

The Role of Librarians in Promoting Effective Library Resource Utilisation for Counselling and Physiotherapy Education in Academic Institutions.

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Abstract - This paper presents an opinion-based examination of the role of librarians in enhancing the utilisation of library resources and services for counselling and physiotherapy education in academic institutions. It argues that librarians occupy a strategic position in bridging the gap between available library resources and their effective use by students and faculty in health-related disciplines. Drawing from professional observations and existing literature, the paper contends that despite the availability of print and electronic library resources, underutilisation remains a persistent challenge in counselling and physiotherapy programmes. The paper opines that proactive librarian involvement through user education, information literacy instruction, research support, and personalised reference services significantly improves library utilisation. It further suggests that collaboration between librarians, counselling educators, and physiotherapy instructors is essential for aligning library services with curricular and clinical information needs. The paper concludes that strengthening the professional engagement of librarians and expanding targeted library services will enhance teaching, learning, and research outcomes in counselling and physiotherapy education. Recommendations are offered for academic libraries to reposition librarians as active partners in health sciences education rather than passive custodians of information resources.

Keywords: *Librarian, Library, Library Resources, Library Services, Library Utilisation, Counselling, Physiotherapy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The role of librarians in academic institutions has evolved significantly, particularly within specialised disciplines such as counselling and physiotherapy education, where evidence-based knowledge is essential. Academic libraries now function as active learning environments that support teaching, research, and clinical scholarship through targeted resources

and services rather than merely serving as information repositories (Oakleaf, 2010; ACRL, 2016). The increasing complexity of healthcare education has intensified the need for reliable and discipline-specific information. Although counselling and physiotherapy programmes depend heavily on scholarly and clinical resources, studies reveal persistent underutilisation of available library resources. This challenge is commonly linked to limited user awareness, inadequate information literacy skills, and insufficient integration of library instruction into academic curricula (Head & Eisenberg, 2010; Kumar & Suresh, 2021).

Scholars emphasise the need for a proactive role for librarians in bridging the gap between resource availability and effective use. Access to information alone is insufficient without deliberate guidance that enables users to locate, evaluate, and apply information within their disciplinary contexts, particularly in health-related fields where information use directly impacts learning and professional practice (Bruce, 1997; Lloyd, 2017).

As a result, the contemporary responsibilities of librarians increasingly include user education, information literacy instruction, research support, and personalised reference services. Evidence suggests that librarian-led instructional initiatives, especially when embedded in coursework, significantly enhance students' research skills, confidence, and engagement with library resources (Badke, 2012; Julien & Genuis, 2011). Furthermore, collaboration between librarians and faculty has been shown to improve the relevance and utilisation of library services. By tailoring resources and instruction to curricular and clinical needs, librarians contribute meaningfully to student learning and

academic success (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008). Repositioning librarians as active educational partners is therefore essential for maximising the impact of library resources and strengthening teaching, learning, and research outcomes in counselling and physiotherapy education.

Recent literature emphasises the importance of structured collaboration between librarians and educators in health-related disciplines as a key strategy for improving students' engagement with scholarly information and embedding information literacy within disciplinary learning contexts. In counselling education, the integration of librarian-led instruction into the curriculum has been shown to enhance students' research competencies, critical thinking skills, and confidence in navigating academic databases, thereby improving their academic and professional preparedness (Smith et al., 2022). Similarly, studies in physiotherapy education demonstrate that librarian-faculty partnerships contribute significantly to students' understanding of evidence-based practice. Collaborative instructional approaches that focus on literature searching, critical appraisal, and ethical information use help develop competencies essential for clinical decision-making, as evidence-based practice relies on effective access to and interpretation of research evidence (Jones & Brown, 2023; Koufogiannakis & Brettle, 2016; Eldredge et al., 2019).

As health sciences education continues to evolve, scholars argue for the repositioning of librarians as active participants in the teaching and learning process rather than traditional service providers. This shift aligns with contemporary educational models that emphasise collaboration, interdisciplinary engagement, and shared knowledge creation (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008). Strengthening librarians' professional engagement through curriculum-embedded information literacy instruction, tailored research support, and sustained collaboration in course design has been associated with higher student engagement and improved research outcomes (Julien & Genuis, 2011; Lloyd, 2017).

