

Information Services in School Libraries: A Study of their Contribution to Student Academic Development

Shokhista Makhmaraimova^{1*}, Noila Mustafaeva², Lobar Buriyeva³, Diloram Ashirbaeva⁴,
Karamat Kilicheva⁵, Manzura Rustamova⁶, I.B. Sapaev⁷ and Aziza Turakulova⁸

^{1*}Termez State University, Uzbekistan

²Tashkent State University of Law, Uzbekistan

³Karshi state university, Uzbekistan

⁴Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

⁵University of Tashkent for Applied Sciences, Uzbekistan

⁶Kimyo International University in Tashkent, Uzbekistan

⁷Head of the Department “Physics and Chemistry”, “Tashkent Institute of Irrigation and Agricultural Mechanization Engineers” National Research University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Scientific Researcher of the Alfraganus University Tashkent, Uzbekistan; School of Engineering, Central Asian University, Tashkent, Uzbekistan

⁸National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek, Uzbekistan

E-mail: ¹mahmaraimovash@tersu.uz, ²n.mustafaeva@tsul.uz, ³lobarburiyeva84@gmail.com, ⁴hengbok21@mail.ru,

⁵karomatkilicheva320@gmail.com, ⁶m.rustamova@kiut.uz, ⁷sapaevibrokhim@gmail.com, ⁸a.turakulova@nuu.uz

ORCID: ¹<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0689-6955>, ²<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8373-3060>,

³<https://orcid.org/0009-0007-8146-7057>, ⁴<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-4160-4342>,

⁵<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0669-9997>, ⁶<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9377-5936>,

⁷<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2365-1554>, ⁸<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1682-9094>

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Abstract - This research analyses how the information services offered by school libraries impact students' academic development. During this period, when scholarly information is vital, school libraries are being transformed into learning and educational resource centres. This study aims to establish how digital databases, reference books, reading programs, instruction by a librarian, and scaffolding impact students' engagement and comprehension achievement. The study adopted a survey approach. Data was collected using questionnaires and interviews from various schools' students, librarians, and teacher educators to create a complete picture of the existing system. The outcome for school students with functional libraries and active information services is positive, with skill development, reading, and general academic self-esteem. Conversely, the study also points out imbalances with regard to the availability of services in the less funded or more rural components, where school libraries do not have standard facilities. The research shows why the services provided by such libraries need to be equal by measuring the difference and range of such environments. The result is provided with the appropriate policy that needs to be targeted with funds to help improve the library's aim towards academic achievement for students.

Keywords: School Libraries, Student Performance, Information Services, Academic Development, Educational Equity, Library Resources, Learning Support

I. INTRODUCTION

The significance of school libraries in the education system has not changed over time since these facilities offer

materials and services helpful for educational and intellectual advancement. In today's world, with a greater emphasis on information literacy, the role of school libraries has transformed from housing physical books and resources to providing vital information services that aid students in navigating the complexities of the digital world. Such information services include, but are not limited to, research assistance, academic support, teaching digital literacy, and many others. In an age where information overload has become the standard, school libraries are vital spaces that offer resources and aids designed for purposeful engagement with knowledge. Within school libraries, the umbrella term 'information services' contains a range of actions designed to assist students with locating, evaluating, and utilizing information. These services include, in addition to traditional aids such as access to print and electronic resources, more contemporary aids like digital literacy, guidance in retrieving information, and assisting with research and academic work. Since contemporary educational syllabi focus more on research, analysis, and self-study, information services aim to enhance the students' academic growth. The importance of these services is further highlighted by the fact that students need to be able to access information, and critically, they need to evaluate, synthesize, and apply that information.

