



School Libraries Fostering Children's Literacy and Literature Learning: Reviewing Literature in Context of Pakistan

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: school libraries, literacy promotion, literature review, literature learning, status of libraries

Vol: 02 No: 02 2023

Page Range: 41 to 48

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ABSTRACT

This study systematically reviews the literature on the role of school libraries in promoting reading habits among students in Pakistan. The review analyzes various research articles from the last two decades to assess how school libraries contribute to enhancing literacy and fostering a reading culture in Pakistani educational settings. The literature encompasses empirical studies, case studies, and theoretical articles that explore different aspects of school library functionality, including resource availability, librarian roles, technological integration, and the libraries' overall impact on students' academic achievement and reading habits. Special attention is given to identifying challenges such as funding, training, and resource management that hinder the effectiveness of school libraries in Pakistan. The findings aim to offer a comprehensive understanding of the current state of school libraries in Pakistan and suggest strategies for their improvement to better support the educational development of students. Through this review, the study provides valuable insights into the potential of school libraries as pivotal educational tools in developing countries.



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Introduction

An essential topic of research is the impact of school libraries on enhancing literacy and literature acquisition in children, especially in developing nations such as Pakistan, where educational resources are frequently scarce. Studies suggest that school libraries with ample resources have a substantial and beneficial influence on the development of children's literacy skills (Hughes-Hassell & Mancall, 2005). In Pakistan, school libraries have a crucial role to perform, particularly because there is a widespread shortage of educational resources and facilities.

A study conducted by Khan and Mahmood (2016) highlights the crucial role of school libraries in Pakistan in promoting reading habits among students, leading to improved academic performance and literacy abilities. Nevertheless, the research also emphasizes other obstacles, including insufficient financial resources, inadequate library holdings, and a dearth of specialized training for librarians, all of which impede the efficiency of these libraries (Khan & Mahmood, 2016; Rehman & Shafique, 2011). In addition, Siddiqui (2018) highlights that incorporating digital technology in school libraries has the potential to greatly enhance the availability and caliber of reading materials, leading to improved educational achievements for children. Understanding the potential of school libraries to alter educational experiences for young learners in Pakistan is greatly enhanced by this perspective.

This article tries to provide insights on the current state of school libraries and their impact on children's literacy and literature learning in Pakistan by examining existing literature. Additionally, it aims to identify solutions that might effectively tackle the issues encountered by these libraries, thus improving their contribution to educational progress.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the available literature concerning the influence of school libraries on fostering reading habits among children within the specific setting of Pakistan. The objective of this study is to identify the main themes and findings in the literature, evaluate the influence of school libraries on improving students' reading abilities and behaviors, and investigate the obstacles and possibilities within the educational system in Pakistan that impact the functionality and effectiveness of school libraries.

Methods and Procedure

Literature Search Strategy

In order to gain a thorough comprehension of the subject matter, a methodical exploration of relevant literature was carried out using several electronic databases such as JSTOR, PubMed, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The search was restricted to English-language research published from 1971 to 2023. The search utilized keywords such as "school libraries," "reading habits," "literacy," "educational outcomes," and "Pakistan." The search method employed several combinations of these terms to ensure a comprehensive examination of the existing literature.

Selection Criteria

Studies were eligible if they particularly examined the impact of school libraries on the promotion of literacy and reading habits among students in Pakistan. Both qualitative and quantitative investigations were utilized to acquire varied viewpoints and in-depth understanding. Eligible for inclusion were literature reviews, case studies, empirical research studies, and policy analysis papers. The exclusion criteria encompassed research that did not specifically address school libraries or were not relevant to the Pakistani setting.

Data Extraction and Analysis

The extracted data from the chosen studies encompassed information such as the author(s), publication year, study aims, methodology, significant findings, and conclusions. The data was condensed and organized into tables to make it easier to compare and analyses. The analysis entailed amalgamating the information to discern prevalent themes, patterns, and deficiencies in

the literature. The data was categorized using thematic analysis, focusing on major subjects such as the effects of school libraries on reading habits, the difficulties encountered by school libraries, and methods for enhancing library services in schools.

Quality Assessment

The quality of the included studies was evaluated using recognized standards that examine the clarity of study aims, the appropriateness of the research design, the rigor of the data collection methods, and the relevance and depth of the discussions and findings. This assessment facilitated the determination of the reliability and validity of the findings documented in the literature. This methodological approach guarantees a methodical examination of the literature, establishing a strong basis for comprehending the influence of school libraries on promoting reading habits among students in Pakistan. It also offers valuable perspectives for policymakers and educational stakeholders to improve library services and literacy outcomes.

