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Editorial Desk

It is my distinct honour to present Volume 2 of the Lagos State University Journal of Multidisciplinary Nigerian Studies (LASUJMNS), published in March 2026. This edition comprises twenty-one (21) rigorously researched and high-quality scholarly articles drawn from diverse disciplines, which all reflect the enduring commitment to interdisciplinary scholarship and academic excellence of the journal.

All submitted manuscripts underwent a thorough double-blind peer review process conducted by seasoned and highly respected scholars. In addition, stringent plagiarism screening procedures were implemented to ensure originality, credibility, and adherence to global best practices in scholarly publishing. These quality assurance measures were carried out in strict compliance with the directive of the Vice-Chancellor, Distinguished Professor Ibiyemi Ibilola Olatunji-Bello, mni, NPOM, GCGNS, whose unwavering commitment to academic integrity and excellence continues to guide the operations of the journal.

The successful publication of this volume further reinforces the reputation of Lagos State University as a hub of scholarly innovation and the dedication of the editorial board to maintaining high publication standards. LASUJMNS remains committed to providing a reputable platform for the dissemination of impactful research that addresses contemporary societal challenges and contributes meaningfully to knowledge production within Nigeria and beyond.

We are pleased to announce that the call for papers for Volume 3 is now open. The forthcoming edition is scheduled for publication before the third quarter of 2026. We encourage scholars, researchers, and practitioners to submit original and well-researched manuscripts for consideration.

Distinguished scholars, authors, and members of the academic community, we warmly invite you to continue supporting and subscribing to LASUJMNS as a credible outlet for quality research, enhanced visibility, and wider scholarly reach.

We appreciate your continued collaborations and contributions to contemporary academic discuss.

Prof. M. O. B. Mohammed, FNAEAP
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LIBRARIES AS GARDENS: CULTIVATING INCLUSIVITY AND GROWTH IN NIGERIAN SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Abstract

Ensuring inclusive library spaces and services in Nigerian schools is fundamental to providing equitable access to information and supporting the academic success of diverse learners. This narrative review consolidates existing scholarship on inclusive library practices within the Nigerian educational environment, focusing on physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility. Central themes include the necessity for adaptable infrastructure such as assistive technologies and barrier-free access, customised orientation programmes for students with disabilities, and inclusive policies that foster diversity in school libraries. The literature reveals ongoing challenges including insufficient funding, limited staff training on inclusive practices, and a general lack of awareness regarding inclusion initiatives in Nigerian educational libraries. Nonetheless, notable successes are highlighted such as targeted outreach efforts, digitisation of resources in accessible formats, and collaboration with key stakeholders to raise awareness and build capacity. This review contends that libraries hold significant potential as hubs for social inclusion and enhanced learning if inclusivity is intentionally integrated into their operations. It is recommended that policymakers, educators, and librarians prioritise developing inclusive policies, investing in continuous professional development, and upgrading infrastructure to better accommodate all learners, especially those with special needs. Aligning these efforts with national education objectives and international commitments like the Sustainable Development Goals will further support quality and inclusive education. This paper enriches academic discourse through aggregating Nigeria-specific research on inclusive library services and emphasises urgent areas for action to strengthen inclusive education through libraries.

Keywords:
Inclusive library services, Nigerian schools, Library policy, Assistive technology, Diversity and inclusion.

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Introduction

Inclusive library spaces hold significant value within Nigerian schools, because the spaces functions as information repositories and vital instruments for promoting equitable education and fostering social inclusion. Consequently, school libraries, as physical and digital space, possess the capacity to bridge educational disparities, dismantle entrenched barriers, and enrich learning experiences across diverse student populations. The discussions surrounding inclusion are shaped by ongoing concerns related to social equity, digital exclusion, and the fundamental right to a quality education for all learners, especially those with disabilities, marginalised and disadvantaged groups. The Several international and regional agendas and plan of actions, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union Agenda 2063, and Education for All agenda, emphasised the imperative of ensuring no learner is left behind in acquiring knowledge and skills in contemporary education systems (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

