



Perceptions of Library Importance in Supporting Lifelong Learning among Polytechnic Students: Insights from Kano State Polytechnic

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Abstract	Original Research Article
This study examined students' perceptions of the importance of the academic library in supporting lifelong learning at Kano State Polytechnic, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the growing importance of lifelong learning in an environment characterized by rapid changes in knowledge, technology, employment requirements and information resources. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining a quantitative survey with qualitative focus group discussions. The population of the study comprised 12,305 students drawn from six schools and units of Kano State Polytechnic during the 2025/2026 academic session. A sample of 300 students was selected using stratified random sampling, of which 291 questionnaires were returned and found usable. In addition, 25 students were purposively selected to participate in focus group discussions. Data were collected using a structured five-point Likert-scale questionnaire titled Perceptions of Library Importance and Lifelong Learning Questionnaire (PLILLQ) and a focus group discussion guide. Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson Product Moment Correlation, while qualitative data were analyzed thematically. The findings indicated that students recognized the importance of the library for academic development, independent learning and continuous learning. The study also found significant positive relationships between perceived library importance and lifelong-learning engagement ($r = .50, p < .001$), resource accessibility and lifelong-learning engagement ($r = .43, p < .001$), and information-literacy support and lifelong-learning engagement ($r = .33, p < .001$). Qualitative findings indicated that the library supports independent learning, information-literacy development and access to digital information, although challenges relating to resource availability, digital access, awareness and infrastructure remain. The study concludes that the academic library has an important role in supporting lifelong learning among polytechnic students. It recommends strengthening information-literacy programmes, expanding electronic resources, improving ICT infrastructure, increasing awareness of library services and promoting collaboration between librarians and lecturers. Keywords: Academic library, lifelong learning, information literacy, library resources, polytechnic students, Kano State Polytechnic, independent learning.	

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Introduction

Lifelong learning has become an increasingly important concept in contemporary education because knowledge, technology, occupational

requirements and social conditions continue to change rapidly. Education is no longer viewed exclusively as a process that begins in childhood and ends with graduation. Rather, learning is



increasingly understood as a continuous process that takes place throughout an individual's life and across different formal, non-formal and informal environments.

Lifelong learning involves the continuous development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies required for personal, academic, social and professional development. It encompasses learning that occurs in educational institutions as well as learning that takes place independently, at work, within communities and through digital environments. UNESCO's Institute for Lifelong Learning emphasizes the development of learning systems that operate across the life course and in different settings. Its Learning Hub also specifically includes strengthening libraries as part of lifelong-learning development.

The concept of lifelong learning is particularly relevant to students in polytechnic institutions. Polytechnic education combines theoretical knowledge with practical, technical and vocational skills intended to prepare students for employment, entrepreneurship and further professional development. Students consequently require competencies that extend beyond the immediate requirements of their courses. They need to develop the capacity to identify information needs, locate appropriate information, evaluate sources, use information ethically, solve problems and acquire new knowledge independently.

Academic libraries are important components of the educational infrastructure of tertiary institutions. Traditionally, libraries have been associated with the provision of textbooks, journals, reference materials and reading spaces. However, their contemporary role extends beyond the provision of physical collections. Academic libraries increasingly provide electronic databases, e-books, institutional repositories, online catalogues, internet services, research assistance and information-literacy instruction.

The library can therefore serve as a learning environment in which students develop the ability to locate, evaluate and use information independently. These competencies are particularly relevant to lifelong learning because students who acquire

information-literacy skills are better positioned to continue learning after completing their formal education.

Recent Nigerian research provides evidence of the continuing importance of information literacy to independent learning. Hassan's 2025 study of undergraduate students in Katsina found a gap between access to information resources and students' ability to use those resources meaningfully, and recommended structured information-literacy programmes, continuous workshops and improved awareness of library services.

The situation is also relevant to Kano State Polytechnic. Abubakar's study of the institution found that textbooks were the most available and utilized resources, while journals, encyclopedias and digital resources were less utilized. The study further found a significant positive correlation between availability and utilization of library resources ($r = .742, p < .01$), indicating that resource availability is associated with library use.

