NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES COMMISSION ACCREDITATION AND THE QUALITY OF LIBRARY RESOURCES IN UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES IN NIGERIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Library resources are a core criterion in the National Universities Commission (NUC) accreditation of undergraduate programmes, yet empirical studies of their contribution to programme quality remain limited and mostly predate the wide adoption of e-library services. This paper examines the effect of NUC accreditation on the quality of library resources, treated as a dimension (dependent variable) of quality assurance of undergraduate programmes in three Nigerian universities: Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (federal); Nasarawa State University, Keffi (state); and Veritas University, Abuja (private). A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was used. Questionnaire data from 202 valid respondents (Heads of Department, Deans, Professors and Directors of Academic Planning; 98.5% return rate) were analysed with frequencies and linear regression in SPSS. Interviews with Directors of Academic Planning, Heads of Department and senior NUC officials were analysed thematically. Between 89.1% and 99.0% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with each library-related item. Regression showed that NUC accreditation significantly predicts the quality of library resources ($R = .326$, $R^2 = .106$, $F(1, 200) = 23.823$, $\beta = .326$, $t = 4.881$, $p < .001$), so the null hypothesis was rejected. The effect is statistically significant but modest, explaining about 10.6% of the variance. Interviewees confirmed that accreditation drives acquisition, e-resource subscriptions and internet provision, but said universities struggle to sustain library funding. The paper recommends enforcement of the 10% library budget provision, continuous rather than accreditation-driven funding, and expanded assessment of e-library services and library staff competence.

Keywords: NUC accreditation; library resources; quality assurance; undergraduate programmes; e-library; Nigerian universities

1. Introduction

Nigeria has the largest university system in Sub-Saharan Africa, with 328 universities: 77 Federal (23.5%), 69 state (21.0%) and 182 private (55.5%) (NUC, 2026). Rapid expansion, driven by a strong social demand for degrees (Ene, 2016), has intensified concern about the quality of programmes and graduates. The National Universities Commission is the statutory agency that sets minimum academic standards and accredits degree programmes in Nigerian universities (Adeoti, 2015; Ibijola, 2014). Its programme accreditation assesses academic matters, staffing, physical facilities, library resources, funding, research and collaboration, and the tracer system and employers' rating of graduates (NUC, 2020; Sali, 2021).

Quality in university education has been described in terms of inputs, processes and outcomes, and library resources are an essential input alongside learners, lecturers and physical facilities (Olutola & Olatoye, 2020). The library is regarded as the "nucleus" of a university (Mbagwu & Udo-Anyanwu, 2021). It supports curriculum delivery, teaching, learning and research, and it is a social institution that collects, organises, preserves and disseminates information (Umeh & Oguejiofor, 2017). Programmes have failed accreditation because their libraries did not meet minimum standards for information resources (Mbagwu & Udo-Anyanwu, 2021). The NUC standards

cover books and journals in central and departmental libraries, currency of holdings, physical and electronic libraries, seating capacity and internet availability.

Despite this centrality, earlier work has treated the library as a single-institution case (Adeola, 2014; Achi et al., 2019), a single-region case (Mbagwu & Udo-Anyanwu, 2021) or a descriptive concern using percentages only (Adetunla & Familusi, 2017). Many of these studies also predate the e-library era. This paper addresses that gap. Using data from a federal, a state and a private university, it examines:

1. the extent to which NUC accreditation influences the quality of library resources as a dimension of quality assurance in undergraduate programmes; and
2. the challenges that limit that influence.

