

**UTILIZATION OF SCHOOL LIBRARIES BY STUDENTS IN SELECTED  
SCHOOLS IN DAR ES SALAAM, TANZANIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The study investigated the utilization of school libraries by Students in selected schools in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. Data were collected from 147 respondents using questionnaire, interview and covert observation. Qualitative data were subjected to content analysis while quantitative data were analysed by using statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 computer software programme. Findings revealed that students from both private and government schools rarely used the school libraries. However, the majority (25%) of private school students use libraries everyday while only 1 percent of the students from government owned schools use library every day. Moreover, the study revealed that books and newspapers are the main school library information resources available in the school libraries. Furthermore, the study findings revealed that self-reading, doing assignments, reading notes and borrowing books are the main activities conducted by students in school libraries. The study concludes that students' utilization of school libraries is low in government schools as compared to private schools. The study concludes further that books and newspapers are the main information resources found in the selected schools libraries while the main students' activities conducted by students in school libraries are self-reading, doing assignment, reading notes and borrowing books. The study recommend that head teachers in both private and government schools should lobby top management from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to consistently allocate adequate funds for building school libraries and library collections, training school librarians and conducting information literacy training programmes for both students and teachers.*

**Key words:** *Libraries, School libraries, Information resources, Library utilization, Students' activities*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Students need information which is relevant, current and timely for them to surpass in academic issues and school libraries are there to support this mission (Mahwasane, 2017). A good library is first judged by the quality, currency, relevance and size of its collection. Collection development requires adequate funding and innovative planning in order to be sustained. Trained staff, coherent, effective and active library policy is also important. Secondary School students need to use library information resources effectively in order to understand and widen their knowledge. Khanyisiwe (2007) focuses on the relationship between the curriculum and the school library. Secondary school libraries should meet the needs of the curriculum in the sense that library information resources should relate to the curriculum of a particular institution. Laitsch (2003) conducted a study on the role of libraries in students' performance in Columbia. In his research he discovered that there is a need for library specialists to support both students and teachers in the effective use of the library in the teaching and learning process. Library specialists need the teacher's and the principal's support in order to be effective. Library specialists serve as both teachers of students and in-service providers for teachers.

However, in Tanzania most of the school libraries are faced with a number of problems which make students more dependant (Mubofu & Malekani, 2019). For example, Newton Tanzania Collaborative (2011) visited different schools in Tanzania and discovered different problems including the lack of library materials. Furthermore, Hossain (2019) identified lack of information materials and inadequate funding as the key problems faced by school libraries..

Additionally, the review conducted by Mubofu and Malekani (2019) identified lack of reading habit by students and teachers, lack of resources, inadequacy of reading space, lack of maintenance in the libraries, and lack of trained school librarians as part of the problems facing school libraries in Tanzania, Others include lack of funds, lack of interest by Head of Schools and lack of interest by the Tanzanian Government Officials. In some of the schools in Tanzania, Government Secondary Schools, and in particular Ward Secondary Schools, School libraries are almost non-existent. As a result, most Secondary School Students proceed to Universities and Colleges where they fail to make effective use of this important resource. From these findings the study discovered that the usability of libraries by students and teachers in secondary school libraries was poor.

It is however, important to note that for any library to provide good information services to clients the government should ensure that libraries have sufficient stocks of books that reflect the curriculum being taught at the school and availability of well-trained teacher librarians to run the school libraries. Contemporary scholars such as Babayi, Abubakar and Mohammed (2019); and CLN and Usman (2019) noted that school libraries are valuable in literacy work from the earliest stage because it encourages good reading habits of children awhile still at young age and also helps pupils to increase their knowledge and improve their speaking, writing, argumentation and critical thinking skills.

Despite the great potential of school libraries in schools and students' performance, the usage of school libraries is still low (Mahwasane, 2017, Phillips and Recker, 2018; Shonhe, 2019; Tofi and Agipu, 2019; Babayi, Abubakar, and Mohammed, 2019; and Mubofu and Malekani, 2019). The study investigated the school library utilization by students' in selected secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The study surveyed both private and government secondary schools in Dar es Salaam, Region. The study involved three secondary schools in Temeke, Kinondoni and Ilala Districts, therefore, amounting to nine (9) secondary schools. The three districts were selected because of the availability of a large number of both private and government secondary schools. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. The method was appropriate to the study because it helped the researchers to get in-depth information from respondents. It also helped to get the real and natural data from the study area. A hundred and forty seven (147) respondents participated in this study. Out of these, 18 were teachers, 9 were library staff, and 120 were students. Teachers and students were selected because they were directly involved in using library information resources while library staff were involved in providing the information services. Both probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents. Simple random sampling was applied to select students' respondents while purposive sampling techniques was used to select the library staff. On the other hand teachers were conveniently selected for inclusion in this study.

