

ROLE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN SUPPORTING STUDENT LEARNING AND RESEARCH (A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL POLYTECHNIC ILARO, OGUN STATE)

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ABSTRACT: Academic libraries play an indispensable role in students' academic development and research advancement in higher education institutions. This study examines the contributions of academic libraries toward enhancing student learning and academic performance, using Ilaro Federal Polytechnic as a case study. The research specifically aims to (i) examine how academic libraries enhance student learning and academic performance, (ii) explore their contribution to undergraduate and postgraduate research, (iii) assess their role in fostering information literacy skills among students, and (iv) identify the challenges they face in delivering effective services. A descriptive survey research design was employed, and a structured questionnaire was distributed to 85 students, professional librarians, and paraprofessionals selected through simple random sampling. The collected data were analyzed using frequency tables, percentages, and visual representations, such as pie charts. The findings revealed that academic libraries significantly contribute to academic success by providing access to a wide range of print and digital resources, facilitating independent learning, offering research support services, and promoting critical thinking through library-based instruction. Moreover, libraries were found to play a key role in guiding students through the research process via workshops, consultations, and access to scholarly materials, thereby strengthening both undergraduate and postgraduate research. However, several challenges were identified, including erratic power supply, poor funding, limited access to information and communication technology tools, and inadequate staffing. These issues hamper academic libraries' optimal functioning. The study recommends increased budgetary support, better infrastructure, and regular staff development programs to enhance library effectiveness and support student success and research productivity.

KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries, Student Learning, Academic Performance, Research Development, Information Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Nigerian academic libraries are central to higher education, serving as critical hubs for fostering student learning and research by providing access to diverse resources, such as books, journals, and digital databases. These libraries have evolved significantly, transitioning from traditional print-based collections to dynamic

centers that integrate ICT to support academic activities (Arumuru, 2020). The adoption of information and communications technology (ICT) has enabled libraries to offer electronic resources, enhancing access to scholarly materials and aligning with global trends toward digital scholarship. This transformation is vital for supporting the academic community in Nigeria, where access to up-to-date resources is essential for quality education and research output (Bakare, 2023).

Open Educational Resources (OERs) have become increasingly important in Nigerian academic libraries, addressing challenges such as high costs and limited access to educational materials. OERs, such as open-access journals and lecture notes, provide cost-effective solutions for students and researchers (Akande & Popoola, 2022). However, studies reveal that awareness and adoption of OERs remain low, with many students and faculty underutilizing these resources due to inadequate promotion or access barriers (Oluwasanu et al., 2019). Thus, academic libraries are tasked with increasing advocacy and training to enhance OER utilization, ensuring equitable access to educational content for both on-campus and remote learners.

Digital literacy is a cornerstone of modern academic library services in Nigeria, as it equips students with the skills to navigate digital platforms and evaluate credible sources. Research highlights that libraries are implementing training programs to boost digital literacy; however, challenges such as limited infrastructure and insufficient ICT skills among librarians persist (Bakare, 2023). These programs are particularly crucial for tech-savvy undergraduates who rely on digital tools for SDL but may not fully engage with library resources due to skill gaps or lack of awareness (Arumuru, 2020). Strengthening digital literacy initiatives is essential to maximize the impact of library services on student learning outcomes.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift toward digital library services in Nigeria, with libraries adopting online platforms to support remote learning and research. This transition highlighted the importance of responsive digital infrastructure, such as user-friendly websites and social media engagement, to maintain service delivery (Okagbue et al., 2020). However, issues such as unreliable internet connectivity and power supply have limited the effectiveness of these efforts (Bakare, 2023). In a post-pandemic educational landscape, academic libraries must address these infrastructural challenges to ensure seamless access to resources, particularly for distance learners.