The hypothesis tested is:

H_0: NUC accreditation has no significant effect on the quality of library resources in undergraduate programmes in the selected Nigerian universities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Accreditation and quality assurance

Accreditation is a process of self-study and external peer review that determines whether an institution or programme meets set standards (Adeola, 2014; Obadara & Alaka, 2013). Ibijola (2014) describes it as the core component of quality assurance. Quality assurance is a planned and systematic review process that determines whether acceptable standards of education, scholarship and infrastructure are being met, maintained and enhanced (Olaleye & Oyewole, 2016). In Nigeria, accreditation relies on the Self-Study Form, the Programme Evaluation Form, the Accreditation Panel Report Form and the Minimum Academic Standards documents, now the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) (Sali, 2021). A programme earns Full accreditation with an aggregate score of at least 70% and at least 70% in each of the four core areas: academic content, staffing, physical facilities and library. It earns Interim status with an aggregate score of at least 60% but below 70% in a core area, and Denied status below 60% (Sali, 2021).

2.2 Library resources and accreditation: empirical evidence

Studies of library resources and accreditation broadly agree that accreditation improves library provision but is undermined by funding problems. Adetunla and Familusi (2017) surveyed 125 respondents. They found that accreditation increased library information resources and gave libraries a "face lift", but that universities are starved of funds until accreditation approaches. Mbagwu and Udo-Anyanwu (2021) studied 41 heads of federal university libraries in South-East Nigeria. They reported that accreditation increased acquisitions, internet and database subscriptions, staffing and equipment, and that without accreditation libraries received inadequate attention and funds. Uzoagba and Okiche (2018) found that the University of Nigeria, Nsukka library faced late notice of accreditation, scarce funds and delays in accessing approved funds. They recommended enforcement of the policy that universities set aside 10% of their recurrent budget for library development. Achi et al. (2019) found that the library at Bingham University supplied up-to-date print and electronic resources for accreditation, but was constrained by inadequate funding and erratic power supply. Adeola (2014) examined Fountain University, Osogbo, and emphasised library holdings, the quantity and quality of materials and their currency in relation to the minimum academic standards.

Broader studies point the same way. Bolapeju and Bassey (2021) found a significant difference between accreditation requirement adequacy and the quality status of library facilities and funding in South-South federal universities. Ukala and Ohia (2018) found that accreditation had a moderate impact on the provision of libraries and staff offices in Rivers State universities, but minimal impact on laboratory and workshop equipment, and identified poor funding and weak institutional databases as challenges. Akomolafe and Adesua (2019) and Dada et al. (2017)

likewise report a positive but uneven contribution of accreditation to quality assurance in Nigerian universities, and Asiyai (2013) lists accreditation, infrastructure and the assessment of resources among the variables through which quality assurance is judged.

Each of these studies has limits relevant to the present one. Most focus on one institution or one region. Several use only frequencies or means, which cannot show the strength of the relationship between accreditation and library quality. Few give explicit attention to e-library resources, internet access and database subscriptions as components of library quality.

2.3 Theoretical framework

The study draws on Resource Dependence Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) and Neo-Institutional Theory (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, 1991; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Resource dependence explains why libraries in public universities depend on government and TETFund resources, so that library quality tracks the availability of external funds. Neo-institutional theory explains why universities, including private ones that do not depend on government budgets, conform to NUC standards to secure legitimacy. It also anticipates that conformity can be ritualistic. Institutions may build symbols of compliance around accreditation without sustaining the underlying practice, as the "funding only when accreditation approaches" finding suggests.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design

A convergent parallel mixed-methods design was adopted (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously, analysed separately and merged for interpretation (Creswell, 2013).

3.2 Study area, population and sample

The study covered Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria (federal, North-West); Nasarawa State University, Keffi (state, North-Central); and Veritas University, Abuja (private, North-Central). The population comprised Heads of Department, Deans, Professors and Directors of Academic Planning, who are likely to be familiar with accreditation through the peer-review system or direct involvement. It totalled 381 respondents (ABU 94, NSUK 71, Veritas about 40). A sample of 186 was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table and raised by 10% to 205 to allow for attrition. Stratified random sampling ensured proportional representation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.3 Instruments and data collection

A structured questionnaire, the *NUC Accreditation and Quality Assurance Questionnaire (NUCAQAQ)*, was developed from the NUC Programme Evaluation Form, the Accreditation Panel Report Form and the literature. Library resources were measured with five five-point Likert items (strongly disagree to strongly agree), covering:

- adequacy of reference and recommended texts and journals in central and departmental libraries;
- currency of texts and journals (published within the last three years);
- existence of an e-library;
- **relevance of e-book and e-journal subscriptions to the programme; and**
- staff access to the internet, library website, campus hotspots and intranet.