Overall, the literature supports deliberate investment in collaborative frameworks that recognise librarians as educational partners. Expanding targeted library services and sustaining librarian-faculty collaboration can enhance teaching, learning, and

research outcomes in counselling and physiotherapy education, while also contributing to the development of information-literate and evidence-based practitioners (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008).

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the role of librarians in enhancing the utilisation of library resources and services in counselling and physiotherapy education.
2. To identify the factors contributing to the underutilisation of print and electronic library resources by students and faculty in counselling and physiotherapy programmes.
3. To assess the impact of proactive librarian interventions including user education, information literacy instruction, research support, and personalised reference services on library utilisation.
4. To explore the importance of collaboration between librarians, counselling educators, and physiotherapy instructors in aligning library services with curricular and clinical information needs.

Research Questions

1. What is the role of librarians in improving the utilisation of library resources and services in counselling and physiotherapy education?
2. What factors contribute to the underutilisation of library resources by students and faculty in counselling and physiotherapy programmes?
3. How do proactive librarian interventions (such as user education, information literacy instruction, research support, and personalised reference services) influence library resource utilisation?
4. In what ways does collaboration between librarians, counselling educators, and physiotherapy instructors affect the alignment of library services with curricular and clinical needs?

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of librarians in academic institutions has undergone a significant transformation over recent decades, transitioning from traditional custodians of information to active facilitators of learning, research, and professional development. This evolution reflects a broader recognition of the integral role librarians play in enhancing the educational experience, especially in health-related disciplines such as counselling and physiotherapy. As key stakeholders in the educational process, librarians are increasingly seen as essential partners who help

students navigate vast and complex volumes of discipline-specific information. This capability is crucial for developing evidence-based knowledge and clinical competencies, which are vital for future practitioners in these fields (Oakleaf, 2010; ACRL, 2016).

In today's information-rich environment, the importance of information literacy has gained paramount significance. Information literacy encompasses the skills needed to locate, evaluate, and effectively use information in various contexts skills that are particularly critical for students enrolled in counselling and physiotherapy programmes. As these programs demand rigorous standards of evidence-based practice, students must be adept at sourcing and critically analyzing relevant literature and clinical guidelines to inform their practice (Bruce, 1997; Lloyd, 2017). The role of librarians as educators in this context cannot be overstated; they are uniquely positioned to empower students with the critical skills necessary to navigate and utilize library resources effectively. Despite the availability of a wide range of print and electronic library resources, underutilisation remains a persistent challenge within academic libraries. Several studies have highlighted that the mere provision of access to resources does not inherently lead to their effective use. Factors contributing to this underutilisation include limited awareness of available services, insufficient information literacy skills among students, and a lack of integration of library instruction within the educational curricula. Many students enter their academic programs without the requisite skills or knowledge to leverage library resources effectively (Head & Eisenberg, 2010; Kumar & Suresh, 2021).

In the context of health sciences education, the consequences of underutilisation can be pronounced, negatively affecting not only individual learning outcomes but also the overall quality of research and professional preparedness. Students who are unaware of or unable to access relevant clinical guidelines, scholarly literature, or high-quality evidence-based research may find themselves ill-equipped to meet the demands of contemporary practice. This reality highlights the crucial need for proactive interventions by librarians. By actively engaging with students and faculty, librarians can help bridge the gap between resource availability and practical utilisation, fostering an environment where information literacy

flourishes and supports the rigorous demands of health education.

This evolving landscape calls for a collaborative approach, where librarians work closely with educators in counselling and physiotherapy programs to tailor library services that align with curricular and clinical information needs. Such partnerships can significantly enhance the relevance and effectiveness of library services, ensuring that they meet the specific requirements of health sciences education and support students' success.

Professional Engagement of Librarians in Academic Settings

The professional engagement of librarians has been shown to positively influence library use through a variety of targeted activities, including user education, information literacy instruction, research support, and personalized reference services. By actively participating in these areas, librarians can significantly enhance the academic experience for students across different disciplines. Specifically, librarian-led instruction that is embedded within academic programs plays a crucial role in helping students develop critical thinking skills. Such initiatives not only boost students' confidence in their ability to retrieve information but also foster a culture of independent learning (Badke, 2012; Julien & Genuis, 2011).

