

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Library Resource Utilization and User Challenges Among Undergraduates: A Study at the University of Vavuniya

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Abstract: University libraries play a vital role in supporting teaching, learning, and research by providing access to both print and electronic information resources. However, limited evidence exists regarding the utilization of library resources among undergraduate students at the University of Vavuniya and the challenges they encounter. This study aimed to examine the purposes and benefits of library use, identify problems faced by students when using library services and resources, and determine factors that could improve the effectiveness of the university library. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The target population consisted of 2,400 undergraduate students from the Faculty of Business Studies, Faculty of Applied Sciences, and Faculty of Technology. Using stratified random sampling method, a sample of 331 students was selected. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that students primarily use the library to improve critical thinking and analytical skills (28.2%), enhance academic achievement (21.7%), and prepare for examinations and assignments (20.4%). The major challenges affecting library utilization were insufficient library materials (37.3%), difficulties in using OPAC and online databases (20.5%), and poor infrastructure (20.2%). Respondents identified enhancement of library resources (43.4%) and improvement of library infrastructure and facilities (23.5%) as the most important measures for improving library effectiveness. The study concludes that undergraduate students perceive the university library as an important academic support service. Strengthening library collections, technological facilities, internet connectivity, and user education programs would further improve library utilization and support students' learning experiences.

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received
03 March 2026

Accepted
03 June 2026

KEYWORDS

Library Utilization,
Undergraduate Students,
Information Resources,
Academic Libraries,
User Satisfaction,
Library Services.

INTRODUCTION

Universities have long placed a high value on their libraries. They provide study areas, books, journals, and digital resources to support students' learning, research, and academic development. University libraries provide both electronic and physical materials to meet contemporary learning needs in the digital age. These days, students have access to computer laboratories, e-books, online journals, quiet study spaces, and printed textbooks. Even with these advancements, students still utilize library resources in various ways. While some students visit the library infrequently, others use it frequently. The gap in the questions of how much students are aware of library services, how simple it is for them to access materials, and whether using the library affects their academic achievement.

A library is more than just a structure that preserves books. It is a facility that makes knowledge and information necessary for education and self-improvement accessible. Academic libraries provide well-organized collections of information resources to assist a

university's teaching, learning, and research endeavors. Onye (2016) supports that the value of a university library cannot be emphasized since even the most talented students require library resources to succeed. Students can establish autonomous learning habits, enhance their research abilities, and gain a deeper understanding of their subjects with the use of library resources.

Students' academic progress is significantly influenced by how they use library resources. According to Ogundiran et al. (2025) using libraries can boost academic achievement, promote lifelong learning, and increase research output.

Students use the library in various ways, based on their study level and academic discipline. Aina et al. (2019) observed that undergraduate students mostly utilize the library to read and access textbooks, but postgraduate students rely more on digital databases for research work. Humanities and social sciences students make more use of library materials, but technology students typically rely on laboratory work and practical sessions (Khan & Bhatti, 2020). Digital libraries have also altered the way students access information. Students can conduct research at any time, even without visiting the actual library, because of online databases, e-books, and

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.65714/ejlis262104>



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Publisher: Eastern University, Sri Lanka

electronic journals that are available 24 hours a day. However, many students are unaware of all the facilities provided by university libraries, limiting their use (Ekpenyong & Edem, 2021).

Because academic success is directly related to how students use library resources, assessing library utilization is critical. Some students have difficulties such as not understanding where to get information, a lack of orientation programs, outdated collections, and inadequate infrastructure. These difficulties limit their capacity to fully utilize the library. As a result, researching how students use library resources and how it affects their academic performance can help colleges enhance their library services. This study looks at how university library resources are used and how they affect undergraduate academic attainment in University of Vavuniya.

