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FUNDING AND FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF POLYTECHNIC LIBRARIES UNDER BUDGET CONSTRAINTS IN BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
Polytechnic libraries are central to the success of technical and vocational education, providing essential resources for teaching, learning, and research. In Benue State, these libraries face persistent financial challenges, largely due to irregular government allocations and limited alternative funding sources. This study explores the funding landscape and financial sustainability of polytechnic libraries under budget constraints, focusing on the sources of funding, the impact of budget limitations on operations, and the challenges in adopting alternative revenue strategies. Using a qualitative approach, the study reviewed empirical research, policy documents, and professional reports to identify patterns and strategies for sustaining library services. Findings reveal that polytechnic libraries predominantly rely on traditional government funding, which is often unpredictable, and that budget constraints significantly hinder collection development, technology adoption, and service delivery. While alternative funding avenues such as partnerships and income-generating initiatives offer promise, their implementation is constrained by limited staff expertise and institutional support. The study underscores that achieving financial sustainability requires not only securing diverse funding but also strategic planning, innovative approaches and effective management of resources to ensure continuous service provision and long-term growth of polytechnic libraries.
Keywords: Funding, Financial Sustainability, Polytechnic Libraries, Budget Constraints

Introduction

Polytechnic libraries play a crucial role in advancing teaching, learning, and research, especially within technical and vocational education. As noted by Nwuke and Nwanguma in 2024, these libraries provide access to specialised resources, foster innovation, and serve as central knowledge hubs for both students and staff. They occupy a unique space within the academic landscape. They are specifically designed to support technical education by offering resources such as engineering manuals, scientific texts, and digital databases that cater to the practical and professional needs of students and faculty. Thiruppath (2024) and Kotuła (2023) emphasize that these libraries are vital for producing graduates equipped with skills demanded in the labour market. In Benue State, institutions like Benue State Polytechnic rely heavily on their libraries to support both teaching and applied research, yet they often face the challenge of fulfilling their academic mission with limited financial support (Liman & Shuaibu, 2023; Otike & Kisz, 2024).

A key factor that determines how effectively these libraries function is funding, which acts as the financial backbone for acquiring materials, maintaining facilities, and delivering quality services. Eric (2024) highlights that government allocations have historically been the primary

source of funding, providing a degree of stability. However, Jaja, Sam-Kalagbor, and Igoni (2023) point out that economic challenges and competing institutional priorities have made such funding increasingly unpredictable, leaving libraries struggling to keep pace with rising demands.

In practical terms, funding refers to the financial resources needed to sustain library operations, covering costs such as purchasing books, subscribing to electronic databases, upgrading technology, and training staff. Wagbara and Eseyin (2024) explain that adequate funding ensures not only the smooth running of daily operations but also the long-term growth and innovation of library services. When funds are irregular or insufficient, libraries often have to reduce essential services such as collection development, technological improvements, and user support, which, according to George, Fadimu, and Babatunde (2024), directly affects the quality of education.

Financial sustainability is closely linked to funding but goes further, encompassing the ability of a library to maintain steady resources over time to meet both current needs and future growth. As Khademia and Ismaila (2023) argue, a financially sustainable library requires careful planning, diversified income sources, and efficient management of resources. Without this, libraries risk stagnation and may struggle to adapt to evolving user needs or technological advancements, a challenge noted by Osuji and Major-Jack (2024). Nwuke and Okwu (2024) add that creative strategies, such as developing alternative income streams or partnerships, are essential to maintaining service quality and relevance.

Budget constraints further compound these issues. Limited funding can make it difficult for libraries to acquire new books, subscribe to journals, maintain infrastructure, or invest in technology, as highlighted by Walters (2024) and George, Fadimu, and Babatunde (2024). When budgets are tight, libraries must make difficult decisions, such as delaying acquisitions, postponing technological upgrades, or limiting staff development. These compromises reduce service effectiveness and hinder the library's ability to meet modern educational demands, a concern echoed by Nwuke and Okwu (2024) and Agbo, Enyinnah, and Tsegba (2023).

