attitudes of those who participated in a library orientation session. The hypothesis of this study is that knowledge and attitude of the library will improve from pre orientation to post orientation.

Method

Participants

A sample of 250 John Brown University (JBU) students received an email to take the online survey before and after the library orientation. The sample was chosen from the Old Testament classes. There was a total of 150 students who participated by completing both the pretest and posttest survey. For the study to have an 80 percent chance of finding an effect of a dependent *t*-test there would need to be 34 participants.

Materials

Participants took a 17 question survey dealing with library knowledge, attitudes towards the library, and their experiences in the library of JBU. The survey was given to the students to evaluate their pre library orientation and post orientation knowledge. Other questions contained in the survey gave the library information to improve the efficiency of its services. The survey can be viewed at appendix A.

Procedure

The Old Testament students of JBU received an email to take an online survey before and after participating in a library orientation class. The email they received informed the students of the nature of the study and the completion of the survey conveyed their informed consent.

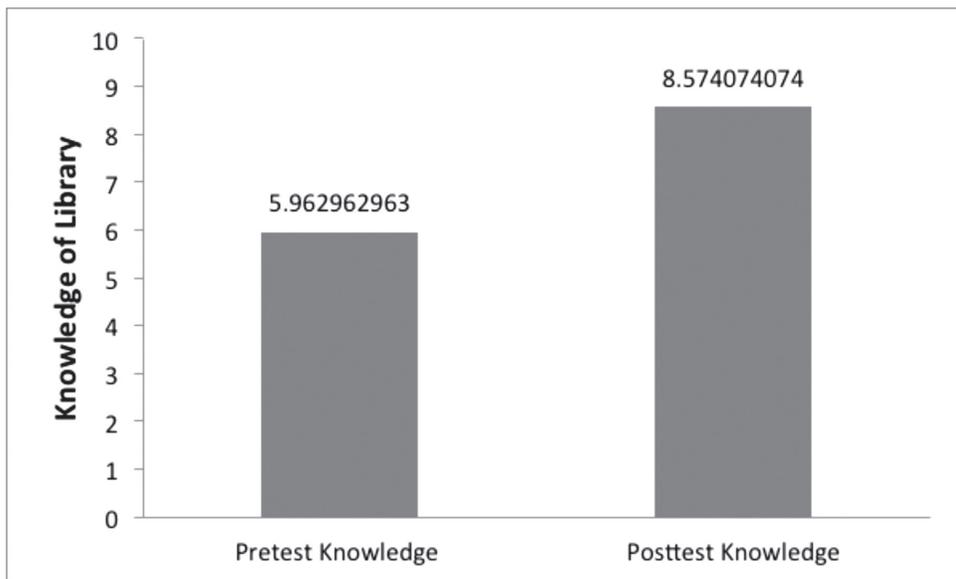


Figure 1. Library knowledge scores increased from pre library orientation session (LOS) to the post group.

Results

For this study, multiple *t*-tests were conducted to measure library orientation session (LOS) effectiveness, student comfort in the library, and the confidence of students in using library resources. For the first *t*-test, the answers to the first four questions of the survey were added up to a possible 10 out of 10. The scores of the pre orientation session were compared to post orientation scores through paired, one-tailed *t*-tests. The use of dependent, one-tailed *t*-tests was due to the directionality of the hypothesis and the analysis of repeated measure of the sample.

For overall knowledge of the library (Figure 1) the post LOS group scored higher than the pre LOS group with significant results supported by the *p*-value, $t(53) = -10.01, p = 0.007, d = 7.33$.

The second *t*-test performed with a significant *p*-value found that those who attended the LOS reported higher confidence in finding library resources after the LOS compared to before the LOS (Figure 2) $t(53) = -8.73, p < .001, d = 1.71$.