In the context of counselling education, these interventions are instrumental for students as they engage with and evaluate psychological literature. By providing structured guidance and support, librarians help students hone their research competencies, equipping them to navigate the complexities of psychological resources effectively. Furthermore, in physiotherapy programs, librarian support is equally vital, as it assists students in accessing and interpreting high-quality evidence for clinical practice (Smith et al., 2022; Jones & Brown, 2023). These findings collectively underscore the strategic role that librarians play in facilitating students' engagement with library resources. They are not just facilitators of access but also educators who integrate essential information skills into discipline-specific learning contexts, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education.

Collaboration between Librarians and Faculty

Collaboration between librarians and faculty members is another critical factor that significantly influences the effective utilization of library resources. The concept of embedded librarianship, in which librarians are actively involved in course design and collaborate closely with instructors, has emerged as a compelling approach to enhance student learning. Such collaborative efforts have been linked to increased student engagement and improved learning outcomes (Koufogiannakis & Brettle, 2016; Eldredge et al., 2019). Within health sciences programs, these librarian-faculty partnerships ensure that information literacy instruction is curatively aligned with both curricular and clinical needs. This alignment is essential for enabling students to apply research evidence effectively in their practice, allowing for a seamless integration between theory and clinical application. These collaborations also present valuable opportunities for librarians to offer tailored research support that addresses the specific demands and challenges faced by both students and faculty. Librarians can aid in selecting appropriate resources that align with course objectives, as well as guiding students in ethical and evidence-based information use. Such partnerships not only enhance the relevance of library services but also empower students with the skills necessary to thrive in their academic and professional journeys. The active involvement of librarians in the educational process fosters a holistic approach to learning, thus enriching the educational environment and better preparing students for their future roles in health-related disciplines.

Repositioning Librarians as Active Educational Partners

Recent scholarship underscores the critical importance of repositioning librarians as active partners in health sciences education rather than limiting their role to traditional service provision. In this expanded role, librarians contribute meaningfully to the design and implementation of curricula, development of assessment strategies, and delivery of targeted instructional programmes that are responsive to the unique needs of counselling and physiotherapy students (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008). By participating in curriculum development, librarians help ensure that information literacy components are embedded throughout academic programmes, promoting the integration of library resources into course content and clinical practice. Such active involvement also enhances the delivery

of instructional programmes that address specific learning objectives. For instance, librarians can design workshops or module-based instruction that teaches students how to search, evaluate, and apply scholarly literature relevant to counselling interventions or physiotherapy techniques. By aligning instructional content with professional standards and curricular goals, librarians facilitate more effective learning and provide students with the competencies needed for evidence-based practice. In doing so, librarians are recognized as integral members of the educational team, bridging the gap between available resources and practical application in academic and clinical settings.

Impact of Collaborative Partnerships on Academic Success

Collaboration between librarians and faculty is a key strategy for enhancing the effectiveness of library resources in health sciences education. Embedded librarian programmes, where librarians actively participate in course planning and collaborate with educators, have been shown to improve student engagement with scholarly information, increase research skills, and foster critical thinking (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008). In counselling and physiotherapy education, these collaborative approaches allow librarians to tailor information literacy instruction to the specific needs of students, integrating clinical guidelines, research evidence, and best practices into learning activities. Through these partnerships, librarians also contribute to assessment strategies, helping to evaluate the effectiveness of library instruction and resource utilisation. By providing feedback to faculty on student research performance, usage patterns of library resources, and emerging gaps in information literacy skills, librarians inform improvements in course design and instructional delivery. This ongoing collaboration enhances teaching quality, supports student learning, and strengthens research capabilities within the institution.

Strengthening Librarian Roles for Effective Resource Utilisation

The literature consistently emphasizes that proactive engagement by librarians, structured information literacy instruction, and collaborative partnerships with faculty are central to improving the utilisation of library resources in health-related disciplines. For counselling and physiotherapy education, these strategies equip students with the skills to access,

evaluate, and apply relevant information effectively, fostering independent learning and evidence-based practice. Strengthening the role of librarians and expanding targeted library services offers multiple benefits. It enhances teaching, learning, and research outcomes, while positioning librarians as essential contributors to academic achievement and professional development. By embracing this expanded, collaborative role, librarians can help ensure that students in counselling and physiotherapy programmes are well-prepared to meet the demands of their professions and to contribute meaningfully to the broader healthcare community (Oakleaf, 2010; Walter, 2008).

