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SCHOOL LIBRARY AS A TOOL FOR ACHIEVING ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE AMONG STUDENTS OF SAINT JOSEPH SECONDARY SCHOOL NYIMAN, MAKURDI, BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined school library as a tool for achieving academic excellence among students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman. The study adopted survey research design; questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for data collection. The population of 257 students formed the population for the study, 156 respondents constituted the sample size for the study which was determine using Taro Yamane formula. The data collected were analyzed using means, tables and standard deviations. Findings of the study revealed that: students in Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman did not use the library resources frequently, lack of qualified library staff, Inadequate technological infrastructure as well as stakeholders view of school library resources as less relevant in the digital age are some of the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources. The study however recommended that: library professionals should be employed to man school libraries, more technological infrastructure should be provided in school libraries, schools should organize seminars and programs to enlighten students on the relevance and the use of school library resources.
Keywords: School Library, Academic Excellence, Secondary School, Students

Background to the Study

School libraries are institutions that play a crucial role in supporting education by providing students with access to a wide range of resources that contribute to their academic development and foster love for reading. According to Aju and Karim (2014), school library is set up in the nursery, primary and secondary schools to cater for the teaching and learning needs of the pupils, students and their teachers. School libraries are learning centers where students can conduct research, have access to variety of

information sources, and build critical thinking and study skills. Effective school library system has a beneficial effect on student accomplishment; Hence, to Lance and Loertscher (2016), were of the notion that well-stocked libraries enhance learning outcomes. Academically, students who have access to well-stocked and highly maintained libraries typically score better. A comprehensive approach to education is promoted when a wide range of books and other resources are available for students to investigate various topics (Scholastic, 2019). By giving children access to a wide range of reading materials, school libraries play a crucial part in encouraging literacy.

A wide selection of books in school libraries promotes leisure reading, which helps students develop their language abilities and a lifetime love of reading, (Krashen, 2014). As champions of literacy, librarians are essential in directing pupils towards the direction of appropriate reading resources. Todd and Kuhlthau (2015), highlight the librarian's job in encouraging a culture of reading among students by suggesting books that suit their reading levels and interests. School libraries are changing in the digital age to incorporate technology and electronic resources. The American Association of School Librarians (AASL, 2018), states that school librarians play a crucial role in educating students about critical analysis and utilizing data from multiple sources. This entails using digital databases, determining the reliability of websites, and comprehending the moral application of knowledge. Students can use school libraries as places to access technology for group projects and study. This integration prepares students for the demands of the information age and is in line with the current educational landscape Loertscher, 2016).

School libraries are essential to the educational process because they foster literacy, offer a safe space for learning, and get pupils ready for life in the digital age. Numerous research and academic publications have demonstrated the beneficial effects of a well-stocked and well-managed school library on students' academic performance as well as their overall development. In addition, school libraries frequently organize extracurricular events like research competitions, book clubs, and literary gatherings that foster love of learning and intellectual curiosity (Todd, 2018). Through these activities, a passion of learning outside of the classroom is fostered, contributing to an all-encompassing approach to education. The school library is a valuable resource that plays a major role in fostering academic success. Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman runs a school library to meet its academic requirements which is essential in developing well-rounded, academically successful people because of their varied collections, information literacy instruction, welcoming physical spaces, technological integration, and extracurricular programs.

Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman Makurdi, Benue State was established in the 2001/2002 academic session by the then late: very Revd. Fr. James Seamus Hunter C.S.S.P, an Irish Holy Ghost Father who came to Benue state on a missionary work. The school is located along Jonah Jang crescent high level Makurdi Benue State and the motto of the

school is Service and Humility.

