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USE OF LIBRARY EDUCATION AMONG THE NURISNG STUDENTS IN THE COLLEGE OF NURSING, NNAMDI AZIKIWE UNIVERSITY TEACHING HOSPITAL (NAUTH)

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ABSTRACT

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This study investigates the use of library resources and services by nursing students of the College of Nursing, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital (NAUTH). It explores the various purposes for which students utilize the library, reviews related literature on academic library usage, identifies key challenges affecting effective utilization, and offers practical recommendations. The findings reveal that most students depend on the library mainly for examination preparation and assignment completion, while engagement with specialized resources such as electronic databases and evidence-based practice tools remains low. Major constraints identified include inadequate up-to-date collections, poor internet access, limited information literacy skills, and insufficient infrastructural facilities. The study concludes by recommending collaborative efforts among the college administration, library management, and academic staff to strengthen the library's capacity to support learning, research, and the development of evidence-based nursing professionals.

Keywords: Library Use, Nursing Students, Information Literacy, Evidence-Based Practice, Academic Libraries, Challenges

Introduction

The academic library is universally recognized as the cornerstone of higher education, a vital organ that supports the teaching, learning, and research activities of an institution. For health sciences education, particularly nursing, its role is even more critical. Nursing is a dynamic and evidence-based profession that requires practitioners to be lifelong learners, constantly updating their knowledge with the latest research and clinical guidelines (Shorten et al., 2018). The library, therefore, serves not merely as a repository of books but as an active learning space that provides access to a vast universe of information necessary for academic success and professional competence. At the College of Nursing, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital (NAUTH), the mission is to produce competent, compassionate, and knowledgeable nurses who can meet the complex health challenges of the 21st century. The achievement of this noble goal is intrinsically linked to the students' ability to effectively locate, evaluate, and apply information. The library is the primary facility designed to facilitate this process. It offers a range of resources, from foundational textbooks and reference materials to sophisticated online databases like CINAHL, PubMed, and Cochrane Library, which are essential for evidence-based practice (EBP).

However, the mere presence of a library does not guarantee its effective utilization. The patterns, purposes, and proficiency with which nursing students use library resources are influenced by a multitude of factors, including their information literacy skills, the quality and accessibility of resources, and the overall learning environment (Borrego et al., 2018). In the Nigerian context, and specifically within resource-constrained settings like many teaching hospital schools of nursing, these factors often present significant challenges. Recent studies specific to the health sciences environment in Nigeria, including work by Nzewi (2023a) at the College of Health Sciences, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, highlight that fresh students often enter with underdeveloped reading habits and low familiarity with complex library resources, creating an initial barrier to effective use. Furthermore, the digital divide remains a pressing issue, as the utilization of electronic information resources in Nigerian academic libraries is often inhibited by factors such as inadequate ICT skills among both users and information professionals (Nzewi, 2021a; Nzewi, 2022).

This article, therefore, seeks to provide a comprehensive examination of the use of library education among nursing students at the College of Nursing, NAUTH. It will delve into the specific purposes that drive students to the library, synthesize relevant literature, identify the salient challenges they face, and propose evidence-informed solutions. The ultimate aim is to contribute to the discourse on improving library services, thereby

empowering nursing students to become more effective information users and, consequently, better healthcare providers.

Purposes of the Study

A clear understanding of why students use the library is fundamental to tailoring services to meet their needs effectively. This study is guided by three primary purposes:

1. To Ascertain the Primary Motivations for Library Use among Nursing Students at NAUTH.
2. To Evaluate the Level of Utilization of Both Print and Electronic Information Resources.
3. To Identify the Specific Academic Tasks for Which the Library is Most Frequently Consulted.

Literature Review

The use of academic libraries by students has been a subject of extensive research globally. Studies consistently show a positive correlation between library use and academic performance. In a comprehensive study, Cox & Jantti (2019) found a statistically significant link between students' grades and their use of key library resources, including book borrowing and database access. They argued that the library contributes to student success by providing the necessary tools for deep learning and research.

