THE IMPACT OF SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES ON LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN NIGER STATE

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the impact of school library services on the literacy development and academic performance among secondary school students in Niger State, Nigeria. The problem statement highlighted the persistent issue of poor academic performance in national examinations, despite ongoing efforts by the government and local communities to improve the education system. The research objectives aimed to determine the impact of school libraries on academic performance, identify challenges faced by these libraries, and propose strategies for enhancing both literacy development and academic achievement. The research methodology employed a questionnaire survey design, utilizing simple random sampling to select 363 senior secondary school students from six public and private schools in Niger State. Questionnaires served as the primary data collection tool, with data analysis relying on frequency counts and simple percentages. Among the study's findings, it was revealed that most of the schools surveyed possessed textbooks, reference materials, and CDs in their libraries. However, there was a notable shortage of video players and electronic resources. The study concluded by recommending the provision of relevant information resources to equip school libraries for technological advancement. It also underscored the importance of capacity building for librarians to enhance their ability to provide effective library services. Furthermore, strategies were suggested to improve literacy development and academic performance, such as promoting students' favourite books and learning materials and ensuring the availability of essential information resources for student use.
Keywords: Academic achievement, literacy development, school library, secondary school students.

Introduction
Education is regarded as one of society's essential services which forms the foundation for the development of human resources, thereby advancing and propelling societal progress. It serves as a catalyst for the enhancement of socio-economic, political, economic, and cultural activities. Education, therefore, stands as an inherent component of fundamental human rights for every child, with the expectation that each citizen should have access to quality education. Access to quality education is entrenched in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Consequently, the vitality of a nation's progress is closely tied to the effectiveness of its education sector, including its libraries, which should operate seamlessly with pertinent collections under the stewardship of qualified professionals.

The quality of an educational institution is commonly assessed based on the presence of a well-maintained library and the type and calibre of educational resources it offers. Nevertheless, regardless of how aesthetically pleasing a library may be, and no matter how current and pertinent its collection, its value remains hollow without the presence of dedicated human resources committed to delivering efficient services to both students and educators alike.

School libraries are essential components of primary and secondary educational institutions, specifically designed to cater to the needs of young learners. As defined by the Library Research Service (2014), a school library is a dedicated facility located within a school and managed by the school itself. These libraries offer a comprehensive range of resources, including printed materials, audiovisual materials, computer-based resources, or a combination thereof. Furthermore, they are equipped with a team of qualified staff, maintain a consistent schedule for providing services to students and faculty, and offer instructions to enhance student's ability to effectively utilize library materials thus supporting classroom standards and improving research and literacy skills.

The significance of school library services in the context of education cannot be overstated. They play a pivotal role in facilitating the successful implementation of new educational policies and objectives. These libraries are instrumental in nurturing a culture of reading among young learners, fostering their intellectual growth, and instilling in them a lifelong love for learning.

Literacy, as defined by UNESCO (2015), is the capacity of an individual to engage effectively in activities that require mastery of reading and writing and for the efficient functioning of their group and community. It also empowers them to utilize reading, writing, and calculation skills for their own advantage and the progress of their community. The act of literacy occurs when the reader comprehends the encoded message, transforming written or visual symbols into meaningful knowledge.

Regarded as a fundamental right, literacy enriches an individual's life, adding value and broadening horizons. The establishment of a literate society paves the way for the growth and empowerment of children, enabling them to better understand their surroundings and the institutions that govern them. This understanding, in turn, influences their reading culture and academic performance, ultimately contributing to their personal and community development.

Statement of the Problem
In Nigeria, the leading debate in the educational sector nowadays is the problem of secondary schools' poor academic performance. Parents and other stakeholders in education stress the high rate of poor academic performance of students in national examinations. The high failure rate has resulted in students' inability to perform excellently in external examinations such as the West African Examination Council (WAEC) and the National Examinations Council (NECO). Despite the efforts made by the government of Nigeria and the community in expanding secondary schools which extended to ward Leve, lowering education expenses to improve the education systems, the literacy level is still not encouraging. The process of teaching and learning is very much complicated in our world today. There are so many intervening factors one has to put in place to establish an effective and quality environment to ensure quality results among many factors. The

availability of a well-prepared and equipped library is among the factor which apparently promotes student literacy level and academic performance.

Fakomogbon, *et al*. (2012) opined that the lack of a standard school library with relevant information resources which students could use for their studies could be one of the major causes of mass failure in schools. For student reading skills to be improved, there should be a need to have different collections of books in the library. In addition, students need to feel comfortable around books to enable them to interact positively with the books. Students also need the support of librarians who can deliver and guide them to access both manual and electronic materials.

Some school library materials are not available whereas available ones are either not sufficient or obsolete for use by the students. Could this be as a result of poor funding of school libraries, insufficient and improper staffing, inadequate curriculum, poor students' motivation, poor user education, and inadequate processing of the library materials among others? The study, therefore, seeks to investigate the impact of school library services on the literacy development and academic performance of secondary school students in Niger State.

Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study is to determine the impact of school library services on the literacy development and academic performance of public and private secondary school students in Niger State. The specific objectives of the study are to:
1. determine the impact of school libraries on literacy development and academic performance of public and private secondary school children in Niger State;
2. identify the challenges students face when using the school library;
3. suggest strategies that will enhance literacy development and academic performance of public and private secondary school children in Niger state.

Research Questions
The following research questions guided the study:
1. What is the impact of the school library on the academic performance of secondary school students in Niger State?
2. What are the challenges students face when using the school library?
3. What are the strategies that will enhance literacy development and academic performance of school children?

Literature Review
A study to investigate the student's satisfaction with library resources and services provided by the academic library was conducted by Mandrekar (2020). A survey was conducted to find out the problems and difficulties faced by the students in accessing the library resources and their impact on their academic success and performance. The findings in the study revealed that there is a significant and remarkable relationship between library usage and the student's academic performance and success. The major finding of the study is to conduct an information literacy programme for the students to promote awareness about the resources, services and facilities available in the library so that the students can take maximum advantage of the benefits provided by the library.

A study to examine the influence of school library resources on students' learning was conducted by Mahwasane (2017). The paper explained the importance of libraries on students' academic

performance. It also recommended that the collaboration between the teaching and library staff is a crucial factor in nurturing the learners' learning development and augmenting their learning achievement. Additionally, collaboration between the school and the public library should be considered as an option to provide learners with access to adequate information that they need in order to succeed in their academic performance.

A study by Gbemi-Ogunleye (2016) examined the use of library and students' academic achievement at University of Lagos, Nigeria. This research adopted a descriptive survey approach, and a random sample of 120 students was included in the study. Two hypotheses were formulated and subjected to testing at a significance level of 0.05. The study's results revealed a statistically significant connection between library usage and students' academic success. Furthermore, it was found that counselling had a significant influence on students' utilization of the school library. Based on these findings, it is recommended that school counsellors take a proactive role in addressing the issue of underutilization of school libraries by students in tertiary institutions across Nigeria.

A study by Baro & Eze (2016) investigated the state of school libraries in Nigerian secondary schools and attempted to find out why there are no libraries in some of the schools. In a survey of 356 Federal University, Otuoke in Bayelsa State students, respondents were asked two questions: 1) the state of school libraries in the secondary school they graduated from; and for those reporting no school library, 2) perceived reasons why there is no school library. The results revealed that almost half of the respondents had no school library in their secondary schools. Reasons for this absence included the Nigerian government's nonchalant attitude towards village schools, lack of adequate space for libraries in school premises, lack of funding, and school management's forceful selling of books to primary and secondary students.

A study by Suleiman, Y., Hanafi, Z., & Tanslikhan, M. (2018) was conducted to examine the perceived influence of library services on students' academic achievement in secondary schools. Non-probability techniques (stratified, purposive and convenience sampling techniques) were used to select 20 schools and its principals from three senatorial districts in Kwara State. The research design used combined both interview and observational checklist to collect relevant data for the study. Nvivo software (version 10) was used to analyze the data collected. Findings of the study revealed that library services positively influenced students' academic achievement. Findings also showed that schools lacked adequate library facilities and materials. None or inadequate trained library personnel were also found in schools. The study recommends that government at all levels (federal, state and local) in collaboration with other stakeholders in education, should build modern libraries in public secondary schools in the state and equip them with all necessary library facilities, while private secondary schools should be mandated to do so. Lastly, there is need for collective action by individuals and Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) to contribute to the development of school libraries in the state.

 Another study investigated by Ayanlola (2014) discovered the impact of school library on students' academic achievement in Iwo Local Government Area of Osun State. Despite the importance of the school library, its operation in terms of compliance with the academic achievement of students cannot be overemphasized. Hence the assessment of the student characteristics is determined so as to know the composition of the students to the school library patronage. Data were gathered using the school record of examinations taken by SSS 3 students,

particularly English Language. The record of examinations is taken by the randomly selected secondary school students of the area till the time of the study. Variables such as sex were investigated. Data analysis was descriptive and analytical using t-test contingency. The findings revealed that the provision and utilization of school libraries have no significant effect on senior secondary school students' academic achievement. The data generated during the study was analyzed using a t-test at a 0.05 level of significance. On the strength of this finding, the null hypothesis being tested was rejected. Therefore, the study recommended that all students, both male and female should patronize the library because it will assist them in their academic programs.

From the literature reviewed, it is evident that the library has an impact on the literacy development and academic performance of students. Hence, this study hopes to determine the impact of school libraries on students' academic performance and literacy development in selected secondary schools in Niger State.

Research Methodology
A descriptive survey research design using copies of the questionnaire was used in collecting data. The data collected was used to determine the impact of school library services on the literacy and academic development of secondary school students in Niger State. The population for this study is three thousand, nine hundred and twenty-two (3922) students across the six selected secondary schools in Niger State and 6 school librarians. In calculating the sample size from the population of the study, a simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample size as derived by the Kothari (2004) formula.

i.e.

$n = N/\ 1+N(e)\^2$

Where,   n = sample size $n= 3922\ /\ 1+\ 3922\ (0.05)^2$

    N= Total population $n= 3922\ /\ 1+\ 3922\ (0.0025)$

    e= error margin $n= 3922\ /1+9.81$

                               $n= 3922\ /10.81$

                               $n= 363$

Hence, the sample size is 363.

Further, a total enumeration technique was used to include the six (6) librarians in the study. This is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: List of selected Secondary Schools in Niger State

S/No	Name of School	Year of establishment of the Institution	Total number of Students (SS1-SS3)	Sample drawn	Librarian
1	FUT Minna Model School	2012	250	53	1
2	Maryam Babangida School	1965	800	60	1
3	Mawo International Schools	1978	130	55	1
4	Hillcrest international school	2001	118	55	1
5	Bosso Secondary School	1947	1,350	70	1
6	Father O'Connell Science College	1965	1,274	70	1
TOTAL			**3,922**	**363**	**6**

Results and Discussions

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Names of Schools	Total copies Distributed		Total copies Retrieved	
	Students	**Librarians**	**Students**	**Librarians**
FUT Minna Model School	53	1	45	1
Maryam Babangida Girls School	60	1	50	1
Mawo International Schools	55	1	45	1
Hillcrest International Schools	55	1	40	1
Father O'Connell Science College	70	1	60	1
Bosso Secondary School	70	1	60	1
Total	**363**	**6**	**300**	**6**

Research Question 1: What is the impact of the school library on the academic performance of secondary school students in Niger State?

Responses to this question was from the students.

Table 3: Impact of School Library

Impact of school library	SA	A	D	SD	Total
Using the library improves my ability to read	264 (88%)	36 (12%)	0	0	300
Using the Library improves my writing skills	168 (56%)	120 (40%)	12 (4%)	0	300
Using the Library improves my scores in Assignment	180 (60%)	108 (36%)	12 (4%)	0	300
Using the Library gives me the opportunity to have better scores on Tests and Examinations	144 (48%)	132 (44%)	24 (8%)	0	300
Using the Library has exposed my knowledge of recent occurrences by reading magazines, newspapers etc.	120 (40%)	168 (56%)	16 (4%)	0	300
Using the Library gives more knowledge about technology and its revolution in every sector.	144 (48%)	120 (40%)	24 (8%)	12 (4%)	300

Key: SA-Strongly Agreed; A-Agreed; D-Disagreed; SD-Strongly Disagreed.

Table 3 indicates that most students agree with the fact that the library improves their ability to read and write. Also, using the library gives them more knowledge about technology and its revolution in every sector, exposes their knowledge to the recent occurrences by reading magazines, newspapers etc.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges students face when using the school library?
The school librarians agreed to the following challenges faced by the school libraries in Niger State.

Table 4: Challenges faced by Students in Libraries

Challenges faced by students in school libraries	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
You must check-in and leave within a specific time.	3	3	0	0	6
You may not be allowed to carry and eat food within its premises.	4	2	0	0	6
Lack of recent technological development	3	3	0	0	6
Lack of interest by school management	4	1	1	0	6

In Table 4, most librarians agreed to the fact that inadequate funding of school libraries and poor management of library resources are challenges faced by school libraries while few librarians disagreed that lack of recent technological development and lack of interest by school management are challenges school libraries face.

Research Question 3: What are the strategies that will enhance literacy development and academic performance in school children?

Table 5: Strategies to be adopted by School Libraries in Niger State
School librarians suggested the following as strategies that can be adopted:

Strategies to enhance literacy development and academic performance	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
Highlight children's favourite books	3	3	0	0	6
Provide needed resources to students	4	2	0	0	6
Establish read-aloud routines	2	2	4	0	6
Encourage reading in small groups	3	2	1	1	6

The table above reveals that most librarians agreed that highlighting children's favorite books and providing needed information resources to students are ways to promote literacy development and enhance academic performance; while few librarians discouraged the idea of students reading in small groups but the majority of librarians discouraged read-aloud routines as it alters the purpose of a library.

Discussion of Findings
The findings of this study revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed with the highlighted roles of school library which includes the use of the library to improve the ability to read and improvement in writing skills which is in agreement of the study of Margaret (2020) stating that library enhances the students' literacy performance and improves score in assignment, gives the opportunity to have a better score in tests and examinations.
The challenges faced by the school libraries in Niger State can be accrued to inadequate funding, and support from the school management, poor management of library resources, low level of librarian capacity, and poor technological development. This agrees with the study of Liah (2019) which states in the conclusion of their study that in addition to the challenges, lack of library policy, poor staffing practices and lack of awareness of the library are other challenges faced by school libraries.

The findings on highlighting children's favourite books were supported by Bamidele (2016). The study justifies the need for providing the needed resources to students, establishing read-aloud routines, and encouraging reading in small groups.

Conclusion
The impact of the library was also noted in this research as it improves the ability to read and write skills. It also reveals that it gives the opportunity to have a better score on assignments, tests and examinations. It also gives more knowledge on the most recent technology and its revolution in every sector. Despite the roles performed by the school library, it still battles with some challenges such as inadequate funding, poor management, low level of librarian capability, lack of recent technological development and lack of interest by school management.

Recommendations
1. The school management should equip the library with relevant information resources and give support to the development of the library.
2. School libraries should enhance literacy development and academic performance by highlighting children's favourite books establishing read-aloud routines and reading in small groups.

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