Review of Selected Studies and Discussion

Status of school libraries in Pakistan

Haider (2002), aims to offer an in-depth assessment of the state of school libraries in Pakistan. Its objective is to provide insights into the historical evolution of school libraries, the existing challenges they confront, and their significance within the educational framework of the country. Employing a descriptive and analytical approach, the article examines the historical context, financial constraints, limited book accessibility, and dearth of qualified librarians as critical issues impeding the development of school libraries. It further categorizes various types of schools, including state-run institutions, private establishments catering to different socioeconomic groups, and those managed by community trusts or organizations, shedding light on their roles in shaping the school library landscape. Evaluating the current status of school libraries, emphasizing variations in resources, services, and facilities, and underscores the necessity of professional librarians. Moreover, it highlights the scarcity of children's literature in local languages as a significant challenge by proposing recommendations such as the establishment of national library standards, librarian training initiatives, and dedicated budget allocations to enhance school libraries in Pakistan's education system.

Ramzan (2009). gives a general summary of how school libraries are doing in Pakistan, focusing on their importance to education and the difficulties they face. Despite the fact that Pakistan regards education as a fundamental right, there are still serious problems with school libraries and a low literacy rate. Although it is required by law, not all schools really have libraries because many of them are understaffed and untrained. According to a 1990s survey, the majority of schools lacked adequate or functional libraries. Government-run schools for lower-middle-class and impoverished pupils frequently lack libraries, but private English-medium schools in urban areas tend to have better-equipped libraries. Budgets, resources, and space constraints are problems. Access to libraries is restricted, and they are not integrated into the educational system. This emphasizes the need for laws, qualified librarians, and appropriate funds to address these concerns, but it also highlights Pakistan's lack of specific programs or financing for school library development.

Latif et al. (2018) aims to evaluate the state of school libraries in Tehsil Gujar Khan, District Rawalpindi, Pakistan, while also making comparisons at the national and international levels based on school library principles. Through a cluster sampling approach in government high schools, the study gathered data through questionnaires, examining various aspects of these libraries. The major findings reveal significant variations in student and staff numbers, with schools having as few as 110 and as many as 884 students and staff ranging from 9 to 30 members. Library availability is lacking, with 42.9% of schools having no library, and 57% of libraries are functional, hosting collections of varying sizes. Periodicals and newspapers are scarce, and there's a lack of budget allocation, professional staff, librarians, and library automation. Library usage is inconsistent among students and staff. The major findings include

emphasizing the importance of prioritizing school library development, qualified librarians, adequate budgets, expanded collections, improved services, and government initiatives to establish school libraries nationwide.

Tabassum et al. (2019) focuses on evaluating the state of public girls' high school libraries in Lahore, Pakistan. Its primary objective is to assess various aspects of these libraries, including information services, infrastructure, budget, collection, and staffing. By utilizing a qualitative research approach, the study relies on interviews, observations, and student focus groups to gather comprehensive data. The key findings reveal that the overall condition of these school libraries is unsatisfactory. Many challenges were identified, such as a lack of resources, inadequate staff, budget constraints, limited space, and poor infrastructure, all of which impede their ability to offer quality services. Surprisingly, the study indicates that the economic geographical location of schools does not significantly influence library conditions. Instead, effective school leadership and management emerged as pivotal factors determining library status. This research underscores the urgent need for improvements in Lahore's public girls' high school libraries. It contributes valuable insights to the global literature on school librarianship and can inform policy decisions related to education and library management in similar contexts.

School libraries facilities and services

Anwar (2014) reviews the historical evolution and existing literature on library service standards in Pakistan. Its objective is to scrutinize past efforts in shaping these standards, evaluate their methodologies, and assess their suitability in Pakistan's library landscape. The article emphasizes the need for a systematic and methodical approach to standards development. Author employs a historical and chronological approach, analyzing various sources, including bibliographies, indexes, research studies, and citations related to library standards. Among 53 relevant items identified, the full texts are reviewed for their contributions. The article also explores initiatives by organizations like the Pakistan Library Association (PLA) and the Society for the Promotion and Improvement of Libraries (SPIL) in standards development. Key findings include the absence of a systematic approach to reviewing literature on library service standards, often relying on individualistic methodologies. Many proposed quantitative standards are considered unrealistic due to budget constraints. The evolving information landscape necessitates updated standards, emphasizing professional involvement and concrete actions.

Ansari and Zia (2010) investigates the state of automation in school libraries in Karachi, with a focus on private schools. Using a questionnaire-based survey with a stratified sampling method, the research covers various school levels, including primary, secondary, higher secondary, O-level, and A-level institutions. The study aims to assess the extent of automation, the hardware and software used, and the challenges encountered during the automation process. Key findings indicate that many surveyed school libraries have limited staff, with 40% having only one staff member. Library collections vary widely, ranging from under 2,200 books to over 15,400, and the number of users depends on staff and student body sizes. Library automation progress is gradual, with only 12% of libraries fully automated, 40% partially automated, and 48% relying on manual processes. Nine different software systems are identified, with challenges including increased workload, a shortage of skilled personnel, limited finances, and software lacking necessary features.