These findings suggest that the library's contribution to student learning depends not only on the existence of resources but also on students' awareness, accessibility, information skills and perceptions of the value of library services.

The present study therefore examines students' perceptions of library importance in supporting lifelong learning at Kano State Polytechnic. Unlike studies that focus primarily on resource availability or library utilization, this study considers the broader relationship between the library and students' capacity for independent and continuing learning.

Statement of the Problem

The expansion of the internet and social media has transformed the way students obtain and use information. Students now have access to an unprecedented volume of information through search engines, social networking platforms, websites, electronic databases and other digital channels. However, access to information does not necessarily guarantee effective learning.

Students require appropriate skills to identify

information needs, locate credible sources, distinguish scholarly information from unreliable content, evaluate evidence and use information ethically. Without such competencies, the abundance of information available through digital platforms may create difficulties rather than facilitate meaningful learning. Academic libraries are expected to assist students in developing these competencies. Through library resources, information-literacy programmes, reference services and research assistance, academic libraries can support students in becoming independent information users.

Nevertheless, students may perceive the library primarily as a place for obtaining textbooks, completing assignments or preparing for examinations. Such a narrow perception may limit the extent to which the library contributes to independent and lifelong learning.

Research at Kano State Polytechnic has already identified concerns regarding accessibility, availability and utilization of library resources. Abubakar's recent study found that the institution's library collection remains heavily print-oriented and that some digital resources are underutilized. Although such findings are important, they do not adequately explain how students perceive the broader role of the library in supporting continuous learning. A student may use the library regularly without perceiving it as a resource for lifelong learning, or may have a positive perception of the library but face barriers that prevent effective use.

There is therefore a need for empirical research that examines students' perceptions of the library as an environment for independent learning, information-literacy development and continuous acquisition of knowledge. The problem addressed by this study is the limited empirical understanding of how polytechnic students perceive the importance of the academic library in supporting lifelong learning, particularly within Kano State Polytechnic.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine students' perceptions of the importance of the library

in supporting lifelong learning at Kano State Polytechnic. Specifically, the study sought to:

- i. Determine students' perceptions of the importance of the library in supporting lifelong learning.
- ii. Examine students' perceptions of the contribution of library resources to independent learning.
- iii. Determine the extent to which students perceive library services as contributing to information-literacy development.
- iv. Examine the relationship between perceived library importance and students' engagement in lifelong learning activities.
- v. Identify the major challenges affecting the library's contribution to lifelong learning; and explore students' views on strategies for strengthening the library's role in lifelong learning.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- i. What are students' perceptions of the importance of the library in supporting lifelong learning?
- ii. How do students perceive the contribution of library resources to independent learning?
- iii. To what extent do students perceive library services as contributing to information-literacy development?
- iv. What relationship exists between perceived library importance and students' engagement in lifelong learning activities?
- v. What challenges limit the ability of the library to support lifelong learning among students?
- vi. What strategies can strengthen the library's contribution to lifelong learning?

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H01: There is no significant relationship between students' perceived importance of the library and their engagement in lifelong learning activities at Kano State Polytechnic.

H02: There is no significant relationship between students' perceived accessibility of library resources and their engagement in lifelong learning activities.

H03: There is no significant relationship between students' perceived information-literacy support and their engagement in lifelong learning activities.

Scope of the Study

The study focused on students of Kano State Polytechnic and examined their perceptions of the importance of the academic library in supporting lifelong learning. The study covered: availability and accessibility of library resources, utilization of print and electronic information resources, information-literacy and research support, independent and self-directed learning, digital learning support, challenges affecting library use and strategies for strengthening lifelong-learning support. The quantitative component involved a target sample of 300 students, while the qualitative component involved 25 purposively selected students.