Despite this acknowledged importance, Nigerian school libraries face considerable challenges that restrict accessibility and equity in service provision. These accessibility issues are pervasive, with many schools lacking necessary infrastructural adaptations like ramps or suitable furniture for learners with physical disabilities. Also, Ogunleye, (2022) reports that the availability of assistive technologies, including audio books, Braille materials, and screen readers, remains insufficient, and inadequate thereby affecting students with visual impairments or learning difficulties. Apart from the physical and technological gaps, negative attitudes and limited awareness among library personnel and peers further constrain the participation of students with special needs, thus making them experience academic and social marginalisation. This situation is compounded by financial constraints, outdated facilities, and insufficient professional training among librarians. Evidence gathered from studies within Lagos and Osun States illuminates a worrying trend of low investment in adaptive resources and a lack of targeted initiatives for marginalised learners (Ogunleye, 2022). Additionally, fragmented policy frameworks and weak implementation mechanisms undermine progressive educational objectives. Many library staff lack the specialised training needed to accommodate diverse learning needs, which perpetuates exclusionary practices and limits the potential of school libraries to contribute meaningfully to inclusive education reforms.

Inclusive environment for students in schools has become more important than ever before since this facility is important for conducive teaching and learning as well as improved academic achievement of students. Thus, schools have been striving towards cultivating and ensuring safe and inclusive environment for students at all levels with the ultimate aim of providing an atmosphere that is conducive to learning, growth, and personal development. Such environment must be one that nurtures and protects every student, regardless of their background, abilities, or individuality. According to Osodeke (2018) cited in Aramide (2025), creating an inclusive environment is a multifaceted endeavour that encompasses various aspects of a student's educational journey which includes physical safety is describes as involving provision of measures to safeguard students from any potential harm, such as

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implementing security protocols, conducting safety drills, and maintaining well-maintained facilities. Ensuring physical safety, according to Osodeke (2018) enables students to focus their energy on learning and personal growth without fear or distraction. Therefore, students who feel safe and supported are more likely to engage in academic and social activities, participate actively, exhibit higher levels of motivation and academic performance and reduces the likelihood of students engaging in risky behaviors and promotes positive social interactions, (American Psychological Association, 2014).

In light of these challenges, this review aims to critically examine the inclusivity of Nigerian school libraries by analysing structural, policy, and professional obstacles restricting equitable access. It will investigate both physical and digital dimensions of library services and explore how these factors function collectively to either exclude or integrate various learner groups. The review also evaluates existing policies, infrastructural conditions, and professional development efforts that could reposition school libraries as facilitators of educational equity. Drawing on recent empirical research and perspectives from African scholars, this analysis provides both diagnostic insights and strategic recommendations for fostering inclusivity (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022).

Moreover, this inquiry recognises that inclusivity extends beyond physical disabilities to encompass linguistic, socio-economic, and gender-based inequalities, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of equity in educational spaces. For instance, learners from rural regions may face limited digital access, girls may experience gender-specific barriers, and students with diverse educational needs often find themselves underserved by traditional library services. This broader conceptualisation aligns with observations from Barau and El-Kalash (2021), who argue that adequately resourced public libraries can drive social advancement and sustainable development through inclusive programming.

The core argument of this review is that inclusive library spaces and services constitute essential prerequisites for equitable education in Nigeria. Realising this vision demands deliberate strategies encompassing comprehensive policy reforms, significant infrastructure upgrades, and sustained professional development for library staff. Evidence suggests that clear policy mandates, coupled with accountability mechanisms, are key to ensuring inclusive practices are effectively implemented. Infrastructure improvements should prioritise physical accessibility and expansion of digital resources, while continuous capacity-building is necessary for librarians to become proactive advocates of inclusion and mediators of access for diverse learners (Ogunleye, 2022).