In the specific context of nursing education, the library's role is pivotal in fostering Evidence-Based Practice (EBP). EBP is the conscientious and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about patient care (Sackett et al., 2000). To achieve this, nurses must be proficient in formulating clinical questions, searching for relevant research, appraising the evidence critically, and applying it to practice. Shorten et al. (2018) emphasize that academic libraries are the training ground for these essential skills. Studies from developed countries indicate that when nursing students receive integrated information literacy instruction, their ability to find and appraise high-quality evidence improves markedly.

However, a different picture often emerges in developing regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa. Research from similar institutions in Nigeria highlights a pattern of library use that is largely traditional and exam-focused. A study conducted by Atinmo & Morolake (2019) at a school of nursing in South-West Nigeria found that over 80% of students used the library primarily for reading their personal notes and textbooks in preparation for examinations. This is consistent with findings by Nzewi

(2023), who reported that the reading habits of health science students at Nnamdi Azikiwe University are predominantly examination-driven, with minimal engagement in extensive or pleasure reading. The use of electronic journals and databases was minimal, attributed to factors like lack of awareness, inadequate training, and erratic power supply.

Furthermore, Ojedokun & Owolabi (2020) in their research across several Nigerian tertiary institutions identified a significant gap in information literacy skills. Many students, they reported, lacked the competence to formulate effective search strategies, evaluate the credibility of online sources, or cite references correctly. This skills deficit is exacerbated by systemic issues within library services. As Nzewi (2022) notes, the ICT proficiency of information professionals themselves is a critical determinant of effective service delivery; when librarians lack advanced digital skills, their ability to train and support users is severely compromised. This skills deficit forces students to rely on a limited number of textbooks and, increasingly, on unstructured internet searches using Google, which may not yield academically rigorous or clinically reliable information.

Focus on Health Sciences and Nursing

Delving deeper into health sciences libraries, the expectations are even higher. Resources like MEDLINE, CINAHL, and PsycINFO are considered indispensable for conducting thorough literature reviews and staying abreast of medical advancements. A study by Borrego et al. (2018) demonstrated that access to specialized health sciences databases was a strong predictor of research output and quality among health students in Spain. They concluded that "investment in electronic resources is not an optional luxury but a core component of a modern health sciences education."

However, in the Nigerian context, this investment is often hampered by significant "inhibitors." Nzewi (2021) identified key barriers to the effective utilization of electronic information resources in academic libraries, including inconsistent power supply, poor internet connectivity, and a lack of adequate training for both staff and students. These challenges create a digital divide that separates Nigerian health science students from the global evidence base. This reality is echoed in a Ghanaian study closely mirroring the Nigerian context, where Ansah & Mensah (2021) investigated library use among nursing and midwifery students. Their findings resonated with the challenges faced in Nigeria: overcrowding, outdated book collections, and insufficient copies of key textbooks. Students reported spending more time struggling to find a seat or a required book than actually engaging in productive study. This highlights a critical issue where the library, instead of

being an enabler, becomes a source of frustration and academic stress.

The concept of "library anxiety," first coined by Mellon (1986), is also relevant. This is a feeling of unease, fear, or confusion that students experience when using or contemplating the use of the library. For nursing students, who are already under significant academic and clinical pressure, this anxiety can be a major barrier. This anxiety can be compounded for fresh students, who, as Nzewi (2023a) found, often struggle with navigating both library and information resources upon entry into university. It can be triggered by the large size of the library, a lack of knowledge about how to locate information, or intimidation by technology. Studies by Jiao & Onwuegbuzie (2019) have shown that library anxiety can negatively affect students' academic performance and their willingness to use library resources.