Despite agreeing that school libraries are fundamental to students' academic development, there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding how services provided in school

information centers directly relate to information success. (Allabergenov et al., 2024). The majority of research has concentrated on the school library's collection of educational materials, its physical technology, and its contribution to the educational atmosphere (Mohanty et al., 2024). However, little is known about how information services, from personal interaction instruction to online digital tools training, impact student output, particularly regarding academic achievement, research skills, and higher-order thinking skills. This gap in research, in which library and information services are integrated into a contemporary educational paradigm that advocates for information literacy and self-directed learning, constitutes a crucial concern (Hawthorne & Fontaine, 2024). The interplay between information services and student scholarly evolution is one crucial aspect that remains inadequately explored. In the contemporary educational landscape, success is not a function of rote learning and knowing the subjects taught in class alone; it requires self-sufficient retrieval, assessment, and application of knowledge. The rapid pace of technology, coupled with abundant digital content, necessitates fostering information literacy skills in students. Such skill guidance information services empower learners to develop self-conducted research and evidence-based reasoning needed in and beyond college.

Information services' assistance in student academic progress requires additional focus. Educational research has largely focused on school libraries from a macro perspective, outlining their role in educational resource provision and learning environment facilitation (Kafrooshe & Ibrahim, 2022). However, few studies focus on information services that help students develop specific skills such as research, academic writing, and analytical critique. The effect of library information services, especially information literacy teaching, research consultations, and training on educational technologies, on student engagement and academic workload is vital (Galarza et al., 2024). Furthermore, the delivery of information services within school libraries raises issues of equity and access that must be addressed. Many schools have information resources; however, not all students can use the information services as fully as required. This is particularly the case for low-funded schools and information services in under-resourced communities (Wu, 2024). All of these obstacles must be understood so that all students, regardless of their background, can access the academic resources provided by the school library.

This research tries to fill in the gaps by investigating the roles of information services in students' academic development in school libraries. Using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, this research attempts to evaluate the effect of some information services, including information literacy teaching, research support, and access to digital materials, on students' performance regarding their research, analysis, and writing skills. In addition, this research intends to investigate students' and teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards the usefulness and effectiveness of these services in relation to

academic achievement. This research hopes to resolve a missing part in the literature by analyzing the impacts of information services on students' academic development. Also, it will present some conclusions on how school libraries may improve their services and, in turn, offer valuable suggestions to policymakers and school supervisors on improving the effectiveness of information services towards students' academic success. Besides, this study aims to explain information literacy as a vital component of advanced learning science and advocate for the progressive transformation of school libraries to respond to student needs in the digital world.

Consequently, this research focuses on the information services needed for students' academic development. It emphasizes the importance of investing in library services that develop and prepare students for the uncertainties of tomorrow. This study aims to formulate policies that advance the role of school libraries in students' academic achievement and position students to meet the demands of the information society, enhancing the argument for adopting integrated information services in educational systems. The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature on school library services and their educational impact. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, including data collection and analysis techniques. Section 4 presents the study's findings on the availability and effectiveness of information services in school libraries. Section 5 discusses the results and their implications for academic development. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper with key insights and recommendations for enhancing school library services.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A considerable amount of scholarly work has analyzed the impact of school libraries and their information services on students' academic progression. School libraries aid in learners' academic success by equipping them with the appropriate educational resources and teaching literacy skills essential for learning. As a result, multiple empirical studies have examined the correlation between library services' quality and adequacy and student educational outcomes (Todd, 2005; Lance & Hofschire, 2013).

(McColvin, 2017) notes that school library information services go beyond physically organizing books; they include facilitating access to print and electronic materials, fostering advanced academic skills, and stimulating reading to assist students with their studies. Specialized staff and resources available in school libraries enable children to use the increasing learning opportunities available to them, enhancing their academic achievement (Smith, 2018). This expands the understanding of library services regarding students' academic achievement by adding the cognitive, affective, and social aspects of learning.

The significance of a properly stocked and maintained library is essential to the learning progression of students. An enhancement in academic performance with library services

utilization has also been studied (Hughes-Hassell, 2016). Available resources in the library are a great advantage to students and aid them in performing better than students who do not utilize the library in reading, writing, and other academic activities (Neuman & Celano, 2006). This is also proved by the (Scholastic, 2018) research study that highlights the value of students having access to credible information resources that promote greater engagement and attention towards school and improve their academic grades in the long term.