When these elements are synchronised through targeted funding, coherent policy, and committed practice, Nigerian school libraries will evolve into dynamic centres of inclusion that nurture learners regardless of ability or background. Recent scholarship underscores that failure to address these challenges entrenches cycles of exclusion, impeding Nigeria's progress towards national and global educational goals and broader societal development. Thus, advancing inclusive library services emerges not only as an educational ideal but as a

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compelling, evidence-based mandate for Nigeria's future (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022).

The Child Friendly School model for Nigeria designed by UNICEF focused on school environment that; reflect and realise the rights of every child; see and understand the whole child, in a broad context; be child centred; be gender sensitive and girl friendly; promote quality learning outcomes; provide education based on the reality of children's lives; flexible and respond to diversity; act to ensure inclusion, respect and equality of opportunity for all children; promote mental and physical health and provide education that is affordable and accessible. Other elements as designed by UNICEF include enhancement of teacher capacity, morale, commitment and status; ensuring that it is family focused; is community based and promote community cohesion. This paper aims at investigation what constitute inclusive school library spaces that facilitates accommodates diversity, engender equity and support growth with a view to ascertain a definitive conceptualisation and contextualisation of school libraries spaces, identified the major components of inclusive environment in Nigerian school libraries and establish the state of inclusiveness of the environment in Nigerian school libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. identify and analyse the structural barriers affecting accessibility and equity in Nigerian school libraries, including physical infrastructure and technological resources.
2. examine policy frameworks and their implementation concerning inclusivity within school library services in Nigeria.
3. evaluate the level of professional development and training of library staff in promoting inclusive practices.
4. investigate social and attitudinal factors that influence the participation of marginalised students in school libraries.
5. explore how linguistic, socio-economic, and gender-related factors contribute to exclusion or inclusion within school library environments.
6. propose strategic recommendations for policy, infrastructure, and professional capacity-building to enhance inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries.

Literature Review

Inclusivity in library spaces and services within Nigerian schools represents a fundamental pillar of educational equity and social justice. It transcends mere physical access to books and resources, embedding itself in the very fabric of how educational environments serve all learners irrespective of their disabilities, gender, socio-economic backgrounds, linguistic identities or other differentiating factors. To conceptualise inclusivity fully means to recognise that libraries must be places of meaningful participation where every learner perceives a sense of belonging, empowerment, and recognition. Barau and El-Kalash, (2021) emphasised that this understanding challenges traditional models that often stratify learners by ability or background, and instead fostering an educational environment that adapts to diverse needs and nurtures lifelong learning and social cohesion

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Moreover, frameworks such as the IFLA-UNESCO Public Library Manifesto and IFLA School Libraries Guidelines articulate the important role that libraries play in promoting inclusive knowledge societies. The manifesto and the guidelines emphasise the process of equality in access to information, thus asserting the responsibility of libraries to eradicate knowledge gaps caused by social, economic, or physical barriers. Complementing this, UNESCO's Information for All Programme corroborated this by emphasising digital inclusion, local language resources, and the empowerment of marginalised communities through specific and targeted library services. These global norms advocate the universal design principle, which involves creating library environments that are accessible to all without limitations, need for adaptation and/or specialised design interventions after construction (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

Within the African context, inclusive librarianship is being adapted thoughtfully to local realities. Collaborative efforts involving African library organisations and international partners have resulted in policy frameworks and practical tools that are sensitive to the unique social and infrastructural challenges faced in the region, including Nigeria. These partnerships encourage knowledge transfer while emphasising the need for context-specific solutions that reflect Nigeria's socio-cultural and economic diversity (Aramide, 2022). In Nigeria, scholarship consistently reveals that school libraries frequently fall short of their potential as inclusive learning environments. Rather than vibrant, accessible spaces, many function as static repositories that exclude significant segments of the school population. This exclusion is especially pronounced for students with physical disabilities, visual impairments, and learning differences, as well as those from marginalised socio-economic and linguistic backgrounds. Nigerian assessment studies illuminate systemic barriers entrenched within library design, resource allocation, and service provision that hinder the realisation of inclusivity as defined in global frameworks (Ogunleye, 2022).