Overall internal consistency was acceptable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .757$ across six scale items). Face-to-face interviews were held with Directors of Academic Planning (C1), Heads of Department (C2) and senior NUC staff from the Directorates of Accreditation and Academic Planning (C3), using a pre-prepared guide. Secondary data came from NUC bulletins, accreditation reports and journals.

3.4 Analysis

Of 205 questionnaires distributed, 202 were returned and valid (98.5%). Data were analysed in SPSS with frequency distributions and simple linear regression, with normality checked through histograms, Q-Q and P-P plots. Interviews were analysed

thematically. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive results

Table 1 summarises respondents' views on library resources.

Table 1: Respondents' perceptions of library resources (N = 202)

Item	Agree + Strongly Agree	Undecided	Disagree + Strongly Disagree
Adequate reference/recommended texts and journals in central and departmental libraries	89.1%	5.9%	5.0%
Recommended texts and journals published in the last three years	95.0%	3.5%	1.5%
Existence of an e-library	99.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Relevance of e-book and e-journal subscriptions to the programme	95.5%	4.0%	0.5%
Staff access to internet, library website, hotspots and intranet	95.0%	1.5%	3.5%

Source: Field survey (SPSS output).

Agreement was very high on every item. It was strongest for the existence of an e-library (99.0%) and weakest for the adequacy of print reference and recommended texts (89.1%). The mean score for quality of library resources was 4.34 on the five-point scale. Perceptions of access and currency were positive, but the print collection was the area where respondents were least certain.

4.2 Test of hypothesis

Table 2: Regression of quality of library resources on NUC accreditation

Statistic	Value
R	.326
R^2	.106
Adjusted R^2	.102
Std. error of estimate	.502
F(1, 200)	23.823 ($p < .001$)
Constant (B)	2.560 (SE = .366; t = 7.000; $p < .001$)
NUC accreditation (B)	.404 (SE = .083)

Statistic	Value
Standardised β	.326
t	4.881 ($p < .001$)

Dependent variable: quality of library resources. Predictor: NUC accreditation.

The model is statistically significant (Regression SS = 6.002; Residual SS = 50.387; Total SS = 56.389). NUC accreditation significantly predicts the quality of library resources, so **H_0 is rejected**. Each unit increase in the accreditation score is associated with a 0.404-unit increase in library quality. $R^2 = .106$ shows that accreditation explains about 10.6% of the variance in library quality. The relationship is real but modest, and other factors, chiefly funding, account for most of the remaining variance.

4.3 Accreditation outcomes in the study universities

Programme accreditation records for 2015–2024 show generally good outcomes (Table 3). These figures are aggregate statuses across all core areas and are not library-specific scores, but they are consistent with the survey finding that accreditation pressure is associated with generally satisfactory provision.

Table 3: Accreditation status of programmes in the study universities, 2015–2024

University	Full	Interim	Denied	Total	% Full	% Interim	% Denied
Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria	161	28	5	193	83.41	14.50	2.59
Nasarawa State University, Keffi	122	33	6	161	75.77	20.49	3.72
Veritas University, Abuja	54	7	0	61	88.52	11.47	0.00

Source: NUC accreditation reports (Appendix V of the thesis).

4.4 Interview findings

Interviewees supported the quantitative results and identified four sub-themes.