The students' winning strategy towards mastery is the informational resources taught in the library, which is usually termed information literacy. Identifying, evaluating, and using information effectively qualifies as information literacy and is essential for academic research and critical thinking (Haycock, 2003). Library instructional programs designed to foster these competencies contribute to learners' academic growth by equipping them with skills that enable them to effectively navigate through a plethora of conflicting information (Burgin, 2019).

In addition, the impact of school libraries on helping to subsidize the resource poverty of some learners have been documented (e.g., Lance & Kimmel, 2013). Students in schools with better library services tended to have more equitable academic achievement outcomes, even among students from economically poorer families. (Fitzgerald, 2015) points out the broad range of resources school libraries provide and the information-rich environment they foster to promote educational equity for all learners. Library services work toward academic equity by providing students from different backgrounds with equal opportunities to various materials. Research findings extend beyond the academic functions of school libraries to include their role as a protective space that supports students' psychosocial health and well-being. (Green & Holmes, 2016) assert that school libraries improve the general school climate by providing a safe space devoid of ridicule where students can explore their interests freely. This social function of libraries enhances the students' sense of belonging and community, which research has shown is associated with increased engagement in school and improved academic performance (Stanford, 2014).

Even at a practical level, school libraries have a crucial function in fostering digital literacy. Considering the escalating use of technology for educational purposes, libraries stand out as the sole place where learners can hone their crucial digital competencies (Hayes, 2017). Through technology integration within the library context, students can interact with digital materials, which augment their research skills and prepare them for future scholarly and professional endeavors (Moss, 2020). Therefore, school libraries have been foundational in helping students learn how to live and function in modern society, which is heavily influenced by digital technology.

Despite the advantages of information services in school libraries, gaps do exist, which many studies have documented. Poor funding, inadequate staffing, and a lack of

equitable resource distribution still dampen fully developed academic library services for educational advancement (Smith, 2018). These gaps require swift attention from educational policymakers to change the perception of school libraries' role in the education system and invest significantly in these facilities and resources (Todd, 2005).

III. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SCHOOL LIBRARY SERVICES AND EDUCATIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Scholars have studied the relationship between school library services and student performance and development in differing ways and with varied results. From a comparative perspective, some major works show striking similarities or key differences regarding how school libraries are framed or understood. This indicates the scope and shortcomings of research within the library education nexus.

1. Relationship with Academic Achievement

What remains relatively well understood within the research literature is the impact of school libraries on academic achievement. (Lance & Kimmel, 2013) conducted a longitudinal study spanning several districts. They reported that underperforming schools with well-provisioned libraries significantly improved student test scores and academic performance. On the contrary, (Smith, 2018) offers a more balanced perspective adding that while access to library resources does relate to improved performance academically, the level of impact is greater on older students compared to younger students, especially in elementary school, particularly in subjects that require advanced critical research skills like social studies and history.

(Neuman & Celano, 2006), in their exploration of school libraries in low-income communities, emphasized the non-fiction collection of the library as one of the non-fiction collections as one of the factors determining reading comprehension and critical thinking skills within children. This subset of the study highlighted the barriers libraries face in providing culturally relevant materials, arguing that multicultural representation is paramount, especially in the context of low-income, underprivileged communities.

While Lance & Kimmel's research supports the notion of a universal connection between access to library resources and academic performance, (Smith, 2018) and (Neuman & Celano, 2006) argue that the context, focusing on the age and socio-economic status of the students, should also be taken into consideration. This indicates that demographic and contextual factors might play a crucial role in determining the influence of libraries.

2. Research and Information Literacy

Another area in which school libraries exert a measurable influence is information literacy. (McColvin, 2017) notes that school libraries positively impact information literacy through research training, databases, and resource evaluation. In contrast, (Hughes-Hassell, 2016) broadened the scope by

adding digital literacy. He explains that students easily lost in the maze of digital information are aided by modern school libraries incorporating technological devices.

