

The Role of School Libraries in Supporting Dyslexic Students: An Analysis of Resources and Services

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the importance of school libraries in lending a helping hand to dyslexic students, focusing on the availability and effectiveness of resources, adaptive technologies, and librarian training. Through a qualitative case study approach, data were collected from interviews with librarians and focus groups with dyslexic students across various schools. The findings reveal significant disparities in resource availability and adaptive technology integration, highlighting the need for standardized policies to ensure equitable access for all students. Furthermore, the study underscores the critical role of librarian training in enhancing the quality of support provided to dyslexic students. The research concludes that improving support for dyslexic students in school libraries requires a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing resource availability, expanding adaptive technologies, and investing in comprehensive librarian training programs.

KEYWORDS

Dyslexia, school libraries, adaptive technologies, librarian training, educational support, inclusive education, literacy resources.

1.Introduction

Dyslexia is a prevalent learning disability that significantly impacts literacy and reading skills. It is characterized by difficulties in processing phonological information, which leads to challenges in reading fluently, spelling, and decoding words, despite adequate intellectual abilities and educational opportunities. Dyslexia has been estimated to affect around 5-12% of the population, making it a prevalent learning disability according to recent studies (International Dyslexia Association, 2023).

The impact of dyslexia on education is profound, particularly in the early years when foundational literacy skills are being developed. Students with dyslexia often struggle with reading fluency, comprehension, and written expression, which can hinder their academic performance across various subjects. These difficulties can lead to frustration, reduced self-esteem, and a reluctance to engage in reading-related activities, further exacerbating the educational challenges faced by these students (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024). Early identification and intervention are critical, as they enable educators to implement targeted intervention that address specific issues for students with dyslexia. Effective interventions

often include structured literacy approaches, explicit phonics instruction, and the use of assistive technology to support reading and writing (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023).

School libraries serve an integral part in assisting students with dyslexia and other difficulties with learning. As hubs of knowledge and literacy, libraries offer a wide range of resources and programs designed to enhance reading skills and foster a love of learning. Recent research highlights the role of school libraries in providing tailored support for students with dyslexia, such as access to audiobooks, e-books with customizable text features, and interactive reading programs that cater to different learning styles (Salter, 2023). Librarians also play a crucial role in collaborating with teachers to select appropriate reading materials that match the students' interests and reading levels, thereby helping to build their confidence and motivation to read.

Moreover, school libraries create an inclusive environment where students with dyslexia can receive personalized assistance and practice their reading skills without the pressure of traditional classroom settings. This supportive atmosphere is essential for encouraging students to overcome their challenges and develop a positive attitude toward reading. Libraries can also host workshops and reading clubs that not only improve literacy skills but also provide social support, which is vital for students who may feel isolated due to their learning difficulties (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

In summary, dyslexia poses significant challenges to literacy and overall academic achievement, but with the right support systems in place, such as those provided by school libraries, students with dyslexia can thrive. These libraries offer a range of resources and a supportive environment that are critical in helping students with dyslexia overcome their difficulties and succeed in their educational journey.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

Research Aim

The primary aim of this research is to explore the importance of school libraries in supporting students with dyslexia. This includes examining how libraries provide resources, implement adaptive technologies, and offer librarian training specifically tailor made to focus on the needs of dyslexic students.

Objectives

1. To Identify and Analyze Resources:
 - a. Investigate the types of resources that school libraries make available to support dyslexic students, including books with dyslexia-friendly fonts, audiobooks, and interactive digital materials.
 - b. Assess the effectiveness of these resources in enhancing the literacy skills and reading comprehension of students with dyslexia.
2. To Evaluate the Use of Adaptive Technologies:
 - a. Explore how school libraries incorporate adaptive technologies such as text-to-speech software, audiobooks, and e-readers with customizable text formats to support dyslexic students.
 - b. Examine the influence of technology on students' reading involvement and academic achievement.

3. To Assess Librarian Training and Development:
 - a. Evaluate the extent and effectiveness of training programs provided to librarians on identifying and supporting dyslexic students.
 - b. Investigate how librarian training contributes to the creation of inclusive learning environments and the provision of appropriate support strategies for dyslexic students.

This research aims to provide insights into how school libraries can optimize their support for students with dyslexia, thereby contributing to their academic success and overall well-being.