Data were collected using a combination of methods in order to improve validity and reliability. Therefore, a structured standardised self-administered questionnaire with both closed and

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Open-ended questions was administered to respondents. Interviews and overt observation were included in data collection. Questionnaires were administered to students while interviews were conducted to library staff and Teachers in selected schools in Temeke, Ilala and Kinondoni districts in Dar es Salaam.

Data were collected using a combination of methods in order to improve validity and reliability. Therefore, a structured standardised self-administered questionnaire with both closed and open ended questions was administered to respondents. Interview and overt observation were included in data collection. Questionnaires were administered to students while interviews were conducted to library staff and teachers in selected schools in Temeke, Kinondoni and Ilala Districts in Dar es Salaam. The collected data were organised, coded, analysed and presented both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative data were analyzed by using a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 18.0 computer software programme while qualitative data were subjected to content analysis.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **Frequency of Library Usage by Students in Secondary Schools**

The study also wanted to know how often students use the library for different class activities because the library is part and parcel of the school set up and its use is very necessary in the teaching and learning process. Findings revealed that on the part of private schools students who use the library everyday were 10 (25%), those who use once per week were 6 (15%), twice a week were 5 (12%), and three times a week were 4 (10%). Furthermore, students who use the library rarely were 15 (38%) and there was no respondent who did not use the library at all. With regard to government schools the findings revealed that students who use the library everyday were 1 (1%), those who use once per week were 5 (6%), twice a week were 2 (3%), while those who use the library three times a week were 3 (4%). Students who use the library rarely were 52 (65%) and those who do not use the library at all were 17 (21%).

Therefore, it is evident that both private and government owned schools students rarely use the school library. Sixty five (65%) of the students rarely use school libraries in government schools while only 38% use school libraries in private schools. This is an indication that the habit of using the library regularly is not well nurtured among the pupils. Moreover, the study findings indicate that the majority of the students especially in government schools do not use the library. Babayi, Abubakar and Mohammed (2019) studies on the state of school libraries in

Adamawa State in Nigeria established that school libraries aim at ensuring that the school community including teachers and students have access to information resources for academic use and therefore to increase their academic performance. If the situation remains like the way it is the goals of school libraries as stated by Babayi, Abubakar and Mohammed, (*op. cit.*) et al will never be attained.

### **Information Resources Available in School Libraries**

Any library should be equipped with different types of reading information resources which meet students' and teachers' academic needs. Students through questionnaires were required to mention different information resources found in their school libraries. Findings revealed that 120 (100%) of the students stated that books are found in their library, 77 (64.1%) of the students mentioned that journals are found in the library. Computer and Internet were mentioned by 96 (80%) of the students, while 97 (80.8%) of the students mentioned the availability of Newspapers and 49 (40.8%) of the students mentioned magazines.

Findings reveal that students were familiar with different materials which were available in the library. Also they understood that computer and Internet services were part and parcel of secondary school library information resources. Newspapers were mentioned by 97 (80.8%) students. This reveals that they were aware of the current information which was supposed to be in libraries every day. The study observed that six (6) of the surveyed secondary school libraries had no current newspapers. Newspapers were received once a week. There were also no computers in all the government surveyed school libraries while in private secondary schools the researchers observed few computers however the libraries were not automated, for instance, at St. Anthony's Secondary School.

Although books are 100% available in the surveyed libraries this does not guarantee their access and use due to the availability of books which are not used by teachers in preparing their teaching notice and presence of weak library staff in those libraries (Babayi, Abubakar, & Mohammed, 2019). The main objective of any library regardless of type is to acquire, process and disseminate relevant information resources like books, journals and newspaper to the intended stakeholders however, school libraries face the problem of having library staff with low ability and that they are incapable of providing proper information services to clients (Babayi, Abubakar, & Mohammed, *op. cit.*). This implies that the government as well as private school owners should work together to ensure that library staff in the schools are

employed through the Tanzania public service recruitment agency in order to get the competent employee who will help their library to provide the right services, to the right customers and in the right time.