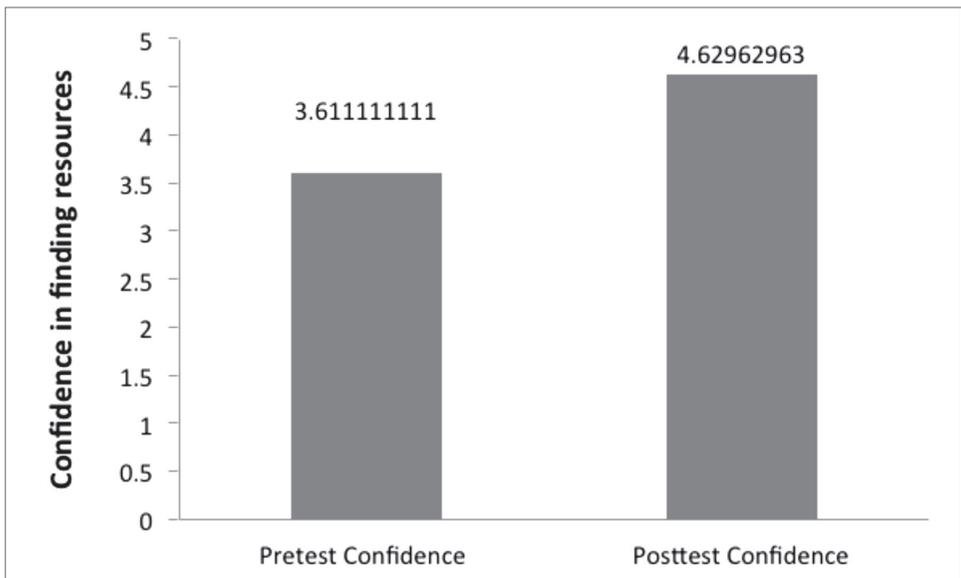


Figure 2. Those who participated scored their confidence of library resources higher after library orientation session.

Lastly, there was a higher mean score on comfort in asking for help for those who attended the LOS compared to those who had not taken the LOS (Figure 3) $t(53) = -4.97, p < 0.001, d = 1.81$.

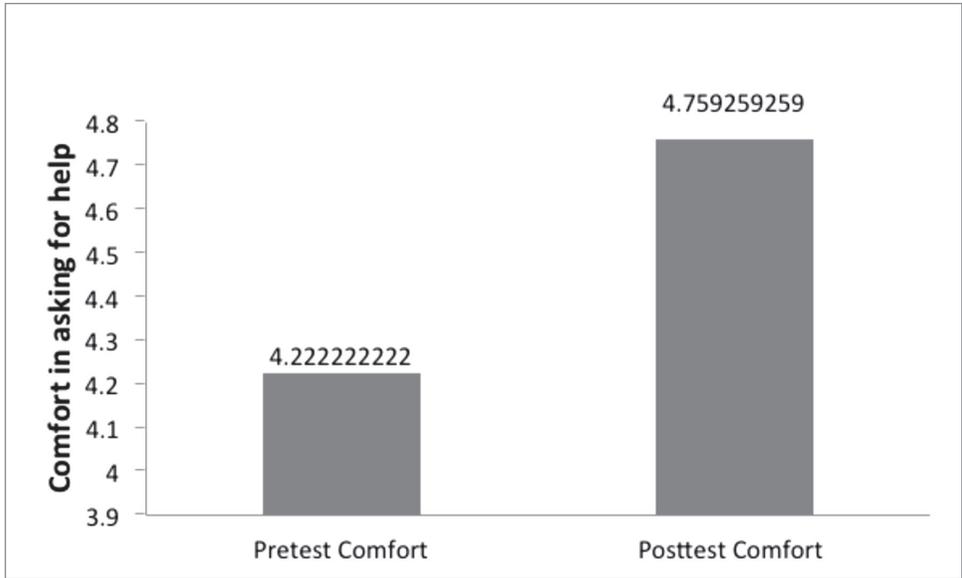


Figure 3. Students rated themselves more comfortable with asking for help in the library after the library orientation session.

In addition, each test had a large effect size indicating a large difference between the mean scores of pre and post LOS groups.

Discussion

The hypothesis that library knowledge and attitudes would increase after the library orientation session (LOS) was supported by the positive increase in library knowledge, confidence in resources, and comfort of asking for help. The large sample of students and accuracy of the survey facilitated the significant results.

As Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1998) found, students who have anxiety about using library resources tend to avoid asking for help in the library. When a student does not have the confidence to work in the library and use its resources, they do not benefit from the vast array of available materials. Not only do the students' internal ideas of the library affect their desire to use it, but social pressures also influence knowledge of the library. A student who feels external pressure to perform will be less likely to ask for help in the library even if they are unsure of what to do (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1998). Students would rather lack knowledge of resources than reach out to the personnel. Part of this fear of asking for help is how the library staff is perceived. If they are seen as harsh and unwelcoming, a student will not feel

confident and comfortable in the library. A positive perception of the library can encourage student usage and the overall achievement of students. As Haddow and Joseph (2010) found, the more students use the library, the better they do in school and the longer they stay in school.

As research shows, the more confident a student is in their knowledge of the library and the more comfortable they are with asking for help in the library, the more likely they will succeed in their academic career. These ideas are supported by the current research results. When the test scores of the students' knowledge, confidence, and comfort before the library orientation session were compared to their posttest scores, there was an increase in library knowledge and positive attitudes toward the library. In application, these results tell of the importance of early induction into a library orientation class. Before the class, the LOS students were not confident in their ability to use the library. They responded with less comfort in talking to the library workers and the students did not know what the library offered as resources. The increase in knowledge positively correlated with the increase of confidence and comfort after the LOS.