The works of Burgin strengthen the notion that school libraries help students learn how to evaluate sources, synthesize information, and apply research appropriately. However, Burgin (2019) argues that information literacy skills, although important, must be coupled with collaborative learning strategies to be truly practical. In contrast, traditional print-centric library models may need to shift to accommodate the growing digital landscape.

Comparative Insight: The divergence between (McColvin, 2017) and (Hughes-Hassell, 2016) centers on adopting technology in information literacy, although both acknowledge its development as vital. This highlights a gap in the literature regarding how school libraries blend traditional methods with new technologies to enhance information literacy.

3. Equity in Access and Resource Distribution

An equally important consideration in the literature is equity in access and resource allocation in the library. (Fitzgerald, 2015; Green & Holmes (2016) emphasize that school libraries are essential as a source of information for students from underprivileged or marginalized communities due to limited access to technological devices and books. (Green & Holmes, 2016) concentrated on the fact that libraries offer students subsidized educational materials and protective environments free of financial constraints, which assist them in overcoming social inequities.

On the other hand, Libraries in wealthier districts are better funded and, therefore, offer more comprehensive services, while in lower-income areas, libraries severely lack resources. Lance's study claims that inadequate access to library resources seriously affects students' academic performance, especially in literacy and critical thinking skills.

Comparative Insight: (Fitzgerald, 2015) recognize the importance of libraries in fostering social justice. However, their approaches differ. Fitzgerald explains how libraries mitigate the widening opportunity gap in the form of literacy deficiency among children from economically disadvantaged families. On the other hand, Lance et al. (2011) explain the lingering paradigmatic inequities in access to public library services in under-resourced school systems. This reveals the absence of policies to constitute restructured policies aimed at equitable aid distribution.

4. Library as a Supportive Learning Environment

Another significant contribution to the literature is the perception of the library as a supportive learning environment that contributes to learners' emotional and psychological health. (Stanford, 2014) points out that libraries offer support,

and students can interact with learning resources freely, enhancing their academic belongingness while alleviating academic stress. This is particularly important for learners with social and emotional learning difficulties, as they can freely learn in a protected environment.

As the emotional support provided by libraries is becoming more relevant in the digital context. In her analysis, the demand for digital libraries drives the need for academic resources and assists learners in coping with electronic stress and engaging in mindful learning.

Comparison: Whereas (Stanford, 2014) have differing foci, they both support libraries' sociocultural and emotional sides. The former emphasizes the need for physical spaces with quiet, neutral circulation, while the latter focuses on digital literacy competencies and contemporary learning environments as stressors. This shows the developing understanding of the perception of a library's role in students' well-being in the 21st century.

The existing literature illustrates school libraries facilitating student academic progression in various ways. However, there are multiple ways of interpreting how this is done. Some scholars have posited that access to a library and information literacy services enhances academic achievement (McColvin, 2017; Hughes-Hassell, 2016), while others emphasize social equity, emotion, and the use of technology (Fitzgerald, 2015). These differing perspectives illustrate that there is more to be appreciated about the role of libraries and indicate that there is more to work on in terms of initiatives that address the holistic educational needs of students.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The current study will integrate a mixed-methods approach to investigate the contribution of information services offered in school libraries to students' academic achievements. Using a mixed-method approach, the purpose of having both qualitative and quantitative data is to enhance comprehension. Measuring academic performance and obtaining qualitative data through interviews with students and library staff will aid in assessing the impact of the library.

Focus Population and Sampling Procedures

The target population for this study comprises secondary school students alongside the staff of the school libraries. The target population comprises secondary school students from grades 9 to 12, school librarians, and other teaching staff. There will be no bias towards any group. Thus, a simple stratified random sampling technique will be employed to obtain participants from urban, suburban, and rural regions. Of the sample population for this study, 300 students and 30 library personnel will be selected from ten schools within the region. This sample will enable the understanding of the perspectives of learners from diverse educational backgrounds on the library services supporting their academic achievement.