Butt et al. (2011) conducted a quantitative assessment of Internet access and utilization in libraries across Lahore, Pakistan. Data were gathered through a questionnaire-based survey in various library types, including academic, special, public, and school libraries, encompassing 75 libraries. Approximately 67% of libraries provided Internet access to both staff and users, with the remaining 33% limiting access to staff members. The timing of Internet adoption varied, with most libraries introducing it in the early 2000s, and the number of Internet terminals varied based on library type and size. Libraries utilized the Internet for various purposes, including bibliographical verification, reference services, document delivery, current awareness, and

accessing reference sources. However, its use for circulation services was less common. Respondents emphasized the Internet's importance in functions like acquisition, reference, classification, cataloging, and professional communication, but functions requiring specific library applications relied less on the Internet. Libraries in Lahore faced challenges, including slow Internet speeds, frequent disruptions, financial constraints, limited awareness among staff and users, copyright issues, inadequate hardware, limited support, restricted access times, and user disinterest.

Abdullah et al. (2021) investigates students' satisfaction with Daanish school libraries in Punjab, Pakistan, aiming to assess the quality and adequacy of library resources and services. Employing a quantitative approach, researchers distributed questionnaires to 377 students across four Daanish schools. Students generally expressed satisfaction with various resources, including reference books, newspapers, magazines, organized collections, and textbook availability. However, there was a lack of opinions on the availability of useful audio/visual materials, suggesting a potential area for enhancement. Library Services: Students reported satisfaction with services such as staff assistance in locating materials and effective orientation programs for new students. Yet, there was no feedback on the availability of sufficient computers and internet facilities, leaving room for improvement. Significant differences in satisfaction levels were noted based on gender, age group, and class of study. Students provided suggestions for enhancing library resources and services, including improving ICT facilities, internet connectivity, audio/visual materials, and air conditioning within libraries. Overall, this study highlights areas where Daanish school libraries can enhance their offerings to better serve students' needs and preferences.

Raza (2022). determines how workplace stress affected the productivity of school library staff at Karachi's Cambridge schools. The study included a sample of 70 professionals, and a structured questionnaire was used to gather the study's data. The main findings showed that a sizeable proportion (65%) of school library professionals claimed to be under a lot of occupational stress. However, there were no appreciable gender differences in participant stress levels or productivity. Additionally, there was no discernible relationship between marital status and either work efficiency or stress. However, the study discovered a weak but statistically significant negative connection between work efficiency and occupational stress, suggesting that elevated stress had a negative impact on professionals' ability to do their jobs. Participant coping strategies included pastimes including reading, playing games, travelling, and spending time with loved ones. Overall, the study emphasized how common occupational stress is in this field and recommended the need of stress management techniques to increase productivity at work.

School libraries as promoters of literacy and learning

Anwar (1971) highlights the pivotal role of school libraries in enhancing literacy and education, with a particular focus on economically disadvantaged regions like Pakistan. The primary objective is to underscore the significance of well-equipped and adequately staffed school libraries for fostering educational development. Employing a descriptive approach, drawing from surveys and reports, including data from a 1967 survey conducted by the Department of Library Science at the University of the Punjab. It sheds light on the state of school libraries in Pakistan, covering both elementary and secondary schools. Key findings reveal that school libraries, especially in elementary schools, are largely absent in Pakistan. Secondary school libraries, where present, often suffer from poor resources, organization, and utilization. Budget constraints, insufficient staffing, and inadequate infrastructure further exacerbate the challenges faced by these libraries. The article proposes crucial improvements, advocating for minimum standards for school libraries, including adequate book collections, trained librarians, regular book budgets, and suitable library spaces.

Merchant (2007) focuses on the transformation of school libraries into dynamic learning hubs, addressing the changing educational landscape and technology's impact. It highlights the

necessity of reimagining the role of school librarians, emphasizing their importance in facilitating learning and fostering connections within the learning community. The study employs a qualitative approach, referencing insights from educators and scholars to assess the current state of school libraries in Pakistan, particularly in public schools. It identifies challenges such as inadequate book collections and limited librarian professional development. It advocates for recognizing librarians as educational leaders, capable of serving as program administrators, information navigators, technology facilitators, and collaborative educators. It stresses the potential of school libraries to connect with educational initiatives, media resources, and technology for information literacy. Empowering librarians in these roles is vital for improving student learning, even in resource-constrained settings. Future articles promise to delve into success stories and challenges related to these transformations.