Unlike educational systems in several western countries where inclusivity in library services has been a longstanding policy priority, Nigerian libraries have yet to integrate these principles fully into practice. However, recent years have seen growing awareness and advocacy within the Nigerian academic and professional communities. The Nigerian Library Association, for example, has vigorously promoted inclusive librarianship through policy advocacy, professional development, and public awareness campaigns. Calls for the inclusion of inclusive library science education curricula and for national standards on library accessibility are gaining momentum, reflecting a shift towards addressing entrenched inequities (Ogunleye, 2022). Key challenges facing Nigerian school libraries include persistent underfunding, inadequate professional training, limited attitudinal awareness, and inadequate infrastructural provisioning. Chronic underfunding is perhaps the most fundamental obstacle. Libraries regularly suffer from budgets that do not cover updating collections, acquiring assistive technologies, or maintaining digital resources. Consequently, learners with special needs rarely access books or materials adapted to their requirements, placing them at a significant academic disadvantage. The lack of investment in digital infrastructure further deepens the digital divide,

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particularly in rural or under-resourced urban schools, where internet connectivity and hardware are scarce.

Most school libraries rely on personnel who lack specialised training in inclusive librarianship. The absence of training programmes focusing explicitly on accommodating diverse learning needs, deploying assistive technologies, and adopting inclusive service delivery frameworks undermines the libraries' ability to serve all learners equitably. Professional development opportunities remain limited, and many librarians work without mentorship or support structures to enhance their competencies in this critical area (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021). Moreover, attitudinal and awareness barriers compound these tangible resource limitations. Misconceptions about disability, low sensitivity to the needs of marginalised groups, and a general lack of knowledge regarding inclusive principles result in exclusionary practices. This is evident in low levels of proactive engagement with learners who have disabilities, little to no adaptation of library programming, and passive or dismissive responses to calls for change. These difficulties reflect broader societal stigmas that permeate education systems and necessitate targeted awareness-raising initiatives (Ogunleye, 2022).

Infrastructural inadequacies represent a further hurdle. Many Nigerian school libraries are characterised by inaccessible physical layouts, lack of ramps, narrow entrances, inappropriate furniture, and insufficient signage in accessible formats. Digital access remains limited or unevenly distributed, further disadvantaging learners reliant on assistive ICT tools or remote access. This infrastructural neglect not only restricts individual access but symbolises a wider policy and governance failure to prioritise inclusivity in educational infrastructure planning (Olubiyo, 2024). Despite these challenges, Nigerian librarians and scholars have put forward constructive strategies to enhance inclusivity. These include advocating for increased and ring-fenced funding for school libraries, institutionalising ongoing inclusive librarianship training, mainstreaming disability awareness within school cultures, and strengthening collaborations with NGOs, donor agencies, and international partners to mobilise resources and technical expertise.

Therefore, achieving inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries requires more than isolated interventions. It involves integrated reforms that simultaneously address policy frameworks, infrastructural development, and professional capacity. Clear policy directives with effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms are necessary to ensure schools do not merely comply in form but deliver inclusion in substance. Infrastructure investments must prioritise physical accessibility, evidence-based adaptive technologies, and digital equity. Librarians must be recognised and supported as agents of transformation through continuous professional education, peer networking, and empowerment (Nwaohiri, 2021).

Literature had revealed a tentative convergence between international inclusive librarianship ideals and Nigerian realities. However, it also signals a long journey ahead to close the existing gap fully. This journey requires robust political will, adequate resource allocation, and societal shifts to reframe disability and difference as natural components of educational diversity and

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strength. School libraries hold unique potential as hubs for social mobility, literacy, and national development if these conditions are met. Nigerian school libraries have critical roles to play in fostering equitable education through inclusive spaces and services. The literature firmly establishes that inclusivity is multifaceted, integrating physical, digital, social, and cultural dimensions. While challenges such as funding constraints, inadequate training, low awareness, and infrastructural deficits persist, growing advocacy and research provide a foundation for transformative change. Embracing international best practices within locally adapted frameworks, investing strategically in infrastructure and human capital, and cultivating inclusive institutional cultures will empower Nigerian school libraries to become engines of equality and lifelong learning for all children (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022).