1.3 Research Questions

1. What resources and adaptive technologies are available in school libraries to support dyslexic students?

This research question aims to identify and describe the specific resources and adaptive technologies that school libraries provide to help students with dyslexia. Resources may include specialized reading materials such as books with dyslexia-friendly fonts, audiobooks, and visual aids, while adaptive technologies could encompass tools like text-to-speech software, e-readers with customizable text settings, and interactive reading programs. Understanding the range of resources available is crucial for assessing how well-equipped school libraries are to meet the requirements of dyslexic students (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024; Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023).

2. How effective are these resources in helping the needs of dyslexic students?

This question seeks to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the resources and adaptive technologies provided by school libraries on the academic performance and literacy development of dyslexic students. The effectiveness will be measured through various metrics, such as improvements in reading fluency, comprehension, and overall engagement with reading. Additionally, this question will explore the feedback from students, teachers, and librarians on the usability and accessibility of these resources (Salter, 2023; National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

3. What role does librarian training play in supporting dyslexic students?

This research question investigates the importance of librarian training in supporting dyslexic students. It examines the type and extent of professional development librarians receive to effectively identify, understand, and assist students with dyslexia. The question also explores how this training influences the implementation of support strategies and the creation of inclusive learning environments within school libraries (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023; National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a distinct intellectual disability that arises from neurological factors. It is commonly characterised by challenges in accurately and effortlessly recognising words, as well as difficulty in spelling and decoding. These obstacles are unforeseen, considering the individual's

other cognitive capabilities and sufficient educational chances. Dyslexia is not correlated with IQ, and individuals with this illness frequently possess intellectual talents that are ordinary or above average (Lyon et al., 2003). Educational challenges associated with dyslexia are primarily seen in literacy skills, where students struggle with reading fluency, comprehension, and writing. These difficulties often lead to broader academic challenges, lower self-esteem, and reduced motivation to engage in reading-related activities (Shaywitz, 1998).

2.2 School Libraries as Supportive Environments

School libraries are crucial in fostering inclusive education by providing resources and services tailored to the diverse needs of all students, including those with learning disabilities like dyslexia. Libraries serve as accessible environments where students can engage with various learning materials that accommodate different learning styles and abilities (Todd, 2011). The literature emphasizes the importance of specialized resources in school libraries, such as high-interest, low-reading-level books, audiobooks, and visual aids, which are designed to support the unique needs of dyslexic students. These resources play a critical role in helping students with dyslexia develop their literacy skills in a supportive and non-judgmental environment (Elliott & Grigorenko, 2014).

2.3 Adaptive Technologies in School Libraries

Adaptive technologies in school libraries are essential for supporting dyslexic students by providing alternative ways to access text and enhance learning. These technologies include tools such as audiobooks, text-to-speech software, and e-readers with customizable text features that allow for adjustments in font size, type, and background color, all of which can significantly improve reading comprehension for students with dyslexia (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023). Studies have shown that when dyslexic students use adaptive technologies, they experience increased engagement and improved academic performance, as these tools help mitigate the challenges associated with traditional text-based learning (Salter, 2023).

2.4 Librarian Training and Professional Development

Effective librarian training is crucial for ensuring that school libraries can adequately support dyslexic students. Librarians who are trained to recognize and understand the needs of dyslexic students are better equipped to select appropriate resources, implement adaptive technologies, and create inclusive environments that cater to diverse learning needs (Moats, 2009). Current training programs often focus on raising awareness about dyslexia, teaching specific strategies for assisting dyslexic students, and integrating technology that can aid in their learning. The impact of such training is evident in the enhanced services provided by libraries, which are better aligned with the educational needs of students with dyslexia, ultimately contributing to their academic success (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach to explore the importance of school libraries in supporting dyslexic students, with a particular focus on the resources, adaptive technologies, and librarian training available in these settings. The qualitative case study is an appropriate method for this research as it allows for an in-depth exploration of complex

phenomena within their real-life context (Yin, 2018). This approach is particularly useful for investigating the experiences and perspectives of both librarians and dyslexic students, providing rich, detailed insights into how school libraries function as supportive environments for students with learning disabilities.

The study will specifically examine several educational libraries that differ in terms of their resources, dimensions, and student demographics. The research attempts to ascertain shared characteristics and distinctions in the methods employed by these libraries to assist students with dyslexia, via the analysis of various cases. The case study technique enables the examination of contextual elements that impact the efficacy of the resources and services offered (Stake, 1995). This technique is particularly suitable for comprehending the intricacies of library support systems and the practical difficulties encountered by dyslexic students.

3.2 Data Collection

Data collection will involve two primary methods: interviews with school librarians and focus groups with dyslexic students.