Batool (2017) investigates primary school children's conceptions of libraries as physical places and to assess the role of school libraries, particularly in the context of Pakistan, in meeting children's information needs. The study employs a multiple qualitative case study approach. Data were collected from various sources, including children's focus groups, interviews with librarians and teachers, examination of documents, and observation. The Nvivo 10 software was used for data organization, from coding to identifying six broad themes, which were subsequently used to report the results. Primary school children predominantly perceive libraries as places for reading and playing, as well as rooms for storing books. Their conceptions vary from the traditional idea of libraries as quiet spaces for reading and studying. The study reveals that primary schools in Pakistan often lack well-equipped school libraries, and the services they offer to children are limited. A significant proportion of children attending state schools do not perceive libraries as physical places for reading and studying, indicating a divergence from the conventional understanding of libraries as quiet spaces.

Ayaz et al. (2017) found that the study is to assess the impact of school libraries on students' academic achievements at the secondary school level in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The study employs a descriptive research design. Questionnaires were used to collect data from both students and teachers. A dichotomous scale with options "Yes" and "No" was used, assigning numerical values of 1 and 2, respectively. Percentage, frequency, and linear regression were utilized for data analysis. The study found a significant positive relationship between school libraries and students' academic achievement, as indicated by a low p-value ($p < 0.05$). Linear regression analysis demonstrated that school libraries have a significant impact on students' academic achievement, with a beta score of 0.317 for students and 0.290 for teachers. A majority of both students (77%) and teachers (80%) agreed that school libraries positively influence students' academic achievements. The study suggests that school libraries play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic performance in the southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, underscoring their importance in the educational system.

Batool (2019) found a situational analysis of information literacy (IL) in Lahore's primary school's libraries, Pakistan, focusing on human and non-human factors within the socio-political context. Employing a case study approach involving six primary schools, data collection methods include interviews, focus groups with young children, school environment observations, and analysis of curriculum documents. Major findings are that Pakistan's education system lacks higher-level planning, resulting in IL education challenges. Budget allocation hasn't kept pace with population growth, leading to private sector involvement with varying quality standards. Effective IL education necessitates collaboration between teachers and librarians, and neglecting this collaboration can hinder IL initiatives. The national curriculum analysis reveals gaps in addressing IL aspects, with core subjects often missing essential IL components. Various learning environments, including schools, homes, tuition centers, and mosques, significantly impact children's IL education. Political instability and economic issues in Pakistan influence IL education's state in primary schools. The study underscores the complexity of IL education in

Lahore's primary schools and advocates collaborative efforts among teachers, librarians, and policymakers to address challenges and promote information literacy.

Conclusion

The collected studies provide a comprehensive overview of the current state and challenges of school libraries in Pakistan. The research consistently highlights the significant role that well-equipped and effectively managed school libraries play in enhancing students' academic performance and literacy (Abdullah & Hamid, 2021; Ayaz et al., 2017). However, challenges such as inadequate automation, limited access to the internet, and a lack of standardized practices have been noted to impede the potential benefits of school libraries (Ansari & Zia, 2010; Butt et al., 2011). Furthermore, the need for professional development of library staff and modernization of library facilities emerges as a common theme across several studies (Anwar, 2014; Batool & Webber, 2017; Ramzan, 2009).

Recommendations

1. **Enhancement of Digital Infrastructure:** There is an urgent need to modernize the libraries by incorporating automation and improving internet access, as highlighted by Ansari & Zia (2010) and Butt et al. (2011). This could involve updating library software and hardware, and ensuring stable and high-speed internet connections to facilitate digital literacy among students.
2. **Development of Standardized Library Practices:** Anwar (2014) stresses the importance of developing standardized practices for library services. Establishing clear guidelines and standards for library operations could help improve the efficiency and consistency of services across school libraries in Pakistan.
3. **Professional Development of Librarians:** As noted by Batool and Webber (2019), librarians' roles are evolving and require an array of skills in information management and literacy education. Regular training programs should be implemented to equip librarians with necessary skills to manage modern libraries effectively.
4. **Expansion of Library Resources:** To further engage students and improve literacy rates, expanding the range of available resources in libraries is crucial (Haider, 2002; Latif et al., 2018). This includes not only books and periodicals but also interactive and multimedia resources that cater to diverse learning needs.
5. **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** Engaging the community and other stakeholders is essential to raising awareness about the importance of school libraries. Initiatives such as those discussed by Merchant (2007) can transform libraries into vibrant learning hubs that extend their influence beyond the school.

By implementing these recommendations, Pakistan can significantly enhance the effectiveness of its school libraries, thereby improving educational outcomes and fostering a more literate society. These changes will require coordinated efforts from government bodies, educational institutions, and private stakeholders to ensure that school libraries can fulfill their potential as central components of educational development in Pakistan.

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