In Benue State, these challenges are especially pronounced. Libraries operate in an environment of inconsistent financial support, even as the demand for digital resources continues to grow (Eric, 2024; Wagbara & Eseyin, 2024). Understanding the relationship between funding, financial sustainability, and budget constraints is therefore critical. Khademia and Ismaila (2023) argue that identifying practical strategies to manage scarce resources allows polytechnic libraries to maintain their role as essential academic support centers despite persistent financial pressures (Osuji & Major-Jack, 2024).

Statement of the Problem

Across the world, polytechnic libraries face rising costs for books, electronic resources, and technology while government funding continues to decline. This creates pressure to maintain up-to-date collections and modern services with limited financial support.

In Nigeria, the problem is more severe as polytechnic libraries depend mainly on irregular and inadequate government allocations. Inflation and high subscription fees further reduce their ability to acquire resources, upgrade technology, or sustain essential services.

In Benue State, these challenges are even more pronounced. Polytechnic libraries struggle with shrinking budgets, delayed funding and few alternative income sources leading to outdated collections and declining service quality. Yet, little is known about how these libraries manage their finances or what strategies they adopt to remain sustainable, creating a critical need for focused investigation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine Funding and Financial Sustainability of Polytechnic Libraries under Budget Constraints in Benue State, Nigeria, with the following specific objectives:

1. To assess the current sources of funding available to polytechnic libraries in Benue State.
2. To determine the extent to which budget constraints affect the operations and service delivery of polytechnic libraries.
3. To explore the challenges polytechnic libraries face in implementing alternative funding strategies for sustainable operations.

Review of related Literature

This section of the research reviewed: theoretical and conceptual frameworks and previous works by other scholars.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the **Resource Dependence Theory (RDT)** developed by Pfeffer and Salancik in 1978. The theory posits that organisations rely on external resources to survive and must actively manage relationships with funding sources to secure the resources necessary for their operations. It emphasises that limited or unstable funding creates vulnerability, compelling institutions to adopt adaptive strategies such as diversification of revenue streams, partnerships, and innovative financial practices to remain sustainable.

Resource Dependence Theory is particularly relevant to this study because polytechnic libraries in Benue State depend largely on government allocations, which are often inadequate and irregular. Budget constraints force these libraries to explore alternative funding mechanisms and cost-saving strategies to sustain their services. By applying this theory, the study provides a framework for understanding how funding limitations influence financial decision-making and how polytechnic libraries can reduce dependence on a single funding source to achieve long-term financial sustainability.

Conceptual Review

Funding is the lifeblood of any institution. It provides the resources needed to acquire materials, maintain facilities, support staff, and develop services (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024a). Without adequate funding, libraries struggle to update collections, maintain essential infrastructure, or adopt new technologies that improve access to information (Jaja, Sam-Kalagbor, & Igoni, 2023; Ofor-Douglas, 2024). The availability and consistency of funding directly influence how well libraries can respond to evolving user needs (Wagbara & Eseyin, 2024; Nwuke & Okwu, 2024).

Financial sustainability complements funding by focusing on long-term viability. Libraries that are financially sustainable can continue providing services despite fluctuations in funding or economic challenges (Khademia & Ismaila, 2023; Osuji & Major-Jack, 2024). Achieving this requires strategic planning, careful resource management, and creative approaches to supplement income (Khongmalai & Distanont, 2024; Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024b), ensuring that operations continue, services expand when needed, and adaptation to change is possible without constant financial stress (Otike & Kisz, 2024; Thiruppath, 2024).

Polytechnic libraries play a unique role in supporting technical and vocational education. They serve students, lecturers, and researchers by providing both traditional and digital resources (Kotuła, 2023; Liman & Shuaibu, 2023). The quality of their services is closely tied to the level of

funding and resource management. When funding is limited, these libraries struggle to keep up with technological advances and growing user expectations (Nwuke & Nwanguma, 2024; George, Fadimu, & Babatunde, 2024).