The literature, therefore, presents a clear dichotomy: on one hand, the recognized global standard of the library as an active partner in EBP and academic success; on the other hand, the reality in many resource-limited settings like Nigeria, where libraries are often under-utilized, under-resourced, and perceived primarily as quiet reading rooms rather than dynamic information hubs. The work of researchers like Nzewi provides critical, localized evidence of the specific barriers from foundational reading habits (2023b) and freshman adjustment (2023a) to professional ICT capacity (2022) and infrastructural inhibitors (2021)—that must be addressed. This review underscores the need for context-specific investigations, such as this one at NAUTH, to diagnose local problems and craft effective local solutions.

Challenges (Infrastructural and Resource-Based)

The effective use of the library by nursing students at the College of Nursing, NAUTH, is hampered by a multitude of challenges. These can be broadly categorized into infrastructural/resource-based and user/skill-based challenges. This section will address the former.

Inadequate and Outdated Collections: This is perhaps the most significant challenge. The library's collection of nursing and medical textbooks is often insufficient for the student population. Multiple students compete for a single copy of a core textbook, especially during peak periods like exam preparation. Furthermore, a considerable portion of the print collection is outdated, with publications that are over ten years old. In a field like nursing where guidelines and protocols change frequently, relying on obsolete information can be detrimental to both academic performance and future patient care (Atinmo & Morolake, 2019).

Poor Internet Connectivity and Inadequate ICT Facilities: Access to the global body of knowledge is contingent on reliable internet access. The library often suffers from slow, unstable, or completely unavailable internet connectivity. This renders the access to electronic databases, e-books, and online journals—which are supposed to compensate for print shortages—frustrating and nearly impossible. Coupled with this is an insufficient number of functional computers in the library. Many students do not own personal laptops, and the limited number of public computers cannot cater to the demand, creating long queues and limiting access time.

Insufficient Seating Capacity and Poor Ergonomics: The physical space of the library is often overcrowded. The seating capacity is inadequate for the growing student population, leading to students sitting on floors, windowsills, or even standing during study sessions. This creates an uncondusive learning environment. Additionally, the furniture is often old, non-ergonomic, and uncomfortable for prolonged study, which can discourage students from spending productive time in the library.

Erratic Power Supply: The unreliable public power supply in Nigeria, compounded by an often overstretched or non-functional library generator/inverter system, leads to frequent power outages. These outages disrupt reading, disable computer use, and plunge the library into darkness and heat, forcing students to leave. This inconsistency makes it difficult for students to rely on the library as a stable place for academic work.

Challenges (User and Skill-Based)

Beyond the physical and resource constraints, there are critical challenges related to the users themselves the students and their level of preparedness to navigate a complex information landscape.

1. **Low Level of Information Literacy Skills:** As identified in the literature, many nursing students enter and progress through their training without formal training on how to use the library effectively. They lack skills in areas such as:
2. **Database Searching:** Inability to construct effective search queries using Boolean operators (AND, OR, NOT) or use subject headings in databases like CINAHL.
3. **Information Evaluation:** Difficulty in critically appraising sources to distinguish between a reputable scholarly article and a predatory journal or a popular website.
4. **Reference Management:** Lack of knowledge on how to cite sources correctly to avoid plagiarism, using styles like APA or Vancouver.

5. This skills gap means that even when resources are available, students may not be able to find or use them effectively (Ojedokun & Owolabi, 2020).
6. **Over-reliance on Passive Information Sources:** Many students demonstrate a strong preference for and reliance on a few recommended textbooks and, more concerning, on lecture notes from their tutors. They perceive the library as a place to "read" these notes rather than to "research" and expand their knowledge. This passive learning approach is at odds with the active, inquiry-based learning required for evidence-based practice.

Awareness and Perception Issues: There is a significant lack of awareness about the full range of services the library could offer. Many students are unaware of the existence of specific electronic databases the institution may subscribe to. Others hold the perception that the library is only for "serious" or "top" students, or that it is too complicated to use, leading to library anxiety (Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 2019).