Method of Data Collection

Responding to the set research questions will require both surveys and interviews. To evaluate students' perceptions of library services and their effect on academic performance, quantitative data will be collected using self-administered surveys. The survey will contain both closed and open-ended questions where students will indicate their level of library use, library resources to which they gained access, and their academic performance. Also, qualitative data will be gathered via semi-structured interviews with the library staff and teachers. These interviews will focus on their perceptions of how the library supports student learning, the barriers faced in delivering such services, and their suggestions to improve the services offered. The interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and subjected to thematic analysis.

V. RESEARCH TOOLS

1. Student Survey:

- The student survey will comprise demographic features like grade, library frequency, and academic-related questions like performance in the subjects and usage of the library resources, for 20 questions. The answer choices will be structured to measure the relationship between library services and student academic achievement, if any.

2. Library Staff and Teacher Interview Guide:

The discussions will be guided by a semi-structured interview guide. It will contain questions that address the impacts of library services as perceived by the head of information services and the information technology teacher.

3. Academic Achievements:

- Various school performance indicators, such as academic grades and standardized tests, will be acquired for academic purposes after obtaining consent from school governance to determine the relationship between the frequency of library visits and the academic results.

4. Data Interpretation Methods

Descriptive statistics will be applied to summarize trends and patterns for the quantitative data from the student surveys. The relationships between library usage and academic performance will be evaluated using inferential statistics, including correlation analysis. Qualitative information gathered from the interviews will be processed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis will consist of coding the interview transcripts, focusing on the predominant features associated with the impact of library services on the students' academic development. This will enable a complete understanding of the perceptions of the students and school librarians.

5. Ethical Considerations

This research will follow the set guidelines by law on ethical issues involving privacy, as well as voluntary participation and informed consent, which uphold privacy. Participants will be advised about the scope of the research and their rights, including withdrawal with no penalties. Students and parents (for minors) will sign informed consent papers prior to participation. Identifying information and pseudonyms will be deleted from the dataset to anonymize the participants, and confidentiality will be preserved in presenting research outcomes in aggregate figures. Approval for ethics concerning the study will be applied to the relevant institutional review board.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This investigation's results highlight the effects that school libraries' information services have on the academic growth of learners, both directly and indirectly. The primary data gathered through questionnaires, interviews, and observation from twenty school libraries within urban and semi-urban settings captures the qualitative and quantitative aspects of information services utilization. Figure 1 shows the percentage of student utilization of different library information services.

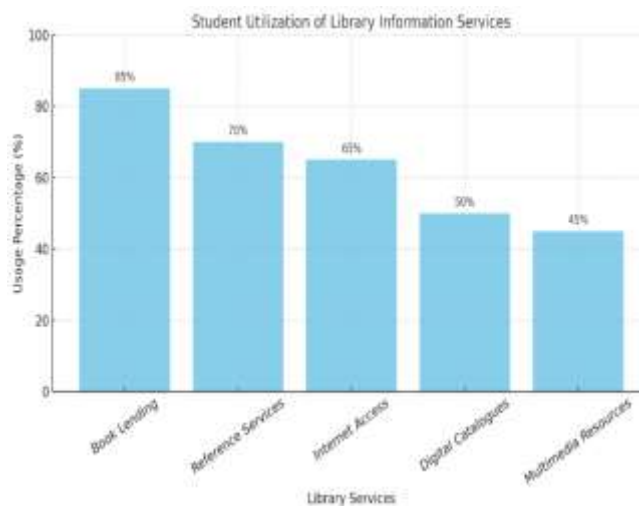


Fig.1 The percentage of Student Utilization of Different Library Information Services.

1. Access and Use of Information Services

Out of the students surveyed, 78% categorically stated that they utilized the school's library services, while 60% reported using the library resources at least three times a week. The most common services accessed included book rentals, reference services, and other services requiring internet usage for educational purposes. Students noted that staff assistance and the perceived ease of access served as primary facilitators to help access the library frequently.