Budget constraints are a major challenge. Limited financial resources affect the acquisition of books, journal subscriptions, infrastructure, and technological tools (Walters, 2024; George, Fadimu, & Babatunde, 2024). To navigate these limitations, libraries must prioritize essential needs, plan carefully, and explore alternative ways of generating resources or collaborating with other institutions (Khademia & Ismaila, 2023; Osuji & Major-Jack, 2024).

In summary, the relationship between these concepts is clear. Funding provides the necessary resources for libraries to operate while financial sustainability ensures that these operations can continue over the long term. Polytechnic libraries are the settings where these financial realities play out, and budget constraints represent the ongoing challenge that shapes decision-making and service delivery. Addressing these challenges thoughtfully allows polytechnic libraries to continue supporting education, research, and skill development effectively.

Related works on the Funding and Financial Sustainability of Polytechnic Libraries under Budget Constraints in Benue State, Nigeria

Suberu (2024) examined Challenges of managing library material budget allocations among selected federal polytechnic libraries in Nigeria. A structural questionnaire was used to survey the opinions of 55 Federal Polytechnic Librarians. The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics. The result showed that polytechnic librarians were responsible for the planning and budgeting for their institution's libraries. However, they have no control over the budgets for their libraries and that the funding of Federal Polytechnic Libraries was inadequate. This is because polytechnic managements do not adhere to the budget implementation policy.

Osuji and Benard (2025) investigated alternative funding strategies and financial sustainability of public universities in Rivers State, Nigeria. Three objectives, three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted correlational research design. The total population of the study consisted of 1,427 principal officers (Deans, Directors, HODs and Administrative staff) in the three public Universities in Rivers State (629 =RSU, 586 =Uniport, and 212 =IAUE). A sample of 396 principal officers (174=RSU, 163=Uniport & 59=IAUE) were drawn from population using the stratified random sampling technique. Two different self-structured questionnaires titled: "Alternative Funding Strategies Questionnaire" and "Financial Sustainability Questionnaire" which were on a 4-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree were used as instruments for the study. The instruments were face and content validated by two experts from Measurement and Evaluation and the Department of Educational Management respectively in Rivers State University and tested for reliability using Cronbach Alpha statistics which yielded reliability indexes of 0.79, 0.74 and 0.73. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics was used in answering the research questions while the null hypotheses were tested using t-Transformation at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that a positive relationship between public-private partnership, commercialization of research and income sharing agreements and financial sustainability of public universities in Rivers State, which is statistically shown to be significant.

Nwankwo, Nneji and Ngwu (2025) explored financial sustainability through revenue generation in academic libraries: An exploration of strategies and challenges in a changing higher education landscape. As traditional funding sources such as government grants and institutional

budgets become increasingly unreliable, libraries are compelled to find alternative means of supporting and expanding their services. The paper examines various revenue generation strategies like premium databases, providing specialized resources such as 3D printers and video production studios, forming collaborative partnerships, and launching crowd funding and donor programmes. Despite the potential of these approaches, academic libraries face significant challenges, such as a rapidly evolving technological landscape, competing institutional priorities and inconsistent revenue models. The paper highlights the crucial role of entrepreneurial librarians in navigating these obstacles and developing sustainable revenue-generating models that ensure the continued relevance and growth of academic libraries in an era of financial uncertainty. To address these challenges, the paper proposes solutions such as continuous technological training for staff, aligning revenue generation strategies with institutional priorities, enhancing marketing and outreach efforts, developing diversified and scalable revenue models, and improving long-term relationships with donors and external partners.