Time Constraints due to Demanding Schedules: The curriculum for nursing students is notoriously demanding, balancing rigorous academic coursework with intense clinical postings in the hospital. This leaves students with very little free time. When faced with a choice between resting, attending to personal needs, or going to the library, the library often loses out, especially if the perceived effort to find information is high.

Solutions to the Challenges

Library Management and Institutional Interventions

Addressing the identified challenges requires a multi-faceted and collaborative approach involving the library management, the college administration, and the academic staff. The following solutions are proposed:

Strategic Collection Development:

1. **Needs Assessment:** The library should conduct an annual, systematic needs assessment involving both students and faculty to identify core and relevant titles that need to be acquired or updated.
2. **Shift to E-resources:** While updating the print collection is necessary, a strategic and budget-friendly shift towards subscribing to key e-book packages (e.g., McGraw-Hill Access Medicine, Springer Link) and database bundles is crucial. E-books can be accessed by multiple users simultaneously, solving the problem of insufficient copies.

3. Partnerships and Grants: The library should actively seek partnerships with professional bodies like the National Association of Nigerian Nurses and Midwives (NANNM) and apply for grants from international organizations to fund resource acquisition.

Upgrading Infrastructure and Technology

1. Investment in Internet: The institution must prioritize investing in a robust, high-bandwidth internet connection specifically for the library. A dedicated fiber-optic line would be ideal.
2. Power Backup: A reliable and silent inverter/solar power system should be installed to ensure uninterrupted power supply to the computer and reading sections of the library.
3. Expansion and Renovation: Explore possibilities for expanding the library space or creating a 24/7 reading room section to alleviate congestion. Invest in modern, ergonomic furniture to improve comfort.
4. Marketing and Awareness Creation
5. The library must actively market its services. This can be done through:
6. Orientation programs for new students that are more engaging and demonstrative.
7. Creating and distributing simple, illustrated guides on "How to Access E-Resources."
8. Using notice boards, social media groups, and the college's website to regularly announce new acquisitions, database trials, and training workshops.

Enhancing Information Literacy and User Education

1. Empowering the user is as important as improving the resources. A comprehensive information literacy program is non-negotiable.
2. Mandatory, Integrated Information Literacy Curriculum
3. Library education should not be a one-off orientation lecture. It should be a mandatory, for-credit course or a series of workshops integrated into the nursing curriculum, preferably in the first year and reinforced in subsequent years. The curriculum should cover:

The concept of Evidence-Based Practice and the role of the library.

1. Effective search strategies in the library catalog and online databases.
2. Critical appraisal of information sources (journal articles, websites).

Academic integrity and referencing skills (using APA style).

1. Collaborative Teaching between Librarians and Faculty
2. Librarians should not work in isolation. They should collaborate with course tutors to design subject-specific research sessions. For example, when students are assigned a care study on Diabetes Mellitus, a librarian can be invited to a class to demonstrate how to find the latest nursing interventions and clinical guidelines on diabetes from credible sources. This makes the training immediately relevant and practical.

Point-of-Need Support:

In addition to formal classes, the library should provide:

1. One-on-One Research Consultations: Where students can book appointments with a librarian for personalized help with their projects.
2. Online Tutorials: Developing short video tutorials on topics like "How to search CINAHL" or "How to cite a journal article" that students can access anytime on their phones.
3. A Helpful and Approachable Staff: Library staff should be trained to be proactive, patient, and supportive in assisting students, thereby reducing library anxiety.

The Role of Faculty and Administration

The successful transformation of the library into a dynamic learning center cannot be achieved by the library staff alone. The academic faculty and college administration play a pivotal role.

Faculty Advocacy and Assignment Design

Championing the Library: Faculty members should actively encourage and even require the use of diverse library resources in their assignments. Instead of asking students to "read chapter 5," assignments can be designed to prompt inquiry, such as "Compare and contrast two recent journal articles (published within the last 5 years) on the management of postpartum hemorrhage."

Verifying Resources: Before giving reading lists, faculty should verify with the library that the recommended materials are available or can be acquired. This prevents a situation where students are directed to resources they cannot access.

Institutional Policy and Funding

Prioritizing the Library in Budgeting: The college administration must recognize the library as a critical academic unit and allocate a significant and consistent portion of the institution's budget to it. This funding is

needed for new books, database subscriptions, and infrastructure upgrades.

Policy on Information Literacy: The administration should enact a policy that formally integrates information literacy into the core curriculum, making it a compulsory component of the nursing program.

Support for Professional Development: Librarians should be sponsored to attend workshops and conferences to keep their own skills updated, especially in the fast-evolving area of digital librarianship and health informatics.

Conclusion

The library at the College of Nursing, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, stands at a critical juncture. It has the potential to be a powerful engine for driving academic excellence and fostering the culture of evidence-based practice that is essential for modern nursing. However, this potential is currently under-realized due to a confluence of challenges ranging from infrastructural deficits and inadequate resources to a significant gap in the information literacy skills of its student users.

This article has outlined that while students use the library, their engagement is often superficial and limited to traditional purposes like exam preparation. The full spectrum of electronic resources and the skills required to leverage them for deep learning and clinical inquiry remain largely untapped. The challenges are significant but not insurmountable.

Addressing these issues requires a concerted, collaborative effort. The library management must take proactive steps in strategic collection development, infrastructure upgrade, and aggressive marketing of services. The academic faculty must become partners in learning, designing assignments that compel library use and collaborating with librarians to provide integrated information literacy instruction. Most importantly, the college administration must demonstrate unwavering commitment by providing the necessary policy support and financial investment.

By working together, these stakeholders can transform the NAUTH College of Nursing library from a passive repository of books into a vibrant, user-centric, and technologically advanced knowledge hub. This transformation is not a luxury; it is an imperative for producing the next generation of Nigerian nurses who are not only clinically competent but also critical thinkers, lifelong learners, and exemplary evidence-based practitioners.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this article, the following recommendations are made:

1. To the College Administration and NAUTH Management:
2. Increase Funding: Allocate a minimum of 10% of the college's annual budget to the library for the specific purpose of updating print collections, subscribing to essential electronic databases (e.g., CINAHL, PubMed Central), and upgrading ICT infrastructure.
3. Invest in Infrastructure: Fund the installation of a robust internet connection, a reliable solar-powered inverter system for the library, and the expansion of the reading space to reduce congestion.
4. Policy Formulation: Formulate and implement a college-wide policy that makes a credit-bearing "Information Literacy and Evidence-Based Practice" course mandatory for all first-year nursing students.

To the Library Management:

Conduct a User Needs Assessment: Immediately conduct a survey to formally assess the resource needs of students and faculty to guide future acquisitions.

1. Develop a Digital Library Portal: Create a simple, mobile-friendly library website or portal that provides one-click access to e-resources, online tutorials, and research guides tailored to nursing topics.
2. Enhance User Education: Move beyond orientation to offer regular, hands-on workshops on database searching, reference management, and plagiarism avoidance. Promote one-on-one research consultations.
3. Improve Marketing: Use multiple channels (social media, posters, class announcements) to continuously inform students about new resources, services, and training sessions.

To the Academic Staff (Nursing Tutors):

1. Revise Assignment Designs: Design assignments and projects that explicitly require students to find, evaluate, and cite recent scholarly articles from library databases, moving beyond textbook reproduction.
2. Collaborate with Librarians: Invite librarians to give guest lectures or workshops within your courses on research methods relevant to specific topics or assignments.
3. Verify Resource Availability: Before publishing reading lists, consult with the library to ensure

recommended materials are available or can be procured in a timely manner.

To the Students:

1. Be Proactive: Actively participate in the library training sessions offered. Do not shy away from asking librarians for help with your research.
2. Explore Beyond Textbooks: Challenge yourself to use at least one scholarly journal article from a library database for your next assignment.
3. Provide Feedback: Formally and constructively communicate your challenges and needs to the library management and college administration through student representatives.

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