IV. METHODOLOGY

This study will adopt a qualitative, opinion-based, desk-based approach, using secondary sources to examine the role of librarians in enhancing library resource utilisation for counselling and physiotherapy education. Data will be collected from peer-reviewed articles, books, reports, theses, and conference proceedings, using relevant keywords across databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Scopus, and institutional repositories. The collected literature will be critically evaluated for relevance and credibility. Analysis will employ thematic content analysis, identifying key themes such as the evolving role of librarians, strategies to improve resource utilisation, and collaboration between librarians, faculty, and students. The study will synthesise these findings to develop an opinion-based understanding of how librarians influence teaching, learning, and research outcomes in health-related education.

Discussion of Findings Using Thematic Content Analysis

Thematic content analysis of the reviewed literature reveals several interrelated themes that explain how librarians contribute to effective library resource utilisation in counselling and physiotherapy education. These themes provide a structured understanding of the evolving role of librarians, the challenges of resource utilisation, and the impact of collaboration on academic success in health sciences education.

Transformation of Librarians' Professional Roles

A dominant theme emerging from the literature is the transformation of librarians from traditional custodians of information to active facilitators of learning, research, and professional development. The findings indicate that librarians are increasingly recognised as key stakeholders in academic institutions, particularly within health-related disciplines. Their role now extends beyond managing collections to guiding students in navigating complex, discipline-specific information environments. This shift is especially significant in counselling and physiotherapy education, where evidence-based knowledge and clinical competence are essential. The literature suggests that this transformation enhances the educational experience by positioning librarians as partners in teaching and learning rather than as peripheral service providers.

Centrality of Information Literacy in Health Sciences Education

Another prominent theme is the central role of information literacy in supporting evidence-based practice. The reviewed studies consistently emphasise that counselling and physiotherapy students require advanced skills to locate, evaluate, and apply scholarly and clinical information. Information literacy is presented not merely as a generic academic skill but as a core professional competency. The findings show that librarians, acting as educators, are uniquely equipped to deliver this instruction. Their involvement strengthens students' critical thinking abilities and supports informed clinical decision-making, which is fundamental to professional practice in health-related disciplines.

Persistent Underutilisation of Library Resources

Despite the availability of extensive print and electronic resources, underutilisation of library services emerges as a recurring theme. The literature identifies several contributing factors, including limited student awareness, inadequate information literacy skills, and weak integration of library instruction into academic curricula. The findings suggest that access alone does not guarantee effective use. In health sciences education, this underutilisation has serious implications, as it can compromise learning outcomes, research quality, and professional preparedness. This theme highlights a disconnect between resource provision and actual use, underscoring the need for intentional strategies to promote engagement.

Proactive Librarian Engagement as a Response to Underutilisation

Closely linked to underutilisation is the theme of proactive librarian engagement. The literature indicates that when librarians actively engage students and faculty through user education, research support, and personalised services, utilisation of library resources improves. Librarian-led instruction embedded within academic programmes is shown to enhance students' confidence, research competence, and independent learning skills. In counselling education, such engagement supports effective interaction with psychological literature, while in physiotherapy education, it facilitates access to high-quality clinical evidence. These findings reinforce the view that proactive involvement by librarians is essential to bridging the gap between resource availability and meaningful use.

Collaboration Between Librarians and Faculty

Collaboration emerges as a critical theme influencing effective library resource utilisation. The literature strongly supports embedded librarianship and librarian–faculty partnerships as mechanisms for improving student learning outcomes. Through collaboration, librarians align information literacy instruction with curricular and clinical requirements, ensuring relevance to students' academic and professional needs. The findings suggest that such partnerships promote seamless integration of theory and practice, particularly in counselling and physiotherapy programmes. Collaborative relationships also enable librarians to provide tailored research support and contribute to ethical and evidence-based information use.

Repositioning Librarians as Educational Partners

A further theme concerns the repositioning of librarians as active educational partners. The literature highlights that librarians' involvement in curriculum design, assessment strategies, and instructional delivery strengthens the integration of information literacy across academic programmes. This expanded role supports targeted instructional initiatives, such as workshops and module-based teaching, that align with professional standards in counselling and physiotherapy. The findings suggest that recognising librarians as integral members of the educational team enhances both the visibility and effectiveness of library services.