The results of this study and others that deal with library effectiveness seem to indicate that classes on the library better equip students for their academic careers. For future research, the usefulness of LOS with younger students would be insightful, as most research has looked at undergraduate and graduate level library use. With younger generations being introduced to technology, it would be helpful to get them oriented with the library at younger levels to better foster library confidence and combat increasing library anxiety (Carlile, 2007).

Although the current research was conducted with a large sample allowing variance and reliability, there could be some confounding variables. One could be the retesting of the students. Because of the nature of the pretest and posttest of this study, each student received the same test twice. The previous encounter with the test could have interfered with truthful answering after the LOS in fear of being wrong. As was mentioned previously, those who suffer most from library anxiety tend to have perfectionist tendencies (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 1998). These tendencies can influence how a person answers questions when they feel under pressure. There can also be some researcher bias, as there was an expected increase of the scores from pre LOS to post. For future research, to account for such confounders, there could be different tests for the pre LOS and post LOS. There could also be an objective outside researcher to collect the data and conduct calculations.

The importance of library use is indicated by the expanse of research conducted in recent years on library anxiety. The new trend among students of avoiding the library out of fear or to avoid social shame is growing as seen in research. The belief that the library is old-fashioned and out of date has to be fought. Research

shows that when students discover the true potential of the library, they open up their abilities to achieve. The LOS here at JBU shows students that there are many different avenues to use library resources, not just checking out books. Along with learning about library resources, the LOS gives the student time to ask questions and build a rapport with the library personnel. Once students feel that they know the library workers, they will be more likely to ask for help to confidently do their projects. With knowledge comes power; therefore, more library knowledge increases the power of students to succeed academically. †

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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APPENDIX A

Survey of JBU Library Use

Informed Consent

You are being given the opportunity to volunteer to participate in a student research project conducted through John Brown University.

1. This survey inquires about student knowledge, attitudes, and experience with the JBU Library.
2. You were selected because you are enrolled in an Old Testament Survey course this semester.
3. Participation in this project involves filling out an online survey.
4. The survey will take five to ten minutes of your time. If this is too much of a time commitment, you may exit the survey now. There are no known risks that accompany the completion of this survey.
5. The survey is anonymous. Therefore, the data collected will never become personally identifiable.
6. Persons under the age of 18 should not participate in this study.
7. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from the University. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

If you decide to participate in the project, please sign this form. If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact Lilli-Anna Baca at baical@jbu.edu, Dr. Rick Froman at rfroman@jbu.edu, or the Chair of John Brown University's Institutional Review Board at (479) 524-7164.

I have been given information about this research and about any potential risks or benefits that may accompany my participation. I also have been given, and understand, my rights as a participant in this research. By completing this survey I give my consent to participate in this project.

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions as honestly and accurately as possible. Be sure to read through each question thoroughly before responding. Remember, this survey is anonymous, so there will be no way to match your responses to your identity. Your participation in this survey is greatly appreciated.

Knowledge of Library and Sources

1. Which type of source do professors prefer for most assignments? (Select One)
 - Popular Journals
 - Professional Journals
 - Scholarly Journals
2. What would you use to find both books and articles on the library homepage? (Select One)
 - JBU Catalog
 - Ebsco
 - SuperSearch
3. How many computers are in the library for students use? (Select One)
 - 12
 - 15
 - 20
 - 24
 - 30

4. Which opportunities exist for you to get help at the library? (Check all that apply)

Call
Text
IM
Email
Front desk
Help desk
By appointment

Attitudes Toward the Library

5. I feel confident that I can find what I need in the library.
(Answered on a 5-point scale, 1 being “disagree,” 5 being “agree”)
6. I feel comfortable asking a librarian for help.
(Answered on a 5-point scale, 1 being “disagree,” 5 being “agree”)

Experience in the Library

7. Have you been in the library to do research? (Yes/No)
8. If you have been in the library to do research:
Did you find what you needed/ were looking for? (Yes/No)
Did you ask for help? (Yes/No)
9. If you asked for help:
Those working in the library were approachable.
(Answered on a 5-point scale, 1 being “disagree,” 5 being “agree”)
10. Those working in the library were helpful.
(Answered on a 5-point scale, 1 being “disagree,” 5 being “agree”)
11. Have you ever used the library study rooms? (Yes/No)
12. What other services or resources would you like to be made available in the library?
(Open Question)
13. What would you like to see covered in the library orientation session? (Open Question)
14. Have you attended one of the library orientation sessions given in your Old Testament class?
(Yes/No)

JBU Student ID#:

Number of semesters you have attended JBU (including this one).