The lifeblood of any educational establishment is its students. They are people that actively seek out new information and abilities while being guided by teachers (Loertscher & Koechlin, 2016). A wide spectrum of learners, from young children in elementary school to older individuals enrolling in professional programs, are covered by this broad idea. Skilled teachers acknowledge these differences and work to design lessons that meet the needs of a wide range of students. Teachers can enable students to take an active role in their own education by creating an engaging and dynamic learning environment. Teachers and librarians work together to include library resources and information literacy training into the curriculum. School libraries create deeper involvement and academic accomplishment among students by collaborating closely with educators to improve the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities (Todd, 2018). Technology is embraced by school libraries to improve instructional opportunities and information access. They give students access to computers, the internet, and digital tools so they can work on group assignments, produce multimedia, and conduct online research. School libraries help kids become digitally literate and set them up for success in a future where technology is pervasive (Lamb, at., 2020). School libraries stimulate research and inquiry, create a reading culture, collaborate with instructors, facilitate resource access, enhance information literacy, and play a variety of other roles in building academic performance and incorporating technology. School libraries greatly enhance students' intellectual development, academic achievement, and general success in the classroom and beyond by carrying out these duties.

Statement of the Problem

The major function of any school library is to facilitate learning and provide the basic information resources to the pupils and students. Thus, any educational programme cannot achieve its objectives fully if the library is left out in the implementation of the programme. Despite their inestimable importance, school libraries in Nigeria seem to be underused by students. However, it is devastating to note that, irrespective of the importance of school libraries, many schools seem not to have a functional school library; talk less of provision of facilities in school libraries. Research has shown that, quality school library programme enhances the school setting, optimize instructions and improve students' achievements, yet in many Nigerian schools, school libraries have not taken it as priority. It is also observed that, the largest number of Nigerian secondary school do not have a school library and in the few schools that could be said to have functional library, students do not always appreciate the use of the resources. This could be the reason for mass failure in their final year examinations. If nothing is being done to address this problem, the increased number of secondary school dropout will become unbearable to the society. It is against this backdrop that, the researchers wish to find out the strategies that can improve the use of school libraries by secondary school students

and possibly reduce the number of drop out on the streets.

Objectives of the Study

1. Find out how frequent do students in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman use the available school library resources.
2. Establish the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman. Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria.
3. Suggest strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman. Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. How frequent, do students in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman use the available school library resources?
2. What are the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman, Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria?
3. What are the strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman, Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria?

Hypothesis 1

Utilization of available school library resources has no significant impact on academic excellence of students of Saint Joseph Secondary school Nyiman, Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria.

Scope

The content scope includes Types of available school library recourses, the quality of school library resources, rate of use of school library resources, factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources and strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources by students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman, Makurdi, Benue State Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

A wide variety of resources are available in school libraries to assist students with their informational and learning requirements. These resources meet students' intellectual, recreational, and academic needs in a variety of styles and kinds. It is crucial for parents, teachers, and students to understand the kinds of materials that are accessible in school libraries. There is still value in traditional print resources for school libraries. For students, books-fiction, non-fiction, reference, and textbooks—serve as essential resources. A large range of topics, hobbies, and reading levels are covered by these

resources. Furthermore, print publications like magazines and newspapers provide up-to-date information and a range of viewpoints on a variety of subjects (Johnson, 2019).

School libraries have been adding more and more digital materials to their collections since the invention of technology. Students have easy access to reading materials on digital platforms such as e-books and audiobooks. Students can read on computers, tablets, or cellphones with these materials, which are frequently available through library catalogs or specialized e-book platforms (Abrams, 2020). Many school libraries have subscriptions to online databases such as JSTOR, EBSCOhost, and ProQuest that provide them with access to a multitude of academic publications, papers, and reference resources. These databases offer a wide range of subject areas and give students reliable, current information for assignments and research projects (O'Connor, 2018). A variety of audiovisual elements are included in multimedia resources, such as CDs, DVDs, and streaming services. Interactive multimedia materials, documentaries, and educational videos augment classroom instruction and accommodate a range of learning preferences. Additionally, access to YouTube Educational channels and Khan Academy, two streaming platforms, provides additional educational content (Dillon, 2021).

The availability and efficient use of school library resources can be hampered by a number of factors, which can affect students' access to information, academic performance, and overall learning experience. These challenges include staffing shortages, budgetary restrictions, and technical constraints. This is because insufficient financing is a major obstacle to the supply of suitable resources for school libraries as the purchase of new books, digital materials, and other educational resources is restricted by financial limitations. Lack of qualified library staff can also impede the effective utilization of school library resources. School librarians play a crucial role in coating collections, providing instructional support, and promoting information literacy skills. However, many schools experience staffing shortages or employ non-certified personnel to oversee library operations. According to American Association of School Librarians (2018), understaffing can limit the availability of library services and hinder students' access to guidance and support from trained professionals. Inadequate technical infrastructure can equally restrict students' ability to access digital library resources and online databases. In fact, most schools lack sufficient computers, internet connectivity, or software necessary for accessing digital materials and conducting research.