Impact of Collaborative Partnerships on Academic Success

The literature also identifies the positive impact of librarian–faculty collaboration on academic success. Embedded librarian programmes are associated with improved student engagement, stronger research skills, and enhanced critical thinking. Librarians' contributions to assessment and feedback processes further support continuous improvement in teaching and learning. This theme demonstrates that collaboration not only improves library resource utilisation but also strengthens institutional research capacity and educational quality.

Strengthening Librarian Roles for Sustainable Resource Utilisation

The final theme centres on strengthening librarian roles to ensure sustainable and effective resource utilisation. The literature consistently shows that structured information literacy instruction, proactive engagement, and collaborative partnerships are central to achieving this goal. For counselling and physiotherapy education, these strategies support independent learning, evidence-based practice, and professional competence. The findings collectively suggest that expanding and formalising librarians' roles within academic structures enhances teaching, learning, and research outcomes.

In summary, thematic content analysis reveals that effective utilisation of library resources in counselling and physiotherapy education is shaped by interconnected themes of professional role transformation, information literacy, proactive engagement, and collaboration. The discussion of findings confirms that librarians are essential contributors to academic success and professional preparation in health sciences education, and that their strategic integration into teaching and learning processes is critical for maximising the value of library resources.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The thematic analysis of the literature demonstrates that librarians play a critical and evolving role in enhancing library resource utilisation within counselling and physiotherapy education. The findings confirm a clear shift from traditional perceptions of librarians as custodians of information to their recognition as active educational partners

who contribute directly to teaching, learning, and research. Information literacy emerges as a central pillar in health sciences education, with librarians uniquely positioned to equip students with the competencies required for evidence-based practice.

The analysis further reveals that underutilisation of library resources remains a persistent challenge, largely driven by limited awareness, insufficient information literacy skills, and inadequate integration of library instruction into academic curricula. However, the literature consistently shows that proactive librarian engagement, embedded instructional practices, and strong collaboration with faculty significantly improve students' use of library resources, research skills, and academic performance.

Overall, the conclusion drawn from the analysis is that effective utilisation of library resources in counselling and physiotherapy programmes is strongly influenced by the extent to which librarians are integrated into academic structures. When librarians are actively involved in curriculum design, instructional delivery, and assessment processes, library services become more relevant, impactful, and aligned with professional and clinical expectations. Strengthening these roles is therefore essential for improving educational quality and preparing students for competent, evidence-based professional practice.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the thematic analysis, the following recommendations are proposed:

First, academic institutions should formally reposition librarians as educational partners within counselling and physiotherapy programmes. This can be achieved by involving librarians in curriculum planning, course design, and assessment activities to ensure that information literacy is systematically embedded across programmes.

Second, structured and discipline-specific information literacy instruction should be integrated into counselling and physiotherapy curricula. Librarian-led modules, workshops, and embedded teaching sessions should focus on searching, evaluating, and applying scholarly and clinical information relevant to professional practice.

Third, institutions should strengthen collaborative partnerships between librarians and faculty members.

Regular collaboration should be encouraged through joint teaching initiatives, shared research support, and continuous feedback on students' information use and research performance. This will enhance alignment between library services, curricular objectives, and clinical requirements.

Fourth, proactive strategies should be implemented to address the persistent underutilisation of library resources. These strategies may include targeted orientation programmes, continuous user education, awareness campaigns, and personalised research support tailored to students' academic levels and disciplinary needs.

Fifth, library management should invest in continuous professional development for librarians, particularly in health sciences information resources, evidence-based practice, and instructional design. This will enable librarians to provide high-quality, relevant support to counselling and physiotherapy students.

Finally, institutional policies should support sustained integration of library services into teaching and learning processes. Clear policies that recognise librarians' instructional and collaborative roles will enhance accountability, promote effective resource utilisation, and strengthen the overall academic and research capacity of the institution.

In conclusion, implementing these recommendations will enhance the utilisation of library resources, improve student learning outcomes, and reinforce the role of librarians as essential contributors to academic success and professional development in counselling and physiotherapy education.

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