Research problem

The university library is an essential part of the learning process, helping students find information, improve their knowledge, and succeed in their studies. Undergraduate students depend on library materials both physical and digital to complete assignments, prepare for exams, and support their learning. However, it is not clear how often students at the University of Vavuniya use the library or how this usage affects their academic performance. Although many studies have examined library use of undergraduate in other universities, there is little or no research focused on the University of Vavuniya. This creates a gap in understanding whether the library is being used effectively and whether it contributes to academic outcomes such as higher grades or improved learning. Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of library utilization by undergraduates at the University of Vavuniya.

Objectives of the study

1. To determine the purposes of library use and the advantages offered by the University of Vavuniya library.
2. To determine the problems that users have when using University of Vavuniya library services and resources.
3. To identify variables that can increase and improve the University of Vavuniya library's effectiveness

Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide evidence-based insights that can guide improvements in library services at the University

of Vavuniya. By identifying the patterns of resource use, the challenges encountered by students, and the impact of utilize library, the study can help university administrators enhance service delivery, strengthen library instruction programs, update collections, and invest in needed infrastructure. Understanding how library use influences academic achievement can also encourage students to adopt effective study habits and make better use of available learning resources.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the research objectives. The target population consisted of 2,400 undergraduate students from three faculties: Faculty of Technology (600 students), Faculty of Business Studies (1,110 students), and Faculty of Applied Sciences (690 students). Since the population was heterogeneous and consisted of distinct academic groups, the stratified random sampling technique was considered most appropriate to ensure that each faculty was adequately represented in the study.

The sample size was determined using the Krejcie & Morgan sampling approach, which recommended a sample of 331 respondents for a population of 2,400. However, to minimize the effect of non-response, 350 questionnaires were distributed to the selected respondents. Out of these, 331 questionnaires were properly completed and returned, while 19 were discarded due to incomplete responses, resulting in a response rate of 94.6% and a non-response rate of 5.4%. The sample was proportionately allocated across the three faculties based on their population size, ensuring fair representation. Accordingly, 95 respondents were selected from the Faculty of Technology, 153 from the Faculty of Business Studies, and 83 from the Faculty of Applied Sciences.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 27.0, where descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages were employed to interpret the findings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Academic libraries are expected to provide a wide range of materials, including books, journals, visual aids, and multimedia resources. Effective use of these materials requires strong collaboration between librarians and the institution. Lance (1994) found that trained library staff improve student achievement, especially when supported by teachers and

administrators. Research also shows that students who use library resources more often generally have higher GPAs and better retention rates, although some studies note limits in proving direct cause (Sterner, 2021). Overall, academic libraries play an important role in supporting learning, improving performance, and creating a better educational environment.

This review also examined online library services and their impact on student success. Studies show that students who access more online resources tend to perform better academically. Nurse et al. (2018) found that successful students use library resources more frequently, which enhances their interest in studies and supports the timely completion of assignments. Nazir (2019) reported that e-resources positively affect performance in academic and competitive examinations. Similarly, online library use has been shown to predict GPA, one-term retention, and overall academic standing (LeMaistre et al., 2018). Carvalhoe Rodrigues & Mandrekar (2020) noted that students satisfied with library resources demonstrate higher academic achievement, highlighting libraries as reliable sources of information. Cherry et al. (2013) and Stemmer & Mahan (2016) consistently found positive correlations between library use and student success, especially when resources are used for research.

Regular use of both physical and digital library materials also improves academic performance. Mezick (2007) reported that academic library services contribute positively to student success and institutional retention. Students who frequently use school libraries perform better than those who do not and recommended regular library use to achieve high academic standards. Ojedokun (2007) emphasized that the usefulness of a library depends on how its materials are utilized. Agboola & Bamigboye (2011) further highlighted that the quality of education in higher institutions relies on the effective use of library resources rather than the library building itself. They stressed the importance of offering a broad collection of books and essential materials to meet the needs of academic communities.

University libraries provide essential resources, including textbooks, journals, maps, diagrams, multimedia tools, and computers. Onye (2016) found that all students had access to textbooks, while fewer had access to computers, internet, or audio-visual materials. Olajide & Adio (2017) noted that some key resources, like abstracts and indexes, were often inadequate or

inaccessible. Despite these challenges, students use libraries to supplement class notes, complete assignments, and prepare for exams (Agyekumaner & Filson, 2012). Research shows a strong link between library use and academic performance. Popoola & Haliso (2009) and Oji & Abana (2012) highlighted that schools with quality library services have better student outcomes. The advent of digital resources and online databases further supports learning and research, improving GPA, retention, and exam performance (Nurse et al., 2018; Nazir, 2019). However, with internet access via smartphones, many students prefer studying outside the library (Matthews, 2014), highlighting the need for improved facilities to encourage library use (Wallace, 2019).

Several studies have identified challenges that limit effective use of library resources. Soria et al. (2013) found that students who used library resources and services were more likely to achieve higher academic performance and retention than those who did not. Mamo & Amidu (2016) highlighted that outdated materials and improper shelving further hinder library use. Despite these challenges, academic success remains a primary goal for students and instructors. Farooq et al. (2011) emphasized that student achievement is central to teaching, while Narad & Abdullah (2016) defined academic achievement as the knowledge and skills gained, measured through grades, learning objectives, and ongoing assessments. Efficient use of library resources is therefore essential to achieving these academic goals.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Out of the 331 respondents, 64.4% (213) were female and 35.6% (118) were male, indicating that women constituted the majority of the study participants and had a higher participation rate than men. Among the respondents, the Faculty of Business Studies had the highest representation with 153 participants (46.2%), followed by the Faculty of Information Technology with 95 participants (28.7%) and the Faculty of Applied Science with 83 participants (25.1%). Together, the Faculty of Business Studies and the Faculty of Applied Science accounted for 71.3% of the total sample, demonstrating a substantial representation from the Faculty of Business Studies. Regarding academic year, third-year students formed the largest group of respondents, accounting for 36.0% of the sample, followed by first-year students at 27.8%. Fourth-year students comprised 71 respondents (21.5%), while second-

year students represented the smallest group with 49 respondents (14.8%). The distribution indicates a strong representation of mid-level students, particularly those in the third year, with 42.6% of respondents coming from the first two years and 78.5% from the first three years, which may have influenced the survey findings.

Benefits and purpose of using library

The table 1 shows how respondents perceived related benefits and purpose of using library. Improvement in analytical and critical thinking skills (28.2%) is the main result, followed by academic achievement (21.7%) and exam preparation (20.4%). 11.8% demonstrate the development of information literacy, while 12.4% recognize the enhance research skills. The benefits of independent learning, on the other hand, are the least acknowledged (1.8%), while assistance for research initiatives is mentioned by 3.8%. In general, respondents prioritise academic achievement and critical thinking over self-directed study and dissertation assistance.

Table 1: Benefits and purpose of using library

Variables	N	Percentage
Academic Achievement	98	21.7%
Enhance research skills	56	12.4%
Development of information literacy	53	11.8%
Preparation for exams and assignments	92	20.4%
Improve critical thinking and analytical ability	127	28.2%
Improved independent and self-directed learning	8	1.8%
Support for research projects and final year projects (dissertations)	17	3.8%

Challenges of using the library

Table 2 shows that there is a notable disparity in the availability of resources, as evidenced by the distribution of respondents' judgements of the difficulties encountered, which shows that 37.3% identify a lack of library materials as the main problem. Infrastructure problems and OPAC/online database access challenges are also noteworthy, 20.5% and 20.2% of respondents, respectively, acknowledged these. While just 7.6% of respondents say they are unaware of library services, connectivity issues affect 14.4%

of respondents, indicating increased awareness despite persistent resource and technology limitations. Overall, the primary issues noted are inadequate information resources and technological limitations.

Table 2: Challenges faced by students while using the library

Variables	N	Percentage
Poor infrastructures	53	20.2%
Insufficient library materials	98	37.3%
Difficulties using OPAC/online databases	54	20.5%
Lack of awareness of library services	20	7.6%
Poor Internet Connection	38	14.4%

According to the results, 43.4% of respondents indicated that improving library resources was their top concern. There is a high demand for current academic materials. Following that Improvement of Library Infrastructure, with 23.5% identifying the need for improved physical spaces. The significance of digital tools and dependable connectivity is demonstrated by the 13.3% of participants who mentioned the adoption of technology and efficient systems as well as the improvement of internet facilities. Finally, orientation on library usage received the lowest priority at 6.6%. While acknowledging the increasing importance of technology in library services, respondents generally place a higher priority on infrastructure improvement and resource augmentation.

Table 3: Factors Improving the use of the library

Variables	N	Percentage
Poor infrastructures	53	20.2%
Insufficient library materials	98	37.3%
Difficulties using OPAC/online databases	54	20.5%
Lack of awareness of library services	20	7.6%
Poor Internet Connection	38	14.4%

CONCLUSION

This study examined library usage among undergraduate students at the University of Vavuniya and its contribution to academic performance. The findings revealed that the library plays a significant role in supporting students' academic activities and intellectual development. Evidence from the study showed that 28.2% of respondents identified improvement in critical thinking and analytical ability as the major benefit of library use, while

21.7% stated that the library contributes to academic achievement. In addition, 20.4% of students reported that the library helps them in preparation for examinations and assignments. These findings demonstrate that undergraduate students recognize the importance of library resources in enhancing their learning and academic success. The study also identified several challenges that limit effective utilization of library services. The majority of respondents (37.3%) indicated that insufficient library materials were the main problem affecting library use. Furthermore, 20.5% experienced difficulties in using OPAC and online databases, while 20.2% highlighted poor infrastructure as a major issue. Poor internet connectivity was identified by 14.4% of respondents. These findings suggest that although students actively use the library, inadequate resources and technological limitations reduce the effectiveness of library services. The results further revealed that students strongly believe improvements are necessary to enhance library utilization. A large proportion of respondents (43.4%) emphasized the need for enhancement of library resources, while 23.5% suggested improvements in library infrastructure and facilities. Additionally, 13.3% recommended better technological systems and internet facilities. This indicates that students expect modern, resource-rich, and technology-supported library services to meet their academic needs effectively. Overall, the study concludes that effective library usage positively contributes to undergraduate academic performance at the University of Vavuniya. The evidence gathered from the respondents confirms that the library supports learning, research, examination preparation, and development of critical thinking skills. Therefore, improving library collections, infrastructure, internet connectivity, and digital services would further strengthen the role of the university library in enhancing students' academic achievement.

Instead of focusing only on prints and non-prints, the library should expand its entire collection (information resources) to incorporate a variety of forms. In particular, the library should embrace technology as a key information resource so that it can benefit from online resources like open access (OPAC) and online databases. The library should implement strategic planning in its acquisition policy to meet the information needs of all library patrons since digital communication is essential to the successful hosting of information in many channels. In order to acquaint students with the resources and services that are accessible,

universities ought to implement thorough orientation programs. Students can use e-resources efficiently if digital platforms are improved and digital literacy training is given.

To reduce the technological difficulties that students encounter, efforts should also be made to enhance internet connectivity and improve access to OPAC and online databases. To assist students in making the most of the resources and services given by libraries, regular orientation programs and information literacy training sessions should be held. Additionally, by providing help and guidance for academic initiatives, the library could enhance its support for independent study and research activities. Lastly, in order to determine students' requirements and continuously enhance library services, it is important to carry out regular user feedback and assessments to make sure they have a beneficial impact on academic performance and overall learning outcomes.

Acknowledgement

We sincerely thank the University of Vavuniya for providing the opportunity to complete this work. We are grateful to the library staff for their valuable support and assistance. We also thank the students of the University of Vavuniya for their cooperation. Finally, we appreciate everyone who contributed to the successful completion of this work.

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