Conceptual Review

Concept of Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning refers to the continuous acquisition and development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and competencies throughout an individual's life. It extends beyond formal classroom education to include self-directed learning, professional development, informal learning and learning through digital environments. The lifelong-learning perspective recognizes that individuals need to continue learning because social, technological and occupational environments constantly change.

For tertiary students, lifelong learning involves

developing the ability to learn independently. A student who learns how to search academic databases, evaluate information, identify credible sources and use information ethically develops competencies that can remain useful after graduation. UNESCO's lifelong-learning framework emphasizes learning across the lifespan and in different settings. The UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning also provides resources aimed at building learning ecosystems that operate across different environments.

Library Resources and Independent Learning

Library resources include textbooks, reference materials, journals, newspapers, theses, dissertations, reports, e-books, databases, institutional repositories, audiovisual resources and other information materials. Access to appropriate information resources is an important condition for independent learning. Students who can independently identify and access information can undertake assignments, research projects and personal learning activities without relying exclusively on lecturers.

At Kano State Polytechnic, Abubakar found that textbooks were the most available and utilized resources, while digital resources and some other information materials were less utilized. The study also reported a significant positive relationship between availability and utilization. This suggests that lifelong-learning support requires both adequate resources and effective strategies for helping students use different categories of resources.

Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning

Information literacy is the ability to identify an information need, locate relevant information, evaluate information critically and use it effectively and ethically. Information literacy is fundamental to lifelong learning because individuals encounter information throughout their academic, professional and personal lives. Agbo and Igwebuike describe information literacy as encompassing the identification, access, evaluation, organization and communication of information, and argue that these skills provide a foundation for independent lifelong

learning. Okoye's study similarly examined information-literacy skills as a strategy for sustaining lifelong learning among students in Nigerian academic institutions and highlighted the importance of students acquiring skills for effective use of information resources.

Digital Libraries and Lifelong Learning

Digital technologies have changed the academic library environment. Students can now access electronic journals, e-books, online databases, institutional repositories and other digital resources. Digital library services can support lifelong learning by making information accessible beyond the physical library. They also allow students to continue learning outside conventional classroom settings. However, digital access alone is insufficient. Students need digital and information-literacy competencies to distinguish reliable scholarly information from inaccurate or misleading information. Recent Nigerian research similarly emphasizes the importance of digital infrastructure, information-literacy training and librarian support in strengthening lifelong learning.

Theoretical Framework

Constructivist Learning Theory

The study was anchored in Constructivist Learning Theory, associated particularly with Jean Piaget and subsequent constructivist scholars. Constructivism views learning as an active process in which learners construct knowledge through interaction with information, experiences and their environment. Rather than simply receiving information from teachers, learners actively search for information, interpret it, compare sources and connect new knowledge with previous experiences. The theory is relevant to academic libraries because libraries provide students with opportunities to explore information independently.

Empirical Review

Research conducted in Nigeria demonstrates the continuing importance of academic libraries to

student learning. Abubakar investigated accessibility and utilization of library resources at Kano State Polytechnic. Using data from 88 registered library users, the study found that textbooks were the most available and utilized resources, while journals, encyclopedias and digital resources were less utilized. The study reported a significant positive correlation between resource availability and utilization ($r = .742, p < .01$).

Hassan's 2025 study investigated information-literacy skills among 300 undergraduate students selected through stratified random sampling. The study identified a gap between access to information and students' competence in using information effectively and recommended structured information-literacy programmes, continuous workshops, increased awareness and improved digital infrastructure.

Okoye investigated information-literacy skills as a means of sustaining lifelong learning among students in Nigerian academic institutions. The study used questionnaires administered across four institutions and concluded that information-literacy skills are important for effective use of information resources and lifelong learning.

Agbo and Igwebuike examined information literacy as a foundation for independent lifelong learning among Nigerian university students. Their study emphasized that students need competencies in identifying, accessing, evaluating and communicating information in order to become independent lifelong learners.

A study of information-literacy training in tertiary institution libraries in South-South and South-East Nigeria found that academic libraries provided training in areas including catalogue use, information evaluation, and database use and advanced searching. However, lack of student interest, personnel, facilities and institutional support were reported as challenges.

More recent evidence from the National Open University of Nigeria also shows the connection between library support, information literacy and lifelong learning. A 2026 study of the NOUN Benin

Study Centre Library reported that orientation, user education, electronic databases and librarian assistance supported information-literacy development and self-directed learning, while poor internet connectivity, inadequate digital skills and insufficient training were identified as barriers.

Despite these studies, relatively little attention has been given specifically to students' perceptions of the academic library as a lifelong-learning environment within a polytechnic context. The present study addresses this gap by combining survey evidence with focus group discussions among students of Kano State Polytechnic.

Methodology

The study adopted a **mixed-methods research design**. The design combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain both measurable evidence and detailed explanations of students' experiences. The quantitative component involved a structured questionnaire, while the qualitative component involved focus group discussions. The population consisted of students of Kano State Polytechnic registered during the 2025/2026 academic session.

The total population was **12,305 students** distributed across six schools/units as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Population of the Study

S/N	School/Unit	Population
1	School of Management Studies (SMS)	4,403
2	School of Technology (SOT)	5,834
3	School of General Studies (SGS)	1,022
4	School of Social and Rural Development, Rano (SSRD)	316
5	Kano State Institute of Information Technology	420
6	School of Environmental Studies, Gwarzo (SES)	310
Total		12,305

Sample and Sampling Technique

A sample size of **300 students** was targeted for the quantitative component. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from the six schools/units. However, of the 300 questionnaires distributed, **291 questionnaires were returned and found usable**, representing a usable response rate of **97.0%**. For the qualitative component, **25 students** were purposively selected to participate in focus group discussions.

Instrument for Data Collection

The quantitative instrument was a structured

questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of demographic items and Likert-scale statements

Focus Group Discussion

The qualitative component involved 25 purposively selected students. The discussions focused on students' understanding of lifelong learning, their experiences using the library, the contribution of library resources to independent learning, information-literacy support, digital resources, barriers to library use and suggestions for improving library services.

Data Collection Procedure

The researcher distributed 300 questionnaires to the selected students. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and participation was voluntary. A total of **291 questionnaires were returned and considered usable** for analysis. The qualitative participants also participated in focus group discussions, which provided additional explanations of their perceptions and experiences.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. For the Likert-scale

items, a mean score of **3.00** was used as the decision benchmark. Mean scores of 3.00 and above were interpreted as agreement, while scores below 3.00 were interpreted as disagreement. Pearson correlation was used to test the three hypotheses at the **0.05 level of significance**. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically by identifying recurring ideas and organizing them into major themes.

Results

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study obtained 291 usable questionnaires from the 300 distributed. The demographic distribution supplied for the study is summarized below.

Table 2: Demographic Distribution of Respondents

Variable	Category	Percentage
Gender	Male	65%
	Female	35%
Age	18–22 years	39%
	23–27 years	40%
	28 years and above	21%
Level	ND I	30%
	ND II	20%
	HND I	21%
	HND II	29%

The distribution indicates that respondents represented different age groups and levels of study, thereby providing perspectives from students at different stages of their polytechnic education.

Students' Perceptions of Library Importance

Table 3: Students' Perceptions of Library Importance

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	The library is important to my academic development.	3.00	Agree
2	The library encourages me to learn independently.	3.00	Agree

3	The library supports continuous learning.	4.00	Agree
4	The library encourages reading beyond course materials.	2.00	Disagree
5	The library provides a suitable learning environment.	4.00	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.20	Agree

The results indicate an overall positive perception of the library's importance, with a grand mean of 3.20. Students agreed that the library supports continuous learning, provides a suitable learning environment and contributes to academic development. However,

the mean score of 2.00 for reading beyond course materials suggests that encouraging students to read beyond prescribed course materials remains an area requiring attention.

Perceptions of Information-Literacy Support

Table 4: Students' Perceptions of Information-Literacy Support

S/N	Item	Mean	Decision
1	Librarians help students find reliable information.	3.00	Agree
2	Library orientation improves information-search skills.	4.00	Agree
3	Library services improve research skills.	3.00	Agree
4	The library helps students evaluate information sources.	4.00	Agree
	Grand Mean	3.50	Agree

The grand mean of 3.50 indicates that students generally perceived library services as contributing positively to information-literacy development. The highest mean scores were recorded for library orientation and assistance in evaluating information sources.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis One

H01: There is no significant relationship between students' perceived importance of the library and their engagement in lifelong learning activities.

Table 5: Relationship between Perceived Library Importance and Lifelong-Learning Engagement

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Perceived library importance and lifelong-learning engagement	291	.50	< .001	Reject H01

The analysis produced a positive correlation of $r = .50$. With $N = 291$, the relationship is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This indicates a moderate positive relationship between students' perception of library importance and their engagement in lifelong-learning activities. The result suggests that students who perceive the library as important tend to report greater engagement in continuous learning activities.

Hypothesis Two

H02: There is no significant relationship between perceived accessibility of library resources and students' engagement in lifelong learning.

Table 6: Relationship between Resource Accessibility and Lifelong-Learning Engagement

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Resource accessibility and lifelong-learning engagement	291	.43	< .001	Reject H02

The result indicates a positive correlation of $r = .43$, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < .001$). Therefore, H02 is rejected. The result suggests that greater perceived accessibility of library resources is associated with greater engagement in lifelong learning.

Hypothesis Three

H03: There is no significant relationship between perceived information-literacy support and students' engagement in lifelong learning.

Table 7: Relationship between Information-Literacy Support and Lifelong-Learning Engagement

Variables	N	r	p-value	Decision
Information-literacy support and lifelong-learning engagement	291	.33	< .001	Reject H03

The result indicates a positive correlation of $r = .33$, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level ($p < .001$). Therefore, H03 is rejected. This suggests that students who perceive stronger information-literacy support also tend to report greater engagement in lifelong learning.

Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Table 8: Summary of Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	r	p-value	Decision
H01: Library importance and lifelong learning	.50	< .001	Rejected
H02: Resource accessibility and lifelong learning	.43	< .001	Rejected
H03: Information-literacy support and lifelong learning	.33	< .001	Rejected

All three null hypotheses were rejected. The findings therefore indicate statistically significant positive relationships between the three library-related variables and students' engagement in lifelong learning. It is important to emphasize that these are **correlational findings**. They demonstrate associations between the variables but do not establish that library importance, accessibility or information-literacy support directly causes lifelong-learning engagement.

Qualitative Findings

Analysis of the focus group discussions produced six major themes.

Theme 1: Library as a Source of Independent Learning

Participants generally described the library as a useful environment for obtaining information independently of classroom teaching. Students indicated that library resources enabled them to explore topics beyond information provided during lectures. The findings reinforce the constructivist view that students actively construct knowledge through interaction with information resources.

Theme 2: Information-Literacy Development

Participants identified library orientation and assistance from librarians as useful for locating and evaluating information. Students indicated that librarians could assist them in identifying appropriate information sources, searching for materials and distinguishing credible information from unreliable online materials. This finding corresponds with Nigerian research showing that information-literacy instruction commonly includes catalogue use, information evaluation, database searching and advanced information retrieval.

Theme 3: Access to Digital Information

Participants recognized the increasing importance of electronic resources, including online journals, e-books and internet-based academic information.

However, digital access was associated with infrastructure requirements. Poor internet connectivity and limited digital skills can restrict effective use of electronic library resources. Similar barriers have been identified in recent Nigerian research on information literacy and lifelong learning.

Theme 4: Library Environment

Participants regarded the physical library environment as relevant to independent learning. Quiet study areas, adequate seating, appropriate lighting and a conducive atmosphere were identified as factors that can encourage students to spend time learning independently.

Discussion of Findings

The study found that students generally perceived the academic library as important to their learning. The overall mean score of 3.20 indicates agreement with the view that the library contributes to academic development, continuous learning and the provision of a suitable learning environment. The finding supports the conceptual understanding of libraries as learning environments rather than merely repositories of books. The library provides students with access to information and opportunities to engage in independent learning.

The study also found a moderate positive relationship between perceived library importance and lifelong-learning engagement ($r = .50, p < .001$). This means that students who attach greater importance to the library tend to report stronger engagement in lifelong-learning activities. The result is consistent with the theoretical assumption that students' engagement with information resources can facilitate independent knowledge construction.

The significant positive relationship between resource accessibility and lifelong-learning engagement ($r = .43, p < .001$) is also important. It suggests that students' perceptions of resource accessibility are associated with their engagement in continuing learning. This finding is consistent with Abubakar's Kano State Polytechnic study, which

reported a significant positive relationship between resource availability and utilization ($r = .742$, $p < .01$).

The relationship between information-literacy support and lifelong-learning engagement was positive and significant ($r = .33$, $p < .001$). Although the association was weaker than those for perceived library importance and resource accessibility, it remains statistically significant. The result reinforces the importance of teaching students how to locate, evaluate and use information effectively.

This finding agrees with Nigerian studies emphasizing information literacy as a foundation for independent lifelong learning. Agbo and Igwebuike specifically identified information literacy as an important basis for independent lifelong learning, while Okoye emphasized information-literacy skills as a strategy for sustaining lifelong learning.

The qualitative findings provide further explanation. Students described the library as a place for independent study and identified librarian assistance, information-literacy training and digital resources as important components of library support.

However, the findings also demonstrate that the potential of the library is affected by resource and infrastructure challenges. This is consistent with recent Nigerian research identifying poor connectivity, inadequate digital skills and insufficient training as barriers to effective information-literacy and lifelong-learning support.

The study therefore suggests that supporting lifelong learning requires a combination of adequate resources, accessibility, information-literacy education, ICT infrastructure and responsive library services.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Strengthen Information-Literacy Programmes

Kano State Polytechnic Library should organize regular practical information-literacy programmes covering database searching, evaluation of online

information, referencing, plagiarism avoidance and effective use of electronic resources.

2. Expand Electronic Resources and Improve Internet and ICT Infrastructure

The library should increase access to relevant e-books, electronic journals, academic databases and institutional digital resources. The Polytechnic should provide reliable internet connectivity, adequate computers and other ICT facilities to support digital library use.

3. Increase Awareness of Library Services and Strengthen Librarian-Student Interaction

Regular library orientation and awareness programmes should be organized to ensure that students understand the resources and services available to them. Librarians should adopt proactive reference and research-support services that enable students to obtain assistance when searching for and evaluating information.

6. Provide Current Resources and Promote Reading beyond Course Materials

Library collections should be regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that students have access to current and relevant materials. The library should develop reading-promotion programmes that encourage students to explore materials beyond their prescribed course texts.

Conclusion

This study examined perceptions of library importance in supporting lifelong learning among students of Kano State Polytechnic. The findings demonstrate that students generally recognize the library as an important component of their academic and continuing learning environment. The quantitative findings showed positive relationships between perceived library importance and lifelong-learning engagement, resource accessibility and lifelong-learning engagement, and information-literacy support and lifelong-learning engagement. The qualitative findings complemented these results

by showing that students perceive independent learning, information-literacy development, digital information access and a conducive learning environment as important aspects of the library's contribution.

The study also identified challenges involving resources, digital infrastructure, awareness and information-literacy training. These challenges suggest that the library's potential to support lifelong learning depends not only on students' perceptions but also on the availability, accessibility and quality of resources and services.

The study concludes that the academic library can make a meaningful contribution to lifelong learning among polytechnic students when it provides current and accessible resources, effective information-literacy instruction, digital services, supportive learning environments and responsive professional assistance. Strengthening these areas at Kano State Polytechnic can help students develop the skills required not only for successful completion of their programmes but also for continued learning and professional development beyond graduation.

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