Methodological Approach

The research methodology for this narrative review focused on exploring inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries, employing a flexible yet rigorous approach suitable for examining evolving social, infrastructural, and policy dimensions in this context. The methodology was designed to gather diverse, relevant, and contemporary scholarly insights, drawing on African and Nigerian perspectives to ensure grounded, locally meaningful findings. The review began with defining clear research questions centred on barriers and enablers related to inclusive library services in Nigerian schools. To capture the most relevant and up-to-date information, selection criteria were established to include sources published from 2019. This ensured that the narrative engaged with recent empirical research, policy analyses, and theoretical contributions reflecting current realities and progress in inclusive librarianship in Nigeria and Africa at large.

Search terms and keywords were crafted carefully to align with the thematic focus. These included combinations such as “inclusive librarianship,” “library accessibility Nigeria,” “school libraries equity,” “diversity in Nigerian libraries,” “inclusive education libraries Nigeria,” and “barriers to library access in Africa.” Such keywords enabled precise retrieval of pertinent literature addressing both conceptual and practical aspects of inclusivity in library spaces and services. The search targeted multiple academic databases and repositories to broaden the source pool. These included multidisciplinary databases like Google Scholar, AJOL and Scopus, as well as specialised ones such as Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts (LISTA). Grey literature including advocacy reports and conference proceedings was also integrated to capture contextual insights often missing from peer-reviewed articles.

The scope of reviewed literature covered peer-reviewed journal articles in library and information science, education, social policy, and disability studies. The selection also incorporated empirical case studies, conceptual frameworks, policy analyses, and evaluation reports, allowing the review to draw on quantitative and qualitative data as well as normative discussions. To maintain quality and relevance, sources underwent critical appraisal focusing on methodological rigour, contextual relevance to Nigerian educational settings, and contribution to understanding inclusivity challenges and interventions. A total of 323 records

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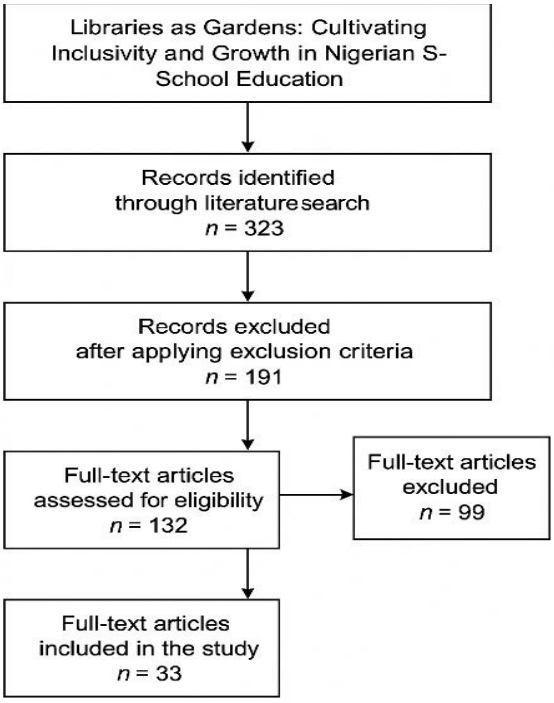
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were retrieved during the literature search. After applying exclusion criteria, 191 records were removed. A further review of the remaining 132 full-text articles led to the exclusion of 99 articles, leaving 33 full-text articles that were included in the study for further analysis.

Analytical synthesis was guided by a thematic framework designed to organise findings into coherent, interrelated themes. The process involved multiple readings and coding cycles to identify recurring motifs such as infrastructural limitations, professional training deficiencies, attitudinal barriers, policy gaps, and digital divides. Themes were cross-compared within and across sources to consolidate core issues while noting divergences or emerging perspectives. This iterative analysis enabled the construction of a nuanced narrative that reflected the interplay among structural, cultural, and policy factors shaping inclusive library services. A reflexive stance was maintained throughout the review to critically examine how the researcher's own contextual knowledge of Nigerian education and inclusive practice influenced interpretation and theme prioritisation. Transparency was upheld regarding source selection rationale and thematic boundaries to enhance trustworthiness.