George, Fadimu and Babatunde (2024), studied budget constraints on collection development practices in Nigerian academic libraries and noted that the effective management of library collections is fundamental to the academic success of institutions, yet the constraints posed by limited budgets often present significant challenges. This study delves into the intricate relationship between budget constraints and collection development practices within Nigerian academic libraries. Drawing on qualitative research methods, including interviews and document analysis, this investigation examines the nuanced strategies employed by librarians to navigate budgetary limitations while endeavoring to maintain and enhance library collections. The study reveals that Nigerian academic libraries face multifaceted challenges stemming from insufficient funding, inflationary pressures, and competing resource demands. Librarians demonstrate resilience and adaptability in their collection development efforts, leveraging various tactics such as prioritization, consortial agreements, and resource sharing initiatives to maximize the impact of available resources. However, these strategies often entail compromises that may affect the comprehensiveness and currency of library collections, thereby impacting the quality of services provided to users. Moreover, the study underscores the critical role of advocacy and collaboration in addressing budget constraints, emphasizing the need for sustained engagement with institutional stakeholders to garner support for library funding initiatives. It also highlights the potential for technological innovations, including digital repositories and open access resources, to mitigate the impact of budget limitations and enhance access to scholarly materials.

Kumar (2024) examined the role of public libraries in changing society: Challenges and opportunities and observed that public libraries have long been pivotal institutions within communities, serving as hubs for learning, information access, and social engagement. In the digital age, these institutions face both challenges and opportunities in adapting to the changing needs of society. This research article examines the evolving role of public libraries, analyzing the challenges they encounter and the opportunities they have to remain relevant and impactful. Challenges include funding constraints, technological advancements, changing user demographics, and evolving community needs. Despite these obstacles, public libraries have the opportunity to leverage technology for enhanced services, create innovative programs that cater to diverse populations, and strengthen community partnerships. By addressing these challenges and embracing opportunities, public libraries can continue to be indispensable assets in fostering literacy, education, and community development.

Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design anchored on document analysis and interpretive review of empirical studies, policy documents, and professional reports relating to funding, financial sustainability, and budget constraints in polytechnic libraries. The aim was to explore the sources of funding available to polytechnic libraries in Benue State, examine how budget limitations affect their operations and service delivery, and investigate the challenges these libraries face in implementing alternative funding strategies for sustainable operations.

Data were obtained through systematic searches of scholarly databases, institutional repositories, open access platforms, and library science journals. Works such as Suberu (2024), Osuji and Benard (2025), Nwankwo, Nneji and Ngwu (2025), George, Fadimu and Babatunde (2024), and Kumar (2024) provided core empirical evidence, while complementary insights were drawn from policy and professional reports on public and academic library funding practices. Reference list screening was also applied to capture additional relevant sources.

A documentary review protocol guided the identification and extraction of information across three key themes: (1) the current sources of funding available to polytechnic libraries in Benue State; (2) the extent to which budget constraints affect library operations and service delivery; and (3) the challenges and strategies involved in implementing alternative funding mechanisms for financial sustainability. Data were systematically analysed using thematic interpretation, focusing on patterns, similarities, and contrasts across the reviewed studies and reports to generate insights relevant to the research objectives.

This methodology allowed the study to comprehensively assess the financial realities of polytechnic libraries in Benue State, drawing lessons from both local and international experiences while highlighting practical approaches to enhancing financial sustainability under budget constraints.

Discussion of Findings

Current Sources of Funding for Polytechnic Libraries in Benue State

The studies reviewed indicate that polytechnic libraries rely predominantly on government allocations and institutional budgets as their main sources of funding. Suberu's (2024) work highlights that while librarians are responsible for planning and preparing library budgets, they often have little control over the actual disbursement of funds. This means that even well-prepared budget proposals may not translate into the necessary resources for acquiring books, journals, or digital tools. Similarly, Osuji and Benard (2025) noted that alternative funding sources, such as partnerships, commercialization of research, and income-sharing models, are gaining prominence in higher education institutions but remain underutilized in polytechnic libraries. The implication is that while some innovative avenues for financial support exist, polytechnic libraries in Benue State are still largely dependent on traditional funding channels, which are often unpredictable and inadequate for meeting all operational needs.

Impact of Budget Constraints on Library Operations and Service Delivery

Budget limitations significantly affect the day-to-day operations of polytechnic libraries. George, Fadimu, and Babatunde (2024) observed that insufficient funding forces librarians to prioritize certain collections or services over others, sometimes compromising the comprehensiveness and currency of library resources. Suberu (2024) also emphasizes that non-adherence to budget implementation policies by polytechnic management further exacerbates the problem, leading to delayed acquisitions and limited access to essential materials. These

constraints can affect the quality of service delivery, as libraries struggle to maintain collections, subscribe to relevant journals, or integrate technological resources like databases and e-learning platforms. The cumulative effect is that students and staff may not have timely access to the information and tools necessary for learning, teaching, and research.

Challenges in Implementing Alternative Funding Strategies for Sustainable Operations

Exploring alternative funding strategies presents both opportunities and challenges for polytechnic libraries. Nwankwo, Nneji, and Ngwu (2025) discuss how academic libraries are increasingly seeking revenue-generating approaches, such as offering premium services, developing specialized resources, and forming collaborations with external partners. However, the adoption of these strategies is not straightforward. Polytechnic libraries face challenges such as limited staff expertise in entrepreneurial activities, lack of institutional support, and inconsistency in revenue flows. Suberu (2024) suggests that structured interventions, like direct budget deductions and e-payment systems managed by regulatory bodies, could improve financial access, but implementing such measures requires coordinated policy action. Additionally, Kumar (2024) points out that technological innovations, while promising, also demand upfront investments that may not be feasible under constrained budgets, further complicating efforts toward financial sustainability.

Synthesis

Taken together, the findings highlight a recurring theme: polytechnic libraries in Benue State operate under a fragile financial environment where dependence on traditional funding sources leaves them vulnerable to budgetary uncertainties. Budget constraints not only limit the scope of services but also restrict the adoption of innovative strategies that could enhance sustainability. While alternative funding approaches hold potential, their successful implementation requires careful planning, institutional support, and the development of financial and technological capacity among library staff. The evidence suggests that achieving sustainable operations in polytechnic libraries is not only a matter of securing more funds but also creating structured systems and strategies that ensure efficient use of resources and long-term viability.

Conclusion

The study has shown that polytechnic libraries in Benue State play a vital role in supporting teaching, learning, and research, particularly in technical and vocational education. However, their effectiveness is closely tied to the availability and management of financial resources. The findings indicate that these libraries largely depend on government allocations and institutional budgets, which are often irregular and insufficient. Budget constraints directly affect their ability to acquire essential materials, maintain infrastructure, and adopt new technologies, thereby limiting the quality of services offered to students and staff.

While alternative funding strategies—such as partnerships, commercialization of resources, and revenue-generating initiatives—present promising opportunities for financial sustainability, their implementation is hindered by limited staff expertise, inadequate institutional support, and inconsistent revenue streams. Overall, the study underscores that achieving financial sustainability in polytechnic libraries is not solely about securing more funds; it requires careful planning, innovative approaches, and strategic management of available resources to ensure continuous service delivery and long-term viability.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Funding Sources: Polytechnic libraries in Benue State should explore and diversify

their funding beyond government allocations, including public-private partnerships, income-generating services, and donor support, to ensure a more stable and consistent financial base for library operations.

2. Mitigate the Impact of Budget Constraints: Library management should prioritize critical services and adopt cost-effective strategies, such as careful budget planning, resource sharing, and phased acquisition of materials and technology, to maintain service delivery despite financial limitations.
3. Develop Alternative Funding Strategies: Staff capacity should be strengthened through training in financial management and entrepreneurial skills, enabling libraries to implement innovative approaches—like premium services or collaborative initiatives—that support sustainable operations over the long term.

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