Furthermore, differences in students' access to technology outside of the classroom can make information access disparities even worse. Students may encounter difficulties making good use of digital library materials if they do not have fair access to technology (Haycock, 2018). Resources for school libraries can be made available and effectively used, but there are curricular pressures, staffing shortages, technology limits, budgetary restrictions, and perceived relevance that can work against them. In order to prioritize library resources and provide fair access to information for all students,

to address these issues (Loertscher and Koechlin, 2016).

Research Methodology

Descriptive survey was adopted for this because it allows the researcher to gather information about target group. The population of the study comprises of the entire number of 257 students of Joseph secondary school from JSS1 – SSS3 in the 2023/2024 academic session. Jss1 have 51 registered students, JSS2 have 45 registered students, JSS3 have 35 registered students, SSS1 have 38 registered students, SSS2 have 43 registered students and SSS3 have 45 registered students. These 257 registered students formed the population for this study while 156 students formed the sample size for the study which was determined using Taro Yamane formular for sample size determination. A self-structured questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection.

Results

Research Question 1

How frequent do students in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman use the available school library resources?

Table 1: ***Mean and standard deviation on the frequent use of available school library resources by students in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman***

S/N	Items	N	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Student visit school library on daily bases	156	3.40	0.870	Accepted
2	Student visit the library only when they have assignment	156	1.42	0.738	Rejected
3	Students visit the library only during examination period	156	1.64	1.051	Rejected
4	Student visit the library only on teachers' instruction	156	2.87	1.062	Accepted
5	Student visit the school library occasionally	156	2.66	1.152	Accepted
			2.398	**0.974**	
	Grand Mean				

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The result from table 1 above shows how frequent students in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman use the available school library resources. Item 1, item 4 and item 5 were accepted with mean score of 3.40, 2.87 and 2.66 with their respective standard deviation of 0.870, 1.062 and 1.152. However, item 2 and item 3 were all rejected with mean score of 1.42 and 1.64 and standard deviation of 0.738 and 1.051 respectively. The grand mean score was however calculated to be 2.398 with standard deviation of 0.974 which is below the bench mark of 2.5. The implication of the above analysis is that students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman did not use the library resources frequent**Research**

Question 2

What are the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman?

Table 2: ***Mean and standard deviation on the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman***

S/N	Items	N	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Insufficient funding poses a challenge to the provision of school library resources	156	1.81	0.624	Rejected
2	lack of qualified library staff can impede effective utilization of school library resources	156	3.31	0.951	Accepted
3	Inadequate technological infrastructure hinder students' ability to access digital library resources and online databases	156	3.03	1.549	Accepted
4	Pressure to prioritize standardized testing and meet curriculum requirements distract from the emphasis on library resources	156	3.07	0.391	Accepted
5	Stakeholders perceive school library resources as less relevant in the digital age	156	3.37	0.812	Accepted
	Grand Mean		**2.918**	**0.865**	

Source: Field Survey 2024

The result from table 2 above shows factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman. Item 2, item 3, item 4 and item 5 were all accepted with a mean score of 3.31, 3.03, 3.07 and 3.37 and the standard deviation of 0.951, 1.549, 0.391 and 0.812 respectively. However, only item 1 was rejected with a mean score of 1.81 and standard deviation of 0.624. The grand mean score was calculated to be 2.918 with standard deviation of 0.865 which is above the bench mark of 2.5. The implication of the above analysis is that, lack of qualified library staff, Inadequate technological infrastructure, pressure to prioritize standardized testing and meet curriculum requirements and stakeholders' perception of school library resources are less relevant in the digital age are the factors that militate against provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman

Research Question 3

What are the strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman?