This narrative review methodology, combining purposive search terms, comprehensive database coverage, multidisciplinary source selection, and rigorous thematic synthesis, provided a robust platform to critically interrogate the state of inclusive librarianship in Nigerian school libraries. It aligns with recent African scholarship emphasising context-specific, locally grounded reviews to inform policy and practice aimed at equitable educational outcomes (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022).

Prisma Flowchart of Libraries as Gardens: Cultivating Inclusivity and Growth in Nigerian School Education



Findings and Thematic Discussion

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Inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries is an essential pillar for achieving equitable education. The findings from recent research reveal complex layers of challenges and promising avenues related to physical, sensory, and cognitive accessibility, policy frameworks, institutional support, as well as practical case studies demonstrating positive models.

Physical Accessibility: Infrastructure Adaptations and Assistive Technologies

Findings from synthesised literature revealed that one of the major barriers to inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries is physical accessibility. The studies revealed that many libraries are housed in buildings that lack the infrastructural modifications needed for students with mobility challenges, and that ramps, wide doorways, accessible toilets, and furniture designed for wheelchair users are not available. Studies carried out in various Nigerian regions emphasised this deficiency as a key factor excluding disabled learners from full participation in library activities (Katsayal & Jabo, 2023). The physical inaccessibility of libraries limits equal opportunity, marginalising students with mobility impairments and contradicting Nigeria's commitment to education for all.

In addition to architectural hurdles, there is a significant scarcity of assistive technologies in school libraries. Devices such as screen readers, Braille printers, audiobooks, and software tailored for visually impaired or reading-challenged students are rarely available (Ogunleye, 2022). Such a lack severely restricts access for students with sensory disabilities or cognitive differences, deepening educational inequalities. These shortages largely arise from chronic funding gaps and low prioritisation of assistive technology in educational resource allocation. Research highlights that without simultaneous attention to infrastructure and technology, efforts to improve accessibility remain piecemeal and insufficient (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

Sensory and Cognitive Accessibility: Tailored Orientations and Inclusive Services

Effective inclusivity involves more than physical access, and it requires attention to the sensory and cognitive needs of diverse learners. Tailored orientation programmes that guide students, especially those with sensory impairments or learning differences, through available library resources are vital. Findings from the synthesised literature revealed that the absence of such programmes in Nigerian schools, leaves many students underprepared to engage with library services meaningfully (Istifanus et al., 2019). This gap curtails the ability of the library to function as an empowering educational space for all. Also, the capacity of library staff to understand and respond to diverse learning needs greatly influences service inclusivity. Unfortunately, many school librarians lack specialised training in disability awareness, inclusive pedagogy, and adaptive service delivery, limiting their ability to offer individualised support (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021; Ogunleye, 2022). Without adequate professional development, libraries fall short of providing environments sensitive to sensory and cognitive diversity, leaving affected students isolated or unsupported.

Policy and Institutional Support: Inclusion Policies and Capacity-Building Initiatives

Policy frameworks and institutional commitment underpin sustainable inclusion in school libraries. While Nigeria's national education policies articulate broad commitments to

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inclusive education, these have not fully translated into clear, actionable guidelines specifically for school libraries. Studies reveal that schools often lack enforcement mechanisms, proper funding allocations, and dedicated monitoring for inclusion initiatives within their libraries (Ogunleye, 2022). This fragmentation limits the operationalisation of inclusivity and curtails progress. Nonetheless, professional and regulatory bodies such as the Nigerian Library Association and Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria have stepped in to bridge gaps through capacity-building programmes aimed at sensitising librarians and providing practical skills related to inclusion. These initiatives seek to empower library staff to become change agents within their institutions (Ogunleye, 2022). Though promising, these programmes struggle with limited reach and inconsistent prioritisation. Institutional backing from school leadership remains critical, as libraries rely heavily on administrative support to secure resources and foster inclusive cultures (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

Case Studies and Positive Models within Nigerian Schools

Despite widespread challenges, there are exemplary cases illustrating successful inclusive practices. Research from Lagos and Osun States showcases schools that have embraced universal design principles to adapt their library environments physically. These adaptations include building ramps, installing signage in accessible formats, providing suitable furniture, and acquiring digital resources tailored for disabled learners (Katsayal & Jabo, 2023). The results show increased usage of libraries by students with disabilities and greater social integration within the school community.