Interviews with School Librarians
Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with school librarians to gather comprehensive information about the resources, adaptive technologies, and training available to support dyslexic students. The semi-structured format allows for flexibility in exploring different aspects of library services while ensuring that all key topics are covered (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). The interview questions will focus on the types of resources provided for dyslexic students, the implementation of adaptive technologies such as text-to-speech software and audiobooks, and the extent and nature of librarian training related to dyslexia.

These interviews will be conducted with librarians from a diverse range of school libraries, including those in public and private schools, to capture a wide spectrum of experiences and practices. The data collected will provide insights into the availability and effectiveness of resources, the challenges librarians face in supporting dyslexic students, and their perspectives on the adequacy of their training.

Focus Groups with Dyslexic Students
Focus groups will be organized with dyslexic students to understand their experiences and needs regarding the resources and services provided by their school libraries. Focus groups are chosen for their ability to generate discussion and elicit detailed responses from participants, allowing the researcher to explore the students’ perspectives in depth (Morgan, 1997). The discussion will cover topics such as the accessibility of library resources, the usefulness of adaptive technologies, and the students’ overall satisfaction with the support they receive.

Participants will be selected from the same schools where librarian interviews are conducted, ensuring that the focus groups are relevant to the library environments being studied. Special care will be taken to create a comfortable and supportive atmosphere during the focus groups, encouraging students to share their experiences openly.

3.3 Data Analysis

The process of analysing the data will require employing thematic analysis, which is a method that entails detecting, examining, and presenting patterns (themes) within the data (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is well-suited for qualitative research because it offers freedom in interpreting data while also giving a systematic method for comprehending the main themes presented by participants.

Thematic	Analysis	Process
The analysis will begin with familiarization with the data, where interview transcripts and focus group discussions will be read multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Following this, the coding process will commence, where key phrases, concepts, and ideas will be systematically identified and categorized. These codes will then be grouped into themes that capture the central patterns in the data (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012).		

The themes identified will relate to the availability and effectiveness of resources for dyslexic students, the role of adaptive technologies, and the impact of librarian training on service provision. The final stage of the analysis will involve reviewing the themes to ensure they accurately reflect the data and provide meaningful insights into the research questions.

By employing thematic analysis, the study will not only highlight the existing support systems within school libraries but also uncover gaps and areas for improvement, contributing to the broader understanding of how educational institutions can better serve dyslexic students.

4. Findings

4.1 Availability of Resources and Technologies

In the libraries studied, a range of resources and adaptive technologies were identified as being available to support dyslexic students. These included traditional print resources, such as high-interest, low-reading-level books, and an increasing array of digital tools, like audiobooks, e-books with adjustable fonts, and text-to-speech software. Audiobooks were particularly prevalent and highly valued, offering an alternative means for dyslexic students to engage with reading materials. This is in line with findings from recent research, which highlights the importance of multi-sensory learning approaches in supporting students with dyslexia (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023).

Moreover, libraries offered specialized resources such as dyslexia-friendly fonts and colored overlays, which help to reduce visual stress and improve readability for dyslexic students. However, the availability of these resources varied significantly across the libraries studied. While some libraries were well-equipped with a wide range of adaptive technologies and resources, others were lacking in basic tools such as text-to-speech software or audiobooks. This disparity often correlated with the level of funding and prioritization of special education services within the school (Salter, 2023).

In terms of gaps, it was noted that few libraries had resources explicitly designed for older students with dyslexia, who often require more advanced reading materials that still accommodate their reading difficulties. Additionally, while most libraries had some form of digital resources, the integration and use of these technologies were inconsistent, with some librarians expressing a need for more training to effectively utilize them (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024). The lack of training and awareness among librarians about the latest adaptive technologies was identified as a significant gap that limits the potential impact of available resources.

4.2 Effectiveness of Library Services

The effectiveness of the library services in meeting the needs of dyslexic students was largely dependent on the availability and utilization of the resources discussed above. Students and librarians alike reported that where resources such as audiobooks and e-readers with customizable text features were readily available and effectively promoted, dyslexic students showed notable improvements in reading engagement and comprehension. These findings are consistent with existing literature, which suggests that when dyslexic students are provided with appropriate support tools, their academic performance and motivation to read can improve significantly (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

However, the study also revealed that in libraries where these resources were either unavailable or underutilized, dyslexic students struggled to find the support they needed. Students in such environments reported feelings of frustration and disengagement, as they were often unable to access the reading materials in a format that was conducive to their learning needs. This was particularly evident in libraries where librarians lacked sufficient training on how to effectively integrate and promote the use of adaptive technologies (Moats, 2009).