Table 3: ***Mean and standard deviation on the strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman.***

S/N	Items	N	Mean	S.D	Decision
1	Promotion of information literacy skills	156	3.06	1.204	Accepted
2	Provision of enough fund for purchas e o f library resources	156	2.86	0.396	Accepted
3	Hosting library programmes that encourage students to utilize library resources	156	2.55	0.716	Accepted
4	Empowering students to have a voice in library resource selection and programming	156	3.36	0.965	Accepted
5	Investing in modern l ibrary resources in school libraries	156	1.81	0.934	Rejected
	Grand Mean		**2.728**	**0.843**	

Source: ***Field Survey 2024***

Result from table 3 above shows strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman. All the items 1 to 4 were accepted; however, item 5 was rejected with a mean score of 1.81 and standard deviation of 0.934. The grand mean score was however calculated to be 2.728 with standard deviation of 0.843 which is above the bench mark of 2.5. The implication of this analysis is that, promotion of information literacy skills, provision of enough fund for purchase of library resources, hosting library programmes that encourages students to utilize library resources and empowering students to have a voice in library resource selection and programming are the strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources among students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1

Quality of school library resources has no significant impact on academic excellence of students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman.

Table 4: ***Chi-square showing significant impact between quality of school library resources and academic excellence of students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman. Source: Field Survey 2024***

Item	df	x^2	Asymp.Sig
Chi-square	2317.940[a]	0.000	
No. of valid case	6		

Table 4: shows that the x^2 calculated is 217.940[a] and sig (p-value) is 0.000. Hence $p<0.05$, the null hypothesis which state that quality of school library resources has no significant association between academic excellence of students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman is rejected. This indicates that quality of school library resources has significant impact on academic excellence of students of Saint Joseph secondary school

Nyiman.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that students in Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman did not use the library resources frequently. The findings of this study disagreed with Jaja and Udumukwu 2023 who carried out similar study on utilization of school library and students' academic achievement in Abuja federal capital territory and found that students in federal capital territory utilized school library frequently and that influences their academic achievement. The findings of this study is also not in agreement with Omonigho 2020 who studied library resources use and effectiveness by secondary school students of Oyemekun Grammar school, Akure Ondo State and discovered that there is considerable level of patronage of school library resources by senior students of Oyemekun Grammar school, Akure, Ondo State.

Findings of the study also revealed that, lack of qualified library staff, Inadequate technological infrastructure, pressure to prioritize standardized testing and meet curriculum requirements, and stakeholders' perception of school library resources are less relevant in the digital age are the factors that militate against the provision and use of school library resources in Saint Joseph secondary school, Nyiman. This finding has agreed with Udofot & Idachaba 2020 who studied factors retarding the development of school libraries in North Central Nigeria and found that lack of adequate staff, inadequate funding and lack of accommodation are some of the factors retarding the development of school libraries in North Central Nigeria.

The study finally revealed that, promotion of information literacy skills, provision of enough fund for purchase of library resources, hosting library programmes that encourages students to utilize library resources and empowering students to have a voice in library resource selection and programming are the strategies that will be adopted to improve the use of school library resources among students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman Makurdi, Benue State, Nigeria. This finding is in agreement with Omah and Urhiewhu 2016 who examined strategies for an effective utilization of school library resources in Karim Lamido Local Government Area of Taraba State and discovered that: adequate allocation of funds, employment of qualified and trained librarians and orientation for students among others are the strategies that can be adopted to enhance effectives utilization of library resources in secondary schools in Karim Lamido Local Government Area of Taraba State.

Conclusion

School library is an integral part of the educational system that cannot be ignore without jeopardizing the quality of education in schools. The use of library resources among secondary students is essential for acquiring timely, current and up-to-date information which would help them in their academic pursuance. The study found that quality of library resources provided, for students in Saint Joseph secondary school,

Nyiman are of high quality which can enable the students to achieve high academic excellence. Furthermore, the study also found out that Students of Saint Joseph secondary school Nyiman do not use the library resources frequently.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made**:**

1. School management should organize seminars and programs to enlighten students on the relevance and the use of school library resources as well as include library hours on the time table and strictly adhered to the time; as this will encourage frequent utilization of school library resources among students in the study area.
2. Library professionals should be employed to man libraries as they play a crucial role in inculcating reading habits in students as well as effective literacy development.
3. School management should allocate more budgetary funds in the purchase and building of databases that will enable students to learn new trends which will provide better opportunities for them in the 21st century

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