In some schools, orientation programmes explicitly designed for students with sensory or cognitive difficulties guide learners effectively, and staff receive specialised inclusivity training. According to Okoroma (2024). such targeted efforts cultivate welcoming environments, enhance learner confidence, and foster inclusive cultures. These cases demonstrate that with strategic planning, investment, and community involvement, Nigerian school libraries can transition into centres of genuine inclusion and empowerment.

Gaps and Persistent Challenges

However, these successes stand against a backdrop of systemic hurdles. Chronic underfunding hampers the ability of most schools to upgrade infrastructure, obtain assistive technologies, or maintain relevant collections. Financial shortages disproportionately affect rural and public schools, perpetuating regional and socio-economic disparities (Obro, n.d.; Istifanus et al., 2019). Also, staffing issues also persist. Many libraries operate without personnel trained in inclusive librarianship, limiting their ability to deliver adaptive services. The lack of ongoing professional development and mentorship weakens staff confidence and competence, preventing libraries from becoming supportive spaces for all learners (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021). Attitudinal barriers within school communities contribute further challenges. Stigma, low awareness of rights related to disability and diversity, and limited sensitivity restrict full participation of marginalised students. Even where physical or technological access exists, these social obstacles can discourage learners from fully engaging with library resources (Ogunleye, 2022). Cultural change initiatives and awareness campaigns remain limited but are

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essential to overcome these intangible barriers. Digital exclusion presents an additional hurdle. Many schools, especially in rural areas, experience unreliable electricity, poor internet connectivity, and limited availability of electronic devices. This restricts access to digital and assistive learning resources, compounding existing inequalities and limiting inclusive service delivery (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

Drawing on recent Nigerian and African literature, it is clear that while Nigerian school libraries have the potential to be transformative spaces of inclusion and equity, they currently face significant challenges in infrastructure, training, policy enforcement, social attitudes, and digital access. Positive models highlight pathways forward, revealing how targeted investment in infrastructure, professional capacity, and inclusive programming can foster welcoming, accessible environments for all learners. Addressing persistent gaps requires coordinated policy attention, sustained financial support, comprehensive staff development, and cultural change efforts. Only through such integrated action can Nigerian school libraries fully realise their role as engines of equitable education and social inclusion.

Implications for Practice and Policy

Inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries is an essential factor for achieving education that is fair and accessible to all learners. However, this ideal remains a work in progress, requiring clear strategies that engage multiple stakeholders. Recent research points to strategic recommendations in policy development, professional growth, and targeted investment to support accessibility infrastructure.

Strategic Recommendations for Nigerian School Library Stakeholders

Stakeholders, including school administrators, librarians, policymakers, and community partners, must collaborate to create an inclusive library culture. A fundamental recommendation is to prioritise the establishment and maintenance of school libraries as active learning centres rather than passive book repositories. Evidence shows that many Nigerian school libraries function without adequate staffing, access to current resources, or physical infrastructure suited for all learners, especially those with disabilities (Obro, n.d.; Katsayal & Jabo, 2023). Stakeholders must advocate for libraries to be integrated into school development plans, recognising libraries as key drivers of equitable education. Another strategic step involves ensuring that every school library is managed by a qualified, trained librarian. Research highlights the shortage of professional librarians skilled in inclusive practices as a significant barrier to accessibility (Ogunleye, 2022). A focus on hiring and retaining such personnel will contribute to purposeful library development and tailored service delivery. Schools and educational authorities should establish clear staffing standards and support ