

---

## ASSESSMENT OF EFFECTIVE LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITY GUSAU

BY

<sup>1</sup>Akeem Olalekan Ayub, <sup>2</sup>Insikak Mfon Inam & <sup>3</sup>Sherif Kunle Yusuf

<sup>1</sup>Sociology, Federal University Gusau (FUGUS), Zamfara, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>Nigeria Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (NCDC).

<sup>3</sup>University Library, Federal University Lokoja, Nigeria.

Email: [ayubakeemola@fugusau.edu.ng](mailto:ayubakeemola@fugusau.edu.ng)

### Abstract

The study explores how university libraries can enhance mental health awareness and inclusion, focusing on their roles. It highlights the potential of libraries to address mental health challenges and improve student well-being. Research objectives encompass mental health literacy enhancement, assessing disability-related information accessibility, librarian roles in well-being, and community-building strategies. Using a quantitative approach, the study employed surveys to extract data from 400 students, although analysis was based on 395 retrieved and valid questionnaires. Ethical guidelines were upheld. Findings underscore the importance of library resources and collaboration, aligning with libraries' innovation. The study also highlights university libraries' capacity to foster mental health awareness. Findings align with existing literature, emphasizing libraries' roles in mental health support, resource use, and accessibility. Diverse resources and collaborations resonate with libraries' innovative potential. Challenges mirror inclusivity discourse. The study underscores university libraries' untapped potential in fostering mental health awareness. In conclusion, the study highlights university libraries' contributions to mental health awareness and inclusion. Recommendations include diverse resources, collaborations, enhanced accessibility, extended hours and librarian training. These actions position libraries as key contributors to mental health awareness and student well-being, fostering a supportive campus environment.

**Keywords:** Inclusion, Mental health awareness, Promoting mental health, Student well-being, University libraries

### Introduction

The global burden of mental health crises and disabilities is a significant challenge, as highlighted by various studies and reports. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023), reported that mental and substance use disorders are a leading cause of disability in children and youth, accounting for a quarter of all years lived with disability (YLDs) and a substantial number of disability-adjusted life years (DALYs) lost. Accordingly, it also reported that around 14% of adults aged 60 and over live with a mental disorder, which accounts for 10.6% of the total DALYs among older adults. A study published in *The Lancet* estimates that 16% of global DALYs are attributable to mental disorders (Arias, Saxena & Verguet, 2022). The WHO (2024) defines mental health as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to contribute to their community. This definition emphasizes that mental health is not just the absence of mental disorders but is an integral and essential component of health, underpinning an individual's ability to build relationships, work, and contribute to society. A mentally healthy individual demonstrates qualities such as effective coping with stress, productive engagement, and positive interpersonal interactions (WHO, 2024). Conversely, mental health disorders, as outlined by the American Psychiatric Association (2013), encompass a diverse range of conditions, such as schizophrenia, anxiety disorders, and eating disorders, underscoring the complexity of mental health challenges.

Despite the extensive research on mental health and disabilities, there is a lack of exploration into the potential of libraries to enhance mental health. However, the valuable role that libraries can play in improving mental health and addressing broader health concerns is often overlooked. In this context, libraries emerge as versatile resources with untapped potential to contribute to mental health and well-being. Whitney et al. (2017) emphasize libraries' ubiquity,

trustworthiness, and educational role in health literacy. Various types of libraries, including public, hospital, and academic health centres, possess distinct strengths that can be harnessed to address health challenges. Notably, digital libraries have expanded accessibility, making valuable health information available to a broader audience, particularly in settings like schools, community centres, and healthcare institutions (Smith, 2011). However, the linkage between libraries and mental health remains underexplored. To bridge this gap, this study focuses on Federal University Gusau's central library as a case study to investigate its potential in promoting mental health awareness and inclusion. By analysing library services, resources, and programs, as well as the roles of librarians, this research seeks to uncover strategies for utilizing libraries to enhance mental health literacy, address disabilities, and contribute to healthier and more supportive campus communities. The study's structured exploration encompasses areas such as access to health-related knowledge, utilization of library services, and the potential impact on individual and community well-being. Through a comprehensive examination, this research aims to illuminate the ways in which university libraries can effectively contribute to mental health awareness and create an inclusive environment for all students.

## **Literature Review**

One study carried out by Gulliksen and Gustafsson (2018) which focused on the role of librarians in public libraries in Sweden. The researchers found that librarians were seen as trusted professionals who could provide information and support on mental health issues. They also found that librarians played a key role in reducing stigma around mental health and promoting well-being through various programs and services. In a study by Pinto and Sales (2019), the researchers explored the impact of bibliotherapy programs offered by librarians on individuals' mental health. They found that participating in bibliotherapy programs led to improvements in individuals' well-being, including reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. Furthermore, a study by Cooper and Crumpton (2020) examined the role of librarians in promoting mental health literacy among library patrons. The researchers found that librarians were effective in providing information and resources on mental health, increasing individuals' knowledge and understanding of mental health issues. These studies, along with others in the field, highlight the significant role of librarians in promoting mental health and well-being. They demonstrate the positive impact of librarians' interactions, programs, and services on individuals' mental health outcomes.

One study conducted by Kumbhar and Kumbhar (2017) examined the accessibility of library services for visually impaired students in Indian universities. The study found that while some universities had made efforts to provide accessible services, many were still lag behind. In another related study conducted by Abdul Razak (2017) the study highlights the importance of physical accessibility in university libraries for individuals with disabilities. The result shows that physical accessibility for disability related includes accessible entrances, ramps, elevators, and designated parking spaces. Hui-Yun Sung (2018) investigated the accessibility of library services for patrons with disabilities in academic libraries across the United States. The researchers collected data on library policies, staff training, assistive technology availability, and collaboration with disability services offices. Nevertheless, they offer numerous opportunities for learning that can tangibly influence economic, social, and cultural development, with a ripple effect on individual health. Borrowing a book from a local library transcends the act itself; it becomes a gateway to learn how to alleviate various health concerns such as malaria, typhoid, HIV/AIDS, and even improve personal well-being (Green, 2020). This access to quality information has the power to transform both individual lives and society. National copyright systems facilitate this access, allowing libraries to bridge the gap between restricted works and eager learners. Libraries, as gatekeepers of valuable health information, offer critical services that promote informed decision-making and health literacy. By providing access to biomedical information for healthcare professionals, libraries enhance the accessibility of health-related knowledge to the public (National Health Services, 2021).

Kitzie and Steeves (2019) stated that librarians can develop and deliver mental health literacy programs that aim to increase students' understanding of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and promote help-seeking behaviours. These programs can include workshops, information sessions, and awareness campaigns. Pisano and Saylor (2019) observed that librarians often collaborate with mental health professionals to provide specialized services. This may involve hosting therapy sessions, partnering with local mental health organizations, or inviting guest speakers to address mental health topics. Finding from their research has shown that such collaborations enhance the effectiveness of

mental health initiatives in libraries. In addition, Cox and Osterhaus Trzasko (2018) reported that librarians receive training to better understand mental health issues and provide appropriate support. Many libraries offer mental health literacy programs for librarians to enhance their knowledge and skills. The result from the study showed that there is positive impact of such training on librarians' ability to address mental health needs. University libraries play a crucial role in promoting health information literacy by teaching students and community members how to critically evaluate health information and make informed decisions about their health (Bostick et al., 2018). Also, Libraries can offer workshops and training sessions on finding reliable health information online and using evidence-based resources (Haddow et al., 2019). Furthermore, University libraries can promote physical health by providing access to fitness resources, such as exercise equipment, fitness classes, and wellness programs (Baker et al., 2017).

### **Research Objectives**

The main objective of this study is to assess the effectiveness of library and information services in promoting mental health awareness among undergraduate students of Federal University Gusau. However, the specific objectives are to:

- i. To examine the role of libraries in enhancing mental health literacy among students:
- ii. To assess the accessibility of disability-related information and services in university libraries:
- iii. To investigate the role of librarians in promoting mental health and well-being among students
- iv. To analyse strategies for building healthy communities through university libraries.

### **Methodology**

The study was conducted at Federal University Gusau, located in the urban setting of Gusau, Zamfara State, Nigeria. This setting allowed for exploration of the role of university libraries in promoting mental health awareness within the context of the city's diverse population and cultural influences. The university's integration within the urban landscape offered a dynamic atmosphere for learning and engagement, contributing to the study's insights. To comprehensively explore the role of university libraries in promoting mental health awareness and inclusion for students at Federal University Gusau, a quantitative research approach was employed for data collection and analysis techniques, allowing for a well-rounded understanding of the research topic. The quantitative phase, a structured survey was conducted among a representative sample of students from Federal University Gusau. The survey comprised closed-ended questions designed to gather quantitative data on students' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences regarding the role of university libraries in promoting mental health awareness and inclusion. The study's sample size was determined statistically, resulting in a total of 400 participants, although analysis was based on 395 retrieved and valid questionnaires. A random sampling technique was employed, selecting individuals from the student population to minimize bias and enhance representation. A random sampling technique was utilized to select participants from the student population at the institution. This ensured a diverse representation across various academic disciplines and demographic backgrounds within the university community. Researchers engaged with participants individually in person, explaining the study's purpose, inviting participation, and distributing the printed questionnaires. Participants were encouraged to complete the questionnaires on the spot, with researchers available to address any queries and ensure clarity. The collected quantitative data underwent statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and means were used to summarize the survey responses. The data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science, version 25.

**Results**

**Table 1:**  
Sociodemographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Responses	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	199	50.4
	Female	196	49.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Age	18-20 years	38	9.6
	21-23 years	121	30.6
	24-26 years	179	45.3
	27+ years	57	14.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Academic Discipline	Faculty of Education	130	32.9
	Faculty of Management and Social Sciences	133	33.7
	Faculty of Sciences	132	33.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Academic Year	Freshman / 1st Year	67	17.0
	Sophomore / 2nd Year	85	21.5
	Junior / 3rd Year	112	28.4
	Senior / 4th Year or higher	131	33.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Ethnicity	Hausa	189	47.8
	Fulani	91	23.0
	Yoruba	54	13.7
	Igbo	35	8.9
	Other Nigerian ethnicities	21	5.3
	Non-Nigerian	5	1.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Residential Area	On-campus housing	37	9.3
	Off-campus housing (within Gusau)	272	68.9
	Off-campus housing (outside Gusau)	86	21.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Previous Experience with Mental Health Resources	Regularly used university mental health resources	33	8.3
	Used university mental health resources occasionally	65	16.5
	Aware of but never used university mental health resources	109	27.6
	Not aware of university mental health resources	188	47.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 1 presents the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, outlining the foundational makeup of the study's participant cohort, comprising 395 individuals. Gender distribution demonstrated near parity, with 50.4% identifying as male and 49.6% as female. Age distribution revealed that a significant portion of respondents, constituting 30.6%, belonged to the 21-23 years age group, while 45.3% were within the 24-26 years range. Academic disciplines displayed a balanced distribution, with roughly equal representation across faculties: 32.9% from the Faculty of Education, 33.7% from the Faculty of Management and Social Sciences, and 33.4% from the Faculty of Sciences. Examining academic years, the higher classes, particularly senior students (33.2%), held the largest share, followed by junior students (28.4%). Ethnicity analysis highlighted the prominent presence of Hausa participants (47.8%), followed by Fulani (23.0%) and Yoruba (13.7%). Residential areas depicted a diverse distribution, with 68.9% residing off-campus within Gusau, 21.8% off-campus outside Gusau, and 9.4% in on-campus housing. Turning

to experiences with mental health resources, 8.4% indicated regular usage, 16.5% occasional usage, 27.6% awareness but non-usage, and 47.6% reported being unaware of these resources. These sociodemographic insights provide a comprehensive snapshot of the participant cohort's varied backgrounds, which lay the groundwork for deeper exploration into their perceptions and patterns of engagement with mental health resources.

**Table 2:**  
Perceptions and Engagement in Library Mental Health Initiatives

<b>Perceived impact of library resources on understanding of mental health topics</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Significantly improved my understanding	69	17.5
Moderately improved my understanding	84	21.3
Had little impact on my understanding	187	47.3
No impact on my understanding	55	13.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Discussing mental health concepts with fellow students using information obtained from library resources</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, frequently	54	13.7
Yes, occasionally	85	21.5
No, I have not	256	64.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Extent to which exposure to mental health resources from the library has positively influenced attitudes towards mental health</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
High	103	26.1
Low	261	66.1
Neutral	31	7.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2 highlight the impact of library resources on understanding mental health topics, the types of specific resources accessed, and ways libraries could further contribute to improving students' mental health literacy. Regarding the perceived impact of library resources, the results indicate that 17.5% of respondents felt their understanding of mental health topics significantly improved, while 21.3% reported a moderate improvement. A substantial proportion (47.3%) indicated that these resources had a limited impact on their understanding, and 13.9% felt no impact. Regarding discussions on mental health using library resources, findings revealed that 13.7% of respondents engage frequently, 21.5% occasionally, while the majority (64.8%) have not participated. Examining the influence of library resources on attitudes, 26.1% reported a high positive impact, 66.1% indicated a low impact, and 7.8% expressed a neutral stance. These outcomes suggest varying degrees of engagement and impact, underscoring the potential for university libraries to enhance mental health awareness and attitudes among students.

From multiple response on the specific mental health resources accessed from the library, books were the most frequently accessed (75.4%), followed by articles (24.6%). Online resources (19.2%), workshops or presentations (16.2%), pamphlets (9.1%), podcasts (5.6%), and videos/DVDs (5.1%) were also utilized. Similarly, the multiple responses on ways libraries could further contribute to improving students’ mental health literacy, many students expressed interest in a more diverse collection of mental health resources (72.4%) and collaborative mental health programs (53.9%). Additionally, 84.1% of respondents emphasized the importance of increased visibility of mental health materials, while 87.3% believed workshops on mental health topics would be beneficial. Peer-led mental health discussion groups (72.7%), mobile apps for mental well-being (78.7%), and creative writing contests focused on mental health themes (51.1%) were also seen as valuable ways to enhance mental health awareness and inclusion. These findings provide insights into the ways university libraries can play an instrumental role in fostering mental health literacy and inclusion among students, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the university community.

Findings from the multiple responses on specific challenges encountered while using library resources, reveal that 12.9% face difficulty locating relevant mental health materials, signalling a need for improved organization. A significant 53.7% encounter limited mental health-related resources, emphasizing the demand for a more inclusive collection. Around 17.0% lack awareness of available resources, necessitating enhanced communication. Outdated information affects 56.2%, underscoring the importance of up-to-date content. Stigmatization, noted by 55.2%, indicates the need for a non-judgmental borrowing environment. Inadequate guidance in digital resources impacts 72.7%, warranting improved user support. Desire for varied formats (84.1%) underscores catering to diverse learning preferences. A substantial 87.3% point to limited opening hours as a constraint, suggesting potential benefits from extension.

**Table 4:**  
Accessibility and Support Services for Students with Disabilities

<b>Encountered instances of inaccessible library resources for disabilities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, I’ve encountered such instances	345	87.3
No, I have not	50	12.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Witnessing library efforts in promoting inclusivity and accessibility for students with disabilities</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, I’ve seen such efforts	206	52.2
No, I have not	122	30.8
Not sure	67	17.0
<b>Alignment of library staff knowledge of disability services</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, strongly aligns	89	22.5
Somewhat aligns	123	31.1
Neutral	150	38.0
Does not align	33	8.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 4 unveils insights into accessibility and support services for students with disabilities. An overwhelming 87.3% of respondents have encountered instances of inaccessible library resources for disabilities, underscoring the need for improved accessibility measures. Conversely, 12.7% have not reported such instances. A significant portion of students (52.2%) have positively acknowledged the university library’s endeavours to foster inclusivity and accessibility. This recognition signifies that the library’s initiatives are being appreciated by a considerable number of students. However, around 30.9% of students have not observed these efforts, with 17.0% uncertain. The library’s efforts in promoting inclusivity garner notable recognition, emphasizing the importance of ongoing initiatives and communication. Addressing uncertainty might involve enhancing communication channels to clarify ongoing inclusivity measures and their impact. The perceptions of students regarding the alignment of library staff knowledge with disability services showed that 22.5% agreed that library staff knowledge “strongly aligns” with disability services, while 31.1% believed it “somewhat aligns.” A significant proportion, 38.0%, remained “neutral” about the alignment. On the other hand, a relatively smaller fraction of 8.6% thought that library staff knowledge “does not align” with disability services. The findings suggest that there is a mixed perception among students about the alignment of library staff knowledge with disability services. While a notable portion sees alignment to some extent, the presence of both “neutral” and “does not align” responses highlights a need for attention in this area.

Regarding specific services/resources collated through multiple responses, accessible study spaces were reported by 55.9%, while assistive technology, braille materials, and sign language interpretation were mentioned by 59.2%, 64.8%, and 67.6% respectively. Personalized accessibility consultations were identified by 75.4%, and 50.1% noted captioned videos. Text-to-speech software and resources were reported by 53.2%, and 32.7% mentioned screen magnification tools. Accessible formats for visually impaired students were recognized by 67.1%, and 47.1% acknowledged subtitles for library events. Quiet sensory-friendly areas were indicated by 50.4%, and 41.5% mentioned adjustable furniture. Resources in simplified formats were reported by 50.9%, and accessible virtual reality experiences were noted by 41.5%. The high percentage of instances of inaccessible resources calls for enhanced accessibility measures. The diverse availability of support services indicates the library’s efforts to cater to varied disabilities. There is room for further enhancement in providing services like accessible virtual reality experiences. Notably, services like assistive technology and personalized consultations hold substantial importance.

**Table 5:**  
Perceptions and impact of librarian involvement in mental health support

<b>Experience of positive librarian involvement in mental health support</b>	<b>Frequency (395)</b>	<b>Percentage (100.0)</b>
Yes, the librarian provided valuable guidance	86	21.8
No, I have not had such an experience	233	59.0
Not applicable to me	76	19.2
<b>Librarian’s knowledge preparedness for mental health conversations</b>		
Yes, they are knowledgeable	102	25.8
Somewhat, but more training is needed	183	46.3
No, they lack the expertise	34	8.7
Not sure	76	19.2
<b>Impact of participation in library-led events or programs related to mental health and well-being</b>		

Increased my awareness	15	3.8
Provided practical tips	21	5.3
Created a supportive environment	36	9.1
No impact	11	2.8
Not applicable	312	79.0
<b>Importance of librarians' role in reducing mental health stigma on campus</b>		
Extremely important	310	78.6
Moderately important	27	6.8
Slightly important	43	10.9
Not important at all	15	3.8
<b>Influence of librarians' presence in conversations about mental health awareness</b>		
Yes, it fosters a welcoming atmosphere	189	47.8
No, it doesn't make a difference	154	39.0
Not sure	52	13.2

This study examined perceptions and impacts of librarian involvement in mental health support among respondents. Findings indicate that 21.8% reported positive interactions with librarians, where they provided meaningful guidance in mental health matters. However, 59.0% lacked similar positive experiences, suggesting room for improvement or limited reach. Moreover, 19.2% found this aspect irrelevant to them, possibly due to varying experiences or awareness. The varied interactions highlight the importance of enhancing librarian involvement. Regarding librarians' preparedness for mental health conversations, 25.8% deemed them knowledgeable, while 46.3% desired additional training, implying a perceived expertise gap. A smaller group (8.6%) noted a lack of skills, and 19.2% were uncertain, emphasizing diverse perspectives and potential training needs. Participation in library-led mental health events yielded varied outcomes. 3.8% gained awareness, 5.3% practical tips, and 9.1% noted a supportive environment. However, 2.8% saw no impact, and 79.0% found these events inapplicable, indicating varying relevance and effectiveness. Regarding librarians' role, 78.5% considered it extremely important, while 47.8% believed their involvement fosters a welcoming atmosphere for mental health discussions. Yet, 39.0% saw no discernible impact, revealing mixed perceptions on librarians' influence in promoting mental health awareness. This underscores the complex dynamics of librarians' role in this context.

Regarding multiple responses from the respondents on the attributes or skills that librarians should possess to effectively support students' well-being, the highest percentage of respondents (81.3%) indicated that "Mental health first aid training" is a crucial attribute, emphasizing the importance of being equipped to handle mental health concerns. Additionally, "Empathy and active listening" (73.7%) ranked second, signifying the value of emotional connection and understanding. The results also highlight the significance of "Cultural competence and sensitivity" (54.7%) and a "Non-judgmental approach to diverse needs" (72.7%), demonstrating the need for librarians to be attuned to various cultural backgrounds and to treat all students inclusively. The survey underscores the importance of librarians having "Knowledge of available resources" (57.5%) and strong "Communication skills" (44.6%), as well as being prepared for "Crisis management" (40.0%). These attributes collectively contribute to librarians' capacity to



provide effective support for students' well-being. Furthermore, "Confidentiality and privacy awareness" (47.8%) emerged as a vital attribute, highlighting the trust that students place in librarians to safeguard their personal information while seeking assistance. In conclusion, this table illustrates the nature of attributes necessary for librarians to support student well-being comprehensively. It emphasizes the significance of mental health training, empathy, cultural competence, and other essential skills in creating a supportive and inclusive library environment.

**Table 5:**

Exploration of library's role in fostering community and engagement

<b>Impact of community-building library events attended by respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Facilitated interaction with peers	57	14.4
Introduced me to diverse perspectives	45	11.4
Created a shared learning experience	67	17.0
Didn't contribute to a sense of community	5	1.3
Not applicable	221	55.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Effectiveness of library spaces in fostering healthy interactions and connections among students</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, they provide a conducive environment	132	33.4
No, they are not suitable for such interactions	216	54.7
Not sure	47	11.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Library-Led Activities and Students' Participation in Campus Wellness Events</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes, I'm more likely to participate	186	47.1
No, it doesn't affect my decision	121	30.6
Not sure	88	22.3

Table 5 examines the role of the library in promoting community and engagement among students through various variables. The findings highlight the impact of community-building library events, the effectiveness of library spaces for interactions, and the influence of library-led activities on student participation in campus activities. Regarding the impact of community-building library events, 14.4% of respondents noted that these events facilitated interactions with peers, while 11.4% felt they introduced them to diverse perspectives. Additionally, 17.0% mentioned that these events created shared learning experiences, and 1.3% felt that they did not contribute to a sense of community. Furthermore, 55.9% found such events not applicable in this context. Regarding the effectiveness of library spaces in fostering interactions, 33.4% of respondents found that these spaces provide a conducive environment for healthy interactions and connections among students. In contrast, 54.7% felt that library spaces are not suitable for such

interactions, and 11.9% were unsure about their effectiveness. Considering the influence of library-led activities, 47.1% of students expressed that these activities make them more likely to participate in social or wellness-related campus activities. In contrast, 30.6% indicated that library-led activities do not affect their participation decisions, and 22.3% were unsure about the influence. The table provides insights into the library's role in fostering community and engagement, emphasizing both positive and mixed perceptions among the student population.

The findings on the multiple responses on the perceived evolution of library spaces for enhancing student mental well-being, revealed that a significant proportion of respondents expressed a positive perception of the implementation of well-being initiatives within the library. Specifically, the provision of relaxation zones was reported by 53.7% of respondents as contributing to their sense of mental well-being. Hosting well-being workshops was identified as beneficial by 30.9% of participants. Additionally, 59.2% of respondents acknowledged the positive impact of having access to healthy food options within the library premises. In terms of physical activities, 45.1% of students found organizing fitness activities to be conducive to their mental well-being. Similarly, the availability of meditation and mindfulness corners was recognized as contributing to mental well-being by 45.6% of respondents. Creative elements also played a role, with 44.3% of participants appreciating the presence of interactive art and creativity zones to enhance their mental well-being. Furthermore, accessible and comfortable seating areas were identified by 54.7% of students as positively influencing their mental state while studying. The incorporation of outdoor seating and green spaces within the library environment was perceived as promoting mental well-being by a substantial 67.1% of respondents. Finally, the concept of technology-free zones for mental breaks was well-received, with 67.8% of participants acknowledging their positive influence on their overall mental well-being. These findings collectively underscore the significance of creating a library environment that caters to students' mental well-being through a range of thoughtfully designed features and initiatives. Multiple responses on the specific themes for library exploration that contribute to future students' health and well-being programs, revealed that stress management emerged as a prominent concern, with 86.6% expressing interest in this topic. Nutrition and healthy eating followed, garnering 70.4% interest. Mindfulness and meditation, considered essential for mental wellness, were of interest to 53.9% of respondents. Building positive relationships, a vital aspect of overall well-being, captured the attention of 41.8% of participants. Sleep hygiene and techniques for improving sleep quality, crucial for academic success, resonated with 67.6% of respondents. Time management and productivity, pivotal for balancing academic demands, were found to be relevant by 54.7% of participants. Coping with academic pressure, a common challenge, was indicated as significant by 76.5% of respondents. Developing resilience and mental strength, essential skills for navigating academic and personal challenges, attracted the interest of 72.7% of participants. Finally, financial well-being and budgeting, a practical concern for students, were acknowledged by 56.5% of respondents. This data emphasizes the nature of student well-being, providing insights into the themes that resonate with the student population. The results underscore the importance of comprehensive health and well-being programs that encompass these diverse dimensions.

Multiple responses reflect the mean scores of various collaboration strategies in promoting mental health awareness and inclusion among students. The mean decisions were interpreted based on a total of 395 respondents, where a mean score above 0.50 indicates a more suitable strategy, and a mean score below 0.50 indicates a less suitable strategy. The results show that awareness campaigns ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.539) received a mean score above 0.50, indicating that this strategy is perceived as suitable for promoting mental health awareness and inclusion among students. Similarly, collaborative scholarship opportunities for disabled students ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.727) received a mean score well above 0.50, suggesting that it is a highly suitable strategy. On the other hand, collaborative workshops ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.311), cross-departmental accessibility training ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.306), and accessible campus-wide events ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.389) received mean scores below 0.50, indicating that these strategies might be considered less suitable for achieving the desired outcomes. Resource sharing with disability services ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.423), shared assistive technology resources ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.539), and accessible recreation and sports events ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.435) received mean scores relatively close to 0.50, suggesting a mixed perception of their suitability. Interestingly, coordinated accessible transportation services ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.873) received the highest mean score, indicating strong support for this strategy as an effective means of promoting mental health awareness and inclusion among students.