1. **Currency and volume of print holdings.** Accreditation requires universities to keep collections comprehensive and up to date. It prompts institutions to update holdings, acquire new materials and align resources with academic and research priorities.
2. **Internet availability.** Accredited institutions must provide reliable connectivity in libraries, classrooms and laboratories. Accreditation has led universities to upgrade infrastructure and extend network coverage.
3. **Subscription to e-books and journals.** Accreditation encourages subscriptions to electronic databases, e-books and journals, sometimes through consortia and licensing negotiations, to complement physical collections.
4. **Access for staff and students.** Accreditation encourages equitable access through authentication, remote access and user training.

Interviewees also stressed that paucity of funds limits the ability of universities to maintain standards. ABU respondents attributed part of the funding difficulty to federal policies such as the Treasury Single Account and the migration of staff to the IPPIS platform.

5. Discussion

The findings confirm that NUC accreditation is positively and significantly associated with the quality of library resources. This agrees with Adetunla and Familusi (2017), Mbagwu and Udo-Anyanwu (2021) and Achi et al.

(2019), who all found that accreditation improves library resources. It extends that work in three ways. First, the evidence is drawn from a federal, a state and a private university. Second, it uses inferential statistics that quantify the relationship. Third, it gives explicit attention to e-library provision. Almost all respondents (99.0%) confirmed the existence of an e-library, and 95.5% judged subscriptions relevant to their programmes, which suggests that the e-library has become an established part of library resources in these universities.

The modest effect size ($R^2 = .106$) is the most important qualification. Accreditation is a meaningful driver of library quality, but it is not the main one. This is consistent with resource dependence theory: library quality depends heavily on the availability of funds from government, TETFund, tuition and promoters, so accreditation alone cannot deliver library quality. The interview evidence that universities struggle to sustain library funding, and the literature evidence that funds are released as accreditation approaches (Adetunla & Familusi, 2017; Mbagwu & Udo-Anyanwu, 2021; Uzoagba & Okiche, 2018), point to a cyclical, compliance-driven pattern. Neo-institutional theory would describe this pattern as conformity to secure legitimacy. It would also warn that the resulting improvements may not always be sustained between accreditation visits (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). Ukala and Ohia (2018) reached a similar conclusion, that universities have not fully capitalised on routine accreditation exercises to assure quality.

The high agreement scores should also be read with care. Respondents were senior academics and administrators, many of whom take part in accreditation as peer reviewers or as officers of their own institutions. Their perceptions may be more favourable than those of students or library users. The lowest agreement, on print reference and recommended texts, suggests that the physical collection remains the weakest component even where electronic access is strong.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

NUC accreditation has a statistically significant positive effect on the quality of library resources as a dimension of quality assurance of undergraduate programmes in the selected federal, state and private universities. The effect is modest, and the main constraint on sustained library quality is funding rather than regulatory pressure. On this evidence, the paper recommends the following.

1. **Sustain library funding beyond accreditation cycles.** University managements should fund libraries continuously, and the NUC should monitor and enforce the statutory provision of 10% of recurrent expenditure for library development, with sanctions for diversion (Uzoagba & Okiche, 2018).
2. **Strengthen print collections.** Universities should prioritise current, programme-specific reference and recommended texts in central and departmental libraries, since this was the area of least agreement.
3. **Consolidate e-library services.** Universities should keep adequate subscriptions to relevant databases and ensure reliable internet, remote access and user training.
4. **Broaden the accreditation assessment.** The NUC should assess the competence of library staff, seating capacity relative to user population, e-resource usage and collaboration between libraries and faculties, and not only the quantity of holdings.
5. **Address funding constraints.** Government and stakeholders should remove barriers to universities' access to funds for library development.

Limitations and further research. The study covers three universities in the North-West and North-Central zones and relies on the perceptions of senior academics. Future studies should include students and librarians, cover other geopolitical zones, use objective library indicators such as volumes, subscriptions and usage statistics, and test

multivariate models that include funding as a control variable.

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