### **Activities Conducted by Students in School Libraries**

Students were asked to mention different activities which they conducted in the library. Findings revealed that, there were 90 (75%) of the student respondents, who mentioned 'Self reading'. 41(34.2%) of the respondents mentioned 'Reading notes', 58 (48.3%) mentioned doing an assignment, 41 (34.2%) borrowing books, 32 (26.7%), writing notes, 7 (5.8%), doing discussion and 40 (33.3%) reading news.

Findings shows that majority 75% of the students used the school library as a self-reading room. This is probably because the library provides a conducive environment for students to have private study and librarians are there to ensure silence prevails in the library. However, findings from covert observation conducted by the researcher revealed that some students used the library as a place for sleeping while others considered the library as a discussion room. Researchers further observed that some students visited the library during the examination period only and they went with their own textbooks to read their notices and not the available library information resources. This was confirmed by the library staff who once interviewed echoed that:

*This is an examination week that's why you can see a large number of students in the library trying to prepare themselves for the examination. During the time when there are no examinations you can see empty chairs. But under normal circumstances students hardly come to the library.*

The study further realised that students treated the library as a leisure place because they never know the use of the library and its information resources. It is therefore crucial for the librarians and the school management to ensure that students are well oriented on the use of school libraries. Orientation is primarily concerned with ways of introducing the user to the general techniques of library usage and services available, and the organisation, layout and facilities of a particular library. Failure to orient students on how to make use of the libraries will continue to fail in their examinations because insufficient use of books available in libraries is one of the causative mass failures of students in our school (Laddunuri, 2012).

### **Students' and Teachers' Use of School Library**

During the interview teachers were asked to state the reasons as to why most of the students and teachers do not visit their school library for study purposes.

Teachers' responses revealed that the absence of books is a factor which makes them and students not to visit the school libraries. For instance teachers interviewed noted the following reasons for not visiting school libraries:

- *Small number of mixed information resources*
- *Lack of books for advanced level*
- *Inadequacy of current books*
- *Insufficiency of reading materials like teachers notices*
- *Inadequate of appropriate materials for teachers to prepare students notices*
- *Students are not aware of using library materials for class activities*

The findings from these interviews indicate that there is a problem with the information resources available in school libraries. The information resources are either outdated, not available, students and teachers are not aware of their availability. These issues identified during the interview need to be addressed if at all the school libraries are to be helpful to learners since libraries act as the heart of any educational institution (Laitsch, 2003; Benard, and Dulle, 2014; Dilshad and Akhtar, 2019; and Babayi, Abubakar and Mohammed, 2019).

Furthermore, during the face-to-face interviews, Teachers claimed that students are not aware of libraries. This makes it difficult to plan activities in the library, and most of them like to be spoon fed. It was also reported that most of the students visit the library during the examination period. The researchers observed that teachers and students do not have habits of attending the library on a regular basis. School libraries play a central role in education and contribute greatly to the academic achievement of Students (Benard and Dulle, 2014).

Researchers also observed that students and teachers who are the key stakeholders and users of schools libraries are discouraged in using the school libraries because of inadequacy of appropriate information resources, absence of computers and lack of internet that could be used to retrieve online information sources (Mubofu and Malekani, 2019). It is evident therefore, that much attention is needed to support school libraries in terms of appropriate information resources, funding and staffing for greater for them to contribute much in students' academic performance.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The study concludes that students' utilization of school libraries is low in government schools as compared to private schools. Most 65% of the students in government schools rarely use

school libraries for solving their information needs while only 38% of the students in private schools rarely use school libraries. Furthermore, the study concludes that students in private schools use the school library in one way or another while from the findings it was vividly revealed that 21% of the students in government schools do not use their school library at all.

Moreover, it is concluded that books and newspapers are the main information resources found in the selected secondary schools libraries in Temeke, Kinondoni and Ilala districts in Dar es Salaam region. The study also concludes that self-reading, doing assignments, reading notes and borrowing books are the main activities conducted by students in school libraries. Other activities include reading newspapers, writing notes and discussion.

Furthermore, the study concludes that students and teachers visit to school library is poor because of small number of mixed information resources, lack of books for advanced level, inadequacy of current books, insufficiency of reading materials like teachers notices, inadequate of appropriate materials for teachers to prepare students notices, and unawareness of students on using library information resources for class activities

The study recommend that head teachers in both private and government schools through their board of directors should lobby top management from the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to consistently allocate adequate funding for building school libraries and library collections, training school librarians and conducting information literacy training programmes for both students and teachers.

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