Despite their critical role, Nigerian academic libraries face significant obstacles, including inadequate funding, outdated facilities, and a shortage of skilled personnel (Akande & Popoola, 2022). These challenges contribute to underutilization of library resources, particularly among undergraduates, and hinder research productivity (Oluwasanu et al., 2019). To overcome these barriers, libraries are exploring innovative approaches, such as leveraging emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and forming public-private partnerships to enhance service delivery (Bakare, 2023). By addressing these challenges, academic libraries can reinforce their role as indispensable partners in advancing student learning and research in Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Objectives of the study

- i. To examine how academic libraries enhance student learning and academic performance.
- ii. To explore the contribution of academic libraries to higher education research development.
- iii. To assess the role of academic libraries in fostering information literacy among students.
- iv. To identify the challenges academic libraries face in supporting student learning and research

Research Questions

- i. How do academic libraries support student learning and academic achievement?
- ii. How do academic libraries contribute to undergraduate and postgraduate research activities?

- iii. What impact does library-led instruction have on students' information literacy skills?
- iv. What are the challenges academic libraries face in supporting student learning and research?

RELATED LITERATURE

The Role of Academic Libraries in Higher Education

Academic libraries in Nigeria have undergone a significant transformation, evolving from traditional repositories of print materials to dynamic hubs that support higher education through digital innovation and expanded services. The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) has redefined their role, enabling libraries to provide access to vast digital resources, including e-journals, databases, and open educational resources (OERs), which are critical for student learning and research (Arumuru, 2020). This shift has positioned libraries as facilitators of digital literacy, offering training to equip students and faculty with the skills to effectively navigate online platforms. Moreover, libraries are increasingly adopting emerging technologies, such as AI and cloud-based systems, to enhance resource accessibility and streamline services, ensuring that they meet the needs of a tech-savvy academic community (Bakare, 2023).

The changing educational landscape, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, has further accelerated the role of academic libraries as essential partners in higher education. The pandemic necessitated a rapid shift to online learning, prompting libraries to develop responsive digital infrastructures to support remote access to resources (Okagbue et al., 2020). However, challenges such as inadequate funding, unreliable internet, and limited ICT skills among librarians continue to hinder progress (Akande & Popoola, 2022). To remain relevant, academic libraries must continue to innovate by fostering collaborations through public-private partnerships and prioritizing equitable access to resources for both on-campus and distance learners, thereby solidifying their role as indispensable pillars of academic excellence in Nigerian universities.

Academic Libraries and Academic Performance of Students

Academic libraries in Nigeria significantly influence academic performance by providing access to diverse resources and fostering an environment conducive to learning and research.

These libraries offer critical tools, such as books, e-journals, and databases, which enable students to engage with up-to-date scholarly content essential for academic success (Oluwaniyi, 2020). Studies have shown that students who frequently utilize library resources, particularly digital collections, demonstrate improved academic outcomes due to enhanced access to information and research materials (Akande & Popoola, 2022). Furthermore, libraries support academic performance through services like information literacy programs, which equip students with skills to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively, thereby boosting their ability to excel in coursework and examinations (Bakare, 2023).

However, challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and low awareness of library services, hinder the optimal impact of academic libraries on student performance in Nigerian universities. Research indicates that many undergraduates underutilize library resources due to a lack of digital literacy or awareness of available services, which can negatively affect their academic achievements (Arumuru, 2020). Libraries are increasingly adopting innovative approaches, such as integrating digital tools and offering targeted training sessions to enhance resource accessibility and usage, to address these issues (Bakare, 2023). By overcoming these barriers and promoting active engagement with library services, academic libraries can further strengthen their role in improving the academic performance of students across Nigerian higher education institutions.

Library Support for Research Development

Academic libraries in Nigeria play a pivotal role in fostering research development by providing researchers

with access to critical resources, including scholarly journals, digital databases, and open educational resources (OERs), which are essential for advancing knowledge production. These libraries serve as gateways to global research networks, offering tools such as institutional repositories and citation databases that support the dissemination and visibility of research outputs (Akande & Popoola, 2022). Additionally, libraries facilitate research development through training programs on information literacy and research management tools, enabling researchers to effectively navigate and utilize digital resources (Arumuru, 2020). The adoption of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence for resource discovery and data analytics, further enhances the capacity of libraries to support high-quality research by streamlining access to relevant materials and improving research efficiency (Bakare, 2023).

Despite their critical role, Nigerian academic libraries face challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated infrastructure, and low awareness of available digital resources that limit their support for research development. Studies indicate that many researchers underutilize library services due to insufficient training or unreliable internet access, which hampers research productivity (Oluwasanu et al., 2019). To address these issues, libraries are increasingly implementing innovative strategies to expand resource availability, such as partnerships with international research networks and the integration of open-access platforms (Bakare, 2023). By overcoming these barriers and enhancing researcher engagement through targeted workshops and improved digital infrastructure, academic libraries can significantly strengthen their contribution to research development in Nigerian higher education institutions.

Promoting Information Literacy through Academic Libraries (AALs)

Academic libraries in Nigeria are instrumental in promoting information literacy, equipping students and researchers with the skills to effectively locate, evaluate, and use information in an increasingly digital academic environment. Libraries foster critical skills, such as database navigation, source evaluation, and ethical use of information, through targeted programs such as workshops, tutorials, and online guides, which are essential for academic success and lifelong learning (Arumuru, 2020). These initiatives are particularly vital in addressing the needs of undergraduates who often lack the digital literacy required to effectively engage with scholarly resources (Oluwaniyi, 2020). Libraries enhance students' ability to conduct research and produce high-quality academic work by integrating information literacy into the curriculum and collaborating with faculty, thereby supporting institutional goals of academic excellence.

Despite these efforts, challenges such as limited infrastructure, inadequate funding, and low awareness of ILPs hinder their effectiveness in Nigerian academic libraries. Research highlights that many students underutilize these programs due to insufficient promotion or lack of access to reliable internet and digital tools (Bakare, 2023). To overcome these barriers, libraries are adopting innovative approaches, such as leveraging social media platforms and mobile-friendly resources to deliver training and increase engagement (Okagbue et al., 2020). Academic libraries can enhance the reach and impact of information literacy initiatives by strengthening partnerships with academic departments and investing in digital infrastructure, empowering students and researchers to navigate the complexities of the information landscape with confidence.

Challenges Facing Academic Libraries in Supporting Learning and Research

Academic libraries in Nigeria face significant challenges that hinder their ability to effectively support student learning and research, with inadequate funding and outdated infrastructure being among the most pressing issues. Limited financial resources restrict the capacity of libraries to acquire current books, subscribe to digital databases, or maintain modern facilities, which are critical for providing access to scholarly materials (Akande

& Popoola, 2022). Additionally, unreliable power supply and poor internet connectivity disrupt access to electronic resources, limiting the ability of students and researchers to engage with digital platforms essential for academic work (Bakare, 2023). These infrastructural deficiencies create barriers to equitable access, particularly for distance learners who rely heavily on online library services.

Another major challenge is the low utilization of library resources due to insufficient awareness and inadequate information literacy skills among students and faculty. Research indicates that many undergraduates in Nigerian universities are unaware of available library services or lack the skills to effectively navigate digital tools, resulting in underuse of critical resources (Oluwaniyi, 2020). Furthermore, a shortage of trained librarians with expertise in modern technologies hampers the delivery of innovative services, such as training on research tools or managing institutional repositories (Arumuru, 2020). To address these challenges, academic libraries must prioritize advocacy, invest in staff training, and foster partnerships to secure funding and enhance technological infrastructure, ensuring they can effectively support higher education learning and research.

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the detailed methods used in this study. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and the main instrument for data collection was the questionnaire. This design allowed the researcher to gather data directly from respondents in their natural settings and draw meaningful inferences about the role of academic libraries in supporting student learning and research.

Population of the study

The term “population” refers to the entire group of individuals or items that share common characteristics relevant to the research. The study population comprises all students of Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, who are registered users of the institution’s academic library. These students span various departments and academic levels. The estimated population is over 12,000 students, but only those who have used the academic library during the semester were considered as part of the accessible population for this study.

Sample size and sampling technique

Sampling is the process of selecting a portion of the population that adequately represents the whole population. The sample size for this study is 85 students. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure that only students who had used the academic library facilities were included in the study. This method ensured that the collected data would reflect the experiences and perspectives of actual library users, thereby enhancing the study findings’ reliability and relevance.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the analysis of data gathered from 85 respondents through questionnaires distributed at The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro. The results are presented in tabular form based on the research questions.

Table 1: Library Support Services for Student Learning and Academic Achievement

Library Support Services	YES	NO
Provision of up-to-date textbooks	80	5
Access to the Internet and e-resources	76	9
Conducive reading environment	81	4
Access to journal-related courses	74	11
Availability of previous examination papers	78	7
A user-friendly catalog system	70	15

Table 1 shows that a vast majority of respondents agreed that the academic library at the Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, provides strong support for student learning and academic achievement. Of the 85 respondents, 80 affirmed the provision of up-to-date textbooks, while 81 agreed that the library provides a conducive reading environment. Access to internet and e-resources (76), journals (74), and past examination papers (78) were also highly rated. These figures indicate that libraries play a significant role in facilitating learning by offering essential academic resources and a peaceful learning atmosphere.

However, some respondents indicated gaps in certain areas. For example, 15 respondents did not find the library’s catalog system user-friendly, and 11 respondents disagreed about having access to course-related journals. This implies that while the core academic resources are adequately provided, technical or user experience-related services, such as catalog access, may require improvement. Enhancing these aspects could further improve the library’s usability and better serve the student population.

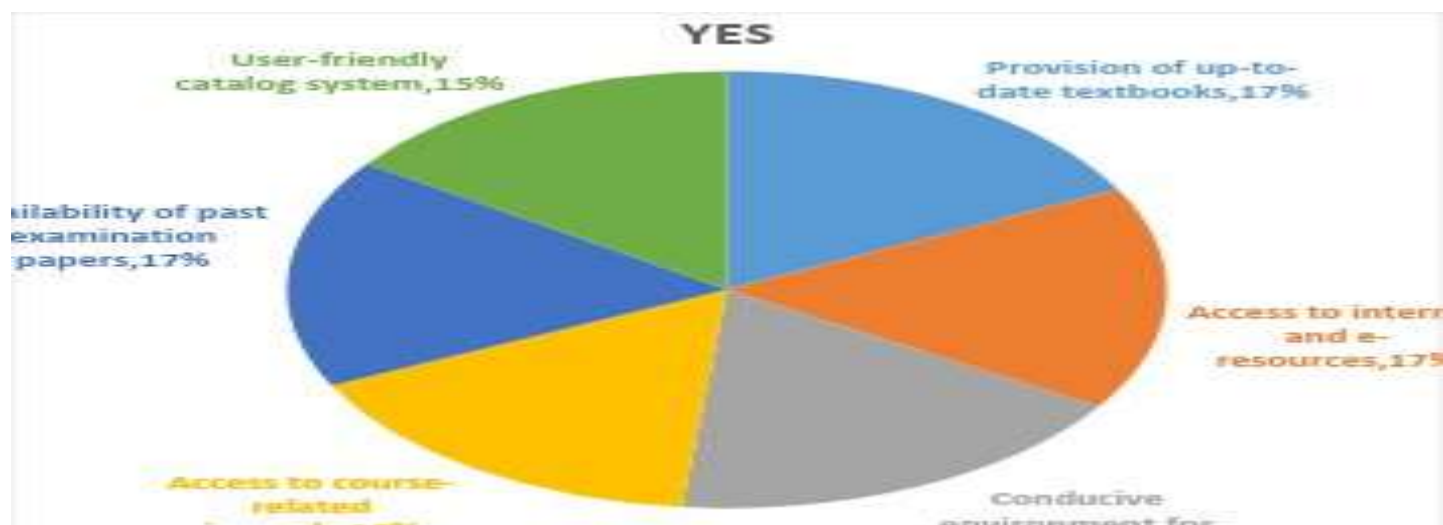
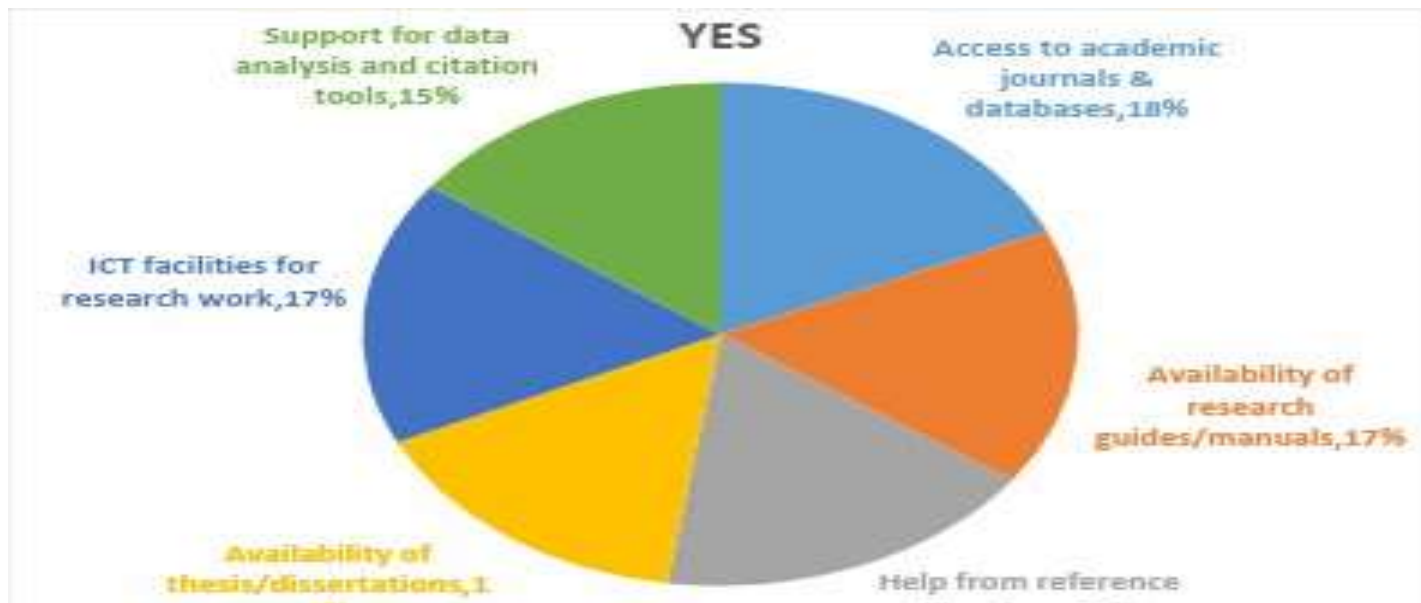


Table 2: Library Contribution to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Research

Research Support Services (RSS)	YES	NO
Access to academic journals and databases	73	12
Availability of research guides and manuals	66	19
Reference librarians’ help	70	15
Availability of the thesis/dissertation	62	23
ICT facilities for research	68	17
Support for data analysis and citation tools	60	25

From the data, the academic library significantly supports research among students. Most respondents (n = 73) acknowledged access to academic journals and databases, which is essential for quality research. Additionally, 70 respondents agreed that librarians provide helpful assistance in sourcing materials, and 68 highlighted the availability of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities for research. These services facilitate student research efforts and contribute to academic success.

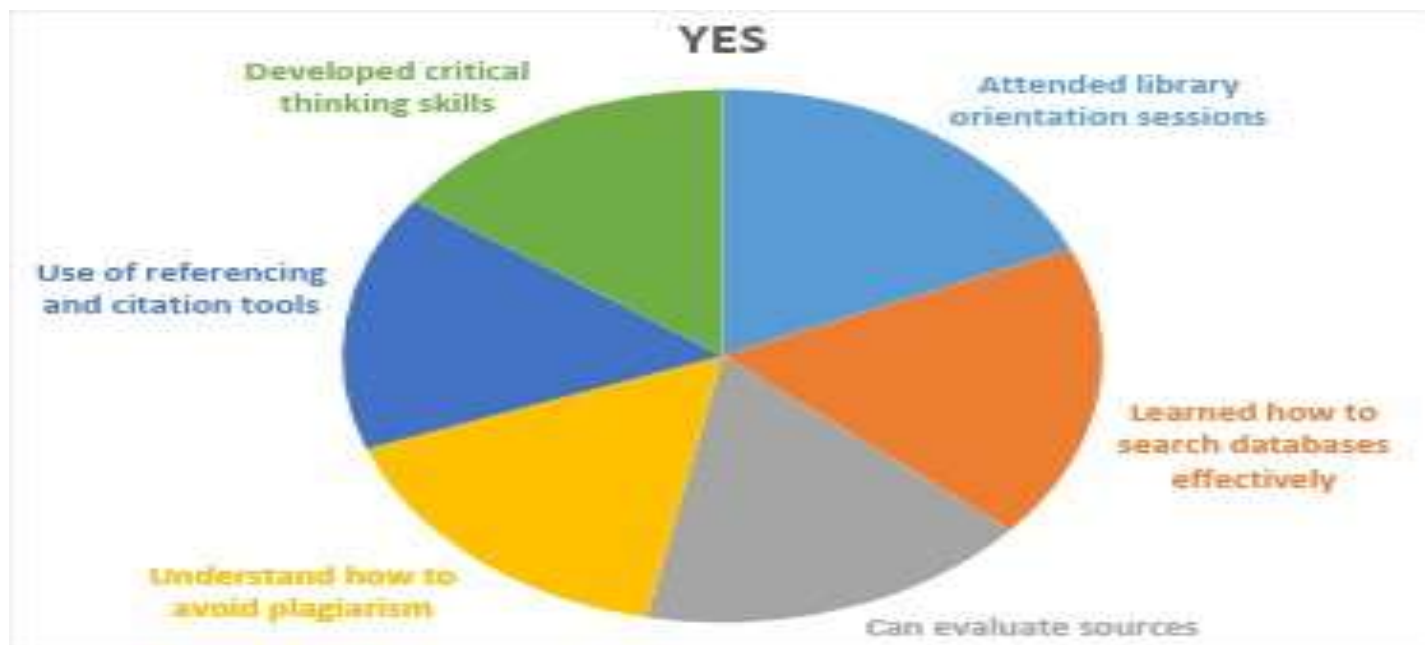


Nonetheless, there are areas that require attention. A total of 25 respondents disagreed with the availability of data analysis and citation tools, and 23 reported difficulty in accessing past theses and dissertations. These findings suggest that although the library has made commendable efforts to support research activities, it must further expand access to advanced tools and archival academic documents to meet the evolving needs of postgraduate and final-year undergraduate researchers.

Table 3: Library-led Instruction’s Impact on Information Literacy Skills

Library Instruction Services	YES	NO
Attended the library orientation sessions	72	13
Learned how to effectively search databases	70	15
Evaluation of sources for credibility	66	19
Understand how to avoid plagiarism	63	22
Use of referencing and citation tools	61	24
Developed critical thinking skills	59	26

The responses indicate that library-led instructional services have a meaningful impact on improving information literacy among students. A significant number of respondents (72) attended library orientation sessions, and 70 said they learned how to effectively search academic databases. Moreover, 66 respondents acknowledged being able to evaluate sources for credibility, while 63 indicated they now understand how to avoid plagiarism. This demonstrates that library instruction successfully equips students with essential academic skills.

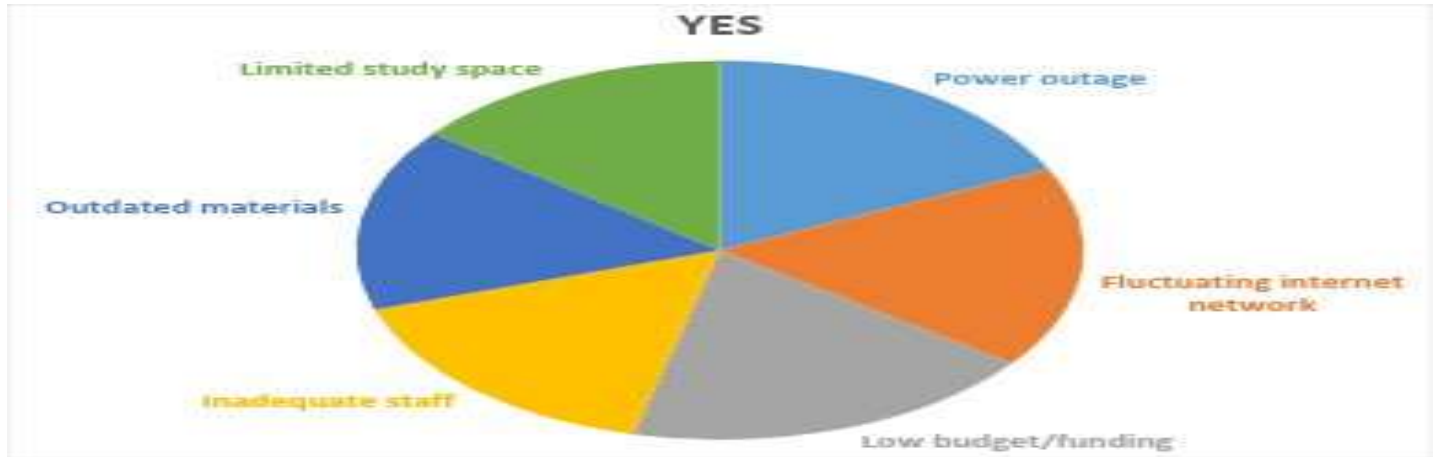


Despite these positive responses, some areas require further improvement. For example, only 61 respondents stated that they were taught how to use referencing and citation tools, and 59 said they had developed critical thinking skills. These relatively lower figures show that specialized training workshops or personal coaching is needed to deepen students' understanding of ethical information usage and critical analysis. Continued investment in literacy programs will ensure that students can confidently navigate academic resources.

Table 4: Challenges faced by academic libraries

CHALLENGES	YES	NO
Power outage	77	8
Fluctuating Internet	74	11
Low budget/funding	80	5
Inadequate staff	69	16
Outdated materials	67	18
Limited study space	62	23

The table reflects the key challenges that hinder the ability of the academic library to support student learning and research. Low funding is the most cited issue, with 80 respondents affirming this problem. Other major challenges include power outages (77), poor internet connectivity (74), and inadequate staff (69). These infrastructural and operational problems greatly reduce the efficiency of library services, especially in areas such as e-resource access and long study hours.



In addition, a significant number of respondents highlighted the presence of outdated materials (67) and limited study space (62). This highlights the need for libraries to regularly update their collections and expand their physical infrastructure to accommodate the growing student population. These challenges must be addressed through increased institutional investment and improved resource management if academic libraries are to effectively fulfill their core mission of supporting learning and research.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study investigated the various roles that academic libraries play in supporting student learning and research, using The Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro, as a case study. The findings revealed that academic libraries significantly contribute to students' academic success by providing access to up-to-date textbooks, conducive learning environments, internet and e-resources, journals, and past examination papers. These services collectively enhance the learning experience of students and support academic achievement.

Furthermore, the study showed that the library plays a vital role in supporting undergraduate and postgraduate research activities by granting access to scholarly databases, journals, information and communication technology facilities, and librarian assistance. Additionally, library-led instruction has a positive impact on students' information literacy, equipping them with essential skills for source evaluation, academic referencing, and ethical use of information. However, persistent challenges, including power outages, poor internet connectivity, inadequate funding, outdated materials, and limited staff strength, were also identified. These barriers hinder academic libraries' optimal performance and limit their effectiveness in fulfilling their roles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. **Increased Funding:** Institutional management and government agencies should allocate more funds to academic libraries to ensure the continuous acquisition of current academic materials and technological infrastructure upgrade.

- ii. **Stable Power Supply and Internet Access:** To ensure uninterrupted access to digital resources, investments should be made in providing alternative power sources such as solar energy and high-speed internet connectivity.
 - iii. **Regular Training and Workshops:** The library should organize periodic training sessions to enhance information literacy, focusing on the use of citation tools, research databases, and critical thinking skills.
 - iv. **Update of Library Resources:** Academic libraries should regularly review and update their collections to maintain relevance and ensure that students and researchers have access to the latest materials in their fields of study.
 - v. **Expansion of Physical Infrastructure:** Library facilities should be expanded to accommodate the growing student population and reduce overcrowding, particularly during examination periods.
 - vi. **Recruitment of Qualified Staff:** More professional librarians should be employed to reduce the workload on current staff and improve the quality of service delivery.
- By implementing these recommendations, academic libraries can be better positioned to serve as strategic partners in advancing learning and research, thereby fulfilling their mission in higher education.

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