In examining the ways of enhancing the visibility of disability resources, findings on multiple responses revealed that the respondents' perceptions vary across different variables. The variables with mean scores above 0.50 include "Prominent signage for accessible facilities" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.592), indicating that this method is generally considered suitable for enhancing resource visibility. Similarly, "Regular communication about available services" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.813) and "Interactive digital maps indicating accessible areas" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.813) received relatively high mean scores, suggesting that these methods are well-regarded as effective ways to promote the visibility of disability resources. On the other hand, variables with mean scores below 0.50 include "Clearly labelled resource areas" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.536), "Dedicated web portal for disability resources" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.501), "Accessible virtual library tour for online users" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.339), and "Informational videos featuring disabled student experiences" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.422). These mean scores indicate that these methods might be perceived as less suitable for enhancing the visibility of disability resources among the respondents. Lastly, variables such as "Disability-focused library tours or orientations" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.362) and "Inclusive artwork and displays representing disabilities" ( $\bar{x}$ : 0.309) received the lowest mean scores, suggesting that these methods might be considered less effective in enhancing the visibility of disability resources based on the perceptions of the respondents. It is important to note that mean scores above 0.50 indicate a more favourable perception, while mean scores below 0.50 suggest a relatively less favourable perception, all based on the total of 395 respondents.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study align with and extend the existing literature on the roles of libraries, especially in the context of mental health support and inclusivity. This finding is in agreement with the study of Cooper and Crumpton (2020) who stated that librarians were effective in providing information and resources on mental health, increasing individuals' knowledge and understanding of mental health issues. These studies, along with others in the field, highlight the significant role of librarians in promoting mental health and well-being. With respect to accessibility and support services for students with disabilities, the findings from the study revealed that majority of students have encountered inaccessible of library resources for disabilities. The finding is in line with Kumbhar and Kumbhar (2017) who found that while some universities had made efforts to provide accessible services, many were still lag behind. In addition, the results of this study were in disharmony with Abdul Razak (2017) who discovered that there was physical accessibility such accessible entrances, ramps, elevators, and designated parking spaces for individuals with disability related in university libraries. The call for ongoing inclusivity initiatives and clearer communication aligns with the literature's emphasis on the importance of promoting accessibility (Green, 2020). The emphasis on the importance of library resources resonates with the recognition of libraries as gatekeepers of valuable health information by National Health Services (2021). The prevalence of book usage as a primary resource aligns with Green's (2020) observation that borrowing a book from a library can serve as a gateway to health-related knowledge and personal well-being. The demand for diverse resources and collaborative programs, along with the identification of specific tools like peer-led discussions and well-being apps, is consistent with the work of Green (2020) who emphasised on libraries as platforms for innovation and support.

The discussion on strategies for building healthy communities through university library. The exploration of librarian involvement in mental health support extends the literature's understanding of librarians' roles beyond traditional bookkeeping to encompass mental health advocacy and support (Green, 2020). These study's findings contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence of the ways in which university libraries can play a crucial role in mental health awareness, addressing disabilities, and creating inclusive campus environments. This align with Bostick and Furlough (2018) and Haddow and Galvin (2019) who stated that university libraries play a crucial role in promoting health information literacy by teaching students and community members how to critically evaluate health information and make informed decisions about their health. Libraries can offer workshops and training sessions on finding reliable health information online and using evidence-based resources

---

## Conclusion and Recommendations

This study comprehensively explores librarian involvement in mental health support and its impact on students. Sociodemographic insights reveal diverse participant backgrounds, crucial for understanding their engagement with mental health resources. Exploration of library resources highlights their potential in enhancing mental health awareness. Challenges in resource utilization and accessibility point to areas for improvement, including comprehensive collections and better support for students with disabilities. Collaboration strategies for mental health awareness present a distinctive perspective. Librarian attributes and skills, library's role in fostering community and well-being, and themes for future programs are key findings. Overall, the study contributes valuable insights into promoting mental health awareness and inclusivity among students through libraries. Enhancing mental health support in libraries involves diversifying resources with a variety of materials. Collaborative programs, workshops, and peer-led discussions can foster a sense of community and awareness. Prioritizing accessibility for students with disabilities includes assistive technology, personalized consultations, and diverse formats. Extending library hours and offering user support for digital resources can address challenges in utilization. Training librarians in empathy, crisis management, and mental health first aid equips them to create a welcoming environment for discussions. Implementing these recommendations positions libraries as key contributors to mental health awareness, community building, and student well-being.

## References

- AbdulRazak, M. (2017) "Accessibility of Academic Libraries for Students with Disabilities: A Case Study of the University of Malaya Library," *Malaysian Journal of Library & Information Science*, 22 (1) pp. 1-16
- American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Publishing. doi: 10.1176/appi.books/9780890425596
- Anzalone, M. F., & Vann, C. (2018). Mental health and the role of the law librarian: How law librarians and lawyer assistance programs can help lawyers and law students cope with mental health issues. *AALL Spectrum*, 22(4), 43-48.
- Arias, D., Saxena, S., & Verguet, S. (2022). Quantifying the global burden of mental disorders and their economic value. *eClinicalMedicine*, 54, 101675. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eclinm.2022.101675>
- Association of Specialized and Cooperative Library Agencies. (2007). *Guidelines for library services for people with mental illnesses*. Chicago, IL: American Library Association.
- Baker, L., Freeman, M., & Pomerantz, J. (2017). Libraries as partners in health: An overview and case study. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 105(2), 185-191.
- Bostick, S. L., & Furlough, M. (2018). Health information literacy and the public library: A systematic review. *Public Library Quarterly*, 37(2), 188-208.
- Brewster, L. (2014). The public library as therapeutic landscape: A qualitative case study. *Health & Place*, 26(2014), 94-99. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1353829213001792>
- Cathcart, R. (2018). Librarian or social worker: Time to look at the blurring line? *The Reference Librarian*, 49(1), 87-91. doi:10.1080/02763870802103845
- Cooper, M., & Crumpton, M. (2020). Librarians as mental health literacy gatekeepers: A mixed methods study. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 52(1), 238-251. cking in terms of assistive technology and accessible resources.

- 
- Cox, E., & Osterhaus Trzasko, L. C. (2018). Mental health training for librarians: Results of a pre- and post-training survey. *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 106(2), 161-169
- Green, M. P. (2020). Inclusive Library Service to Individuals with Mental Illnesses and Disorders. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 4(1), 119-125. <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/ijidi>
- Gulliksen, J., & Gustafsson, C. (2018). Librarians as promoters of mental health and well-being in public libraries: A qualitative study. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 50(4), 401-411
- Haddow, G., Scaffi, L., & Galvin, S. (2019). The role of libraries in supporting health information literacy: A review of the literature. *Health Information & Libraries Journal*, 36(2), 91-108
- Hui-Yun Sung (2018) A Survey of Library services for patrons with disabilities in Academic Libraries in the United States. A National Survey,” *Journal of Access Services*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2016, pp. 141-160
- National Health Services. (2021). Knowledge and Library Services. <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/knowledge-library-services>.
- Kitzie, V., & Steeves, V. (2019). The role of librarians in supporting the mental health needs of college students. *College & Research Libraries*, 78(6), 828-841.
- Pinto, A. M., & Sales, C. M. (2019). Bibliotherapy in public libraries: A systematic review. *Journal of Librarianship and Information Science*, 51(2), 413-425.
- Pisano, E. D., & Saylor, C. (2019). Collaborative mental health programming in public libraries: A case study. *Public Library Quarterly*, 38(2), 143-159.
- Ramsey, E. & Aagard, M. C. (2018). Academic libraries as active contributors to student wellness. *College & Undergraduate Libraries*, 25(4), 328-337. doi:10.1080/10691316.2018.1517433
- Smith, C. A. (2011). “The easier-to-use version”: Public librarian awareness of consumer health resources from the National Library of Medicine, *Journal of Consumer Health Internet*. 15(2), 149-163. doi:10.1080/15398285.2011.573339.
- White, B. (2012 August). *Guaranteeing Access to Knowledge: The Role of Libraries*. World Intellectual Property Organisation.
- Whitney, W., Keselman, A. & Humphreys, B. (2017). Libraries and librarians: Key partners for progress in health literacy research and practice. *Information Services & Use* 37, 85-100 85. doi: 10.3233/ISU-170821
- Wise, M. J. (2018). Naps and sleep deprivation: Why academic libraries should consider adding nap stations to their services for students. *New Review of Academic Librarianship*, 24(2), 192-210. doi:10.1080/13614533.2018.1431948
- World Health Organization. (2023). Mental health of older adults. WHO. <https://www.who.int/news-room/factsheets/detail/mental-health-of-older-adults>
- World Health Organization. (2024). Mental health in the Americas: Key facts, challenges, and responses. <https://www.paho.org/en/topics/mental-health>.