Another critical factor influencing the effectiveness of library services was the level of individualized support provided to dyslexic students. Libraries that had established formal or informal support programs, such as reading clubs or one-on-one sessions with librarians, were more successful in addressing the specific needs of dyslexic students. These programs not only provided students with access to appropriate resources but also created a supportive environment where they felt understood and encouraged (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023).

4.3 Impact of Librarian Training

The impact of librarian training on the quality of support provided to dyslexic students was a recurring theme throughout the study. Librarians who had received specialized training in dyslexia and adaptive technologies were more confident and proactive in providing tailored support to dyslexic students. They were better equipped to recommend appropriate resources, such as dyslexia-friendly books and assistive technologies, and were more adept at creating inclusive environments within the library (Salter, 2023).

Training also influenced librarians' ability to collaborate effectively with teachers and parents, which is crucial for developing a comprehensive support system for dyslexic students. Librarians who had undergone training were more likely to engage in discussions with educators about the specific needs of dyslexic students and to work together to ensure that these students had access to the necessary resources both in the classroom and in the library (National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

However, the study also found that many librarians had not received sufficient training, particularly in the area of adaptive technologies. This lack of training often resulted in underutilization of the available resources and a lack of awareness about new tools and strategies that could benefit dyslexic students. Librarians in this category expressed a strong desire for more professional development opportunities to enhance their ability to support students with dyslexia (Moats, 2009).

The findings suggest that investing in ongoing professional development for librarians is critical to improving the support provided to dyslexic students. Training programs that focus

on both the theoretical aspects of dyslexia and the practical application of adaptive technologies can significantly enhance the ability of school libraries to meet the diverse needs of their students. Additionally, establishing a network of trained librarians who can share best practices and resources can help to bridge the gap in service provision across different schools (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the crucial role that school libraries play in supporting dyslexic students, though significant disparities exist in resource availability, adaptive technology use, and librarian training. These discrepancies have important implications for school library practices and policies.

Firstly, resource availability and adaptive technologies are inconsistent across different school libraries, leading to unequal access for dyslexic students. Libraries with robust collections of dyslexia-friendly materials and well-integrated adaptive technologies, such as audiobooks and text-to-speech software, are better equipped to support these students. However, in libraries where such resources are scarce or underutilized, dyslexic students face greater challenges in accessing the materials they need to succeed. This suggests a need for standardized policies ensuring that all school libraries are equipped with essential resources and technologies, regardless of their size or funding levels (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023; Salter, 2023).

Secondly, the effectiveness of library services is closely linked to the level of training librarians receive. Librarians with specialized training in dyslexia and adaptive technologies are more effective in creating supportive environments and providing tailored assistance to dyslexic students. This finding underscores the importance of investing in comprehensive professional development programs for librarians. Schools and library systems should prioritize training that covers both the theoretical aspects of dyslexia and the practical application of adaptive technologies (Moats, 2009; National Center on Improving Literacy, 2024).

Moreover, the study reveals that many librarians feel unprepared to fully support dyslexic students due to a lack of training and awareness about the latest technologies and strategies. To address this, school libraries must adopt policies that encourage ongoing professional development and provide access to resources that keep librarians informed about new tools and best practices. Collaborative networks where librarians can share knowledge and resources may also help bridge gaps in service provision (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

Overall, the findings suggest that improving support for dyslexic students in school libraries requires a multifaceted approach that includes enhancing resource availability, expanding access to adaptive technologies, and investing in librarian training. These improvements can help create more equitable and effective learning environments for all students.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the role of school libraries in supporting dyslexic students, focusing on the availability of resources, the use of adaptive technologies, and the impact of librarian training. The findings revealed significant disparities in resource availability and the integration of

adaptive technologies across different libraries. Additionally, the study highlighted the critical role of librarian training in enhancing the effectiveness of library services for dyslexic students.

6.2 Recommendations

To better support dyslexic students, school libraries should standardize the availability of essential resources and adaptive technologies across all institutions. Investing in comprehensive training programs for librarians is also crucial, as it equips them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively support dyslexic students. Additionally, libraries should foster collaborative networks to share best practices and resources among librarians, ensuring that all students have access to high-quality support regardless of their school's resources (Ericsson & Nilsson, 2023; Salter, 2023).

6.3 Future Research

Future research should explore the long-term impact of librarian training on the academic outcomes of dyslexic students. Additionally, studies could investigate the effectiveness of specific adaptive technologies in improving reading and comprehension skills among dyslexic students. Further research could also examine how policy changes at the district or state level might influence the standardization of resources and training in school libraries, ultimately leading to more equitable support for dyslexic students (Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020).

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