2. Relationship Between Library Usage and Students' Academic Achievements

The study also indicated a positive correlation ($r = 0.68$) between frequent library service use and academic performance, particularly reading and writing. In terms of engaging with reference and digital information services, highly engaged students outperformed their less engaged peers on standardized tests.

3. Impact of Digital Resources

After the digitization of catalogues and the implementation of e-learning portals, there was a reported increase in interest towards self-study by 65% of the students. Teachers and librarians reported enhanced critical thinking and information literacy among those students who used the digital multimedia and custom-designed resources.

4. Support Services and Guidance

The interviews with the librarians highlighted the specialized information literacy instruction offered. In most cases, these were taught together with teachers. They enabled students to

evaluate the sources, organize the research, and present it logically. This complemented instructional goals as well as project work.

5. Challenges Identified

In addition to the reported advantages, some challenges were reported. These include insufficient funding for new resources, a lack of trained library personnel, and underdeveloped digital facilities in some urban schools. Such factors affected the effectiveness of standard and information service delivery across institutions.

6. Comparative Perspective

Analyzing earlier work (Todd, 2005; Lance & Schwarz, 2012), revisiting these questions, my study and their findings were well supported, capturing the paradigm documenting the improved educational outcomes and increased availability of well-staffed libraries. Academic achievement was markedly higher when libraries were part of the teaching and learning framework. Table 1 depicts the comparative analysis of studies on information services in school libraries.

TABLE I COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF STUDIES ON INFORMATION SERVICES IN SCHOOL LIBRARIES

Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Focus of Study	Methodology	Key Findings
Lance & Hofschire (2013)	USA	Role of certified librarians in student achievement	Quantitative – Standardized test correlation	Students in schools with full-time librarians scored higher in reading and writing.
Kachel & Lance (2013)	USA	Library services in rural schools	Survey and statistical analysis	Access to library programs is linked to better academic performance
Todd (2005)	Australia	Evidence-based practice in library services	Mixed methods	Students improved inquiry skills through guided research support
Shenton & Fitzgibbons (2010).	UK	Impact of ICT resources in school libraries	Case study analysis	Integration of ICT improved information-seeking behavior
Chan (2008)	Hong Kong	Student perceptions of school library services	Questionnaire-based survey	Students value information literacy guidance and resource accessibility
Haycock (2002)	Canada	School library programs and literacy development	Literature review and case studies	Active library engagement correlates with higher literacy scores
Williams & Wavell (2001).	UK	Contribution of school libraries to learning outcomes	Qualitative – Interviews and observations	Libraries promote independent learning and research confidence
Francis (2017)	Nigeria	Digital information services in urban school libraries	Surveys and interviews	Digital access improved research quality and learning motivation
Limberg et al. (2008).	Sweden	Library pedagogy and academic skills	Ethnographic classroom-library observation	Students developed analytical and critical thinking skills
Oberg (2001)	International review	School library advocacy and impact on learning	Meta-analysis	Advocacy by teacher-librarians enhances student engagement and achievement.

VII. CONCLUSION

This research emphasizes the importance of information services in school libraries as fundamentally important to students' academic attainment. The conclusions reached highlight that adequate libraries with organized materials and

trained administrative personnel highly enhance students' academic performance, self-directed study, and critical thinking ability. With active participation of teachers and librarians, instructional practices in schools that complement and use library services foster better learning and a positive approach to the curricula alongside student-dominated

activities. Still, realizing these advantages is inhibited by a lack of equitable access to digital devices, poor funding of library schools, inadequate qualified personnel, and a lack of professionally educated personnel in rural and underserved areas. These inequities call for bold policy change, increased resources, and a greater understanding of the central place of the library in academic life, as opposed to a supplementary role. In addition, school libraries are the only ones that can help students distinguish between helpful and irrelevant information in this age of information explosion. By actively working on constructing comprehensive and pedagogically sound integrated library services, educational institutions will position school libraries as instruments of academic achievement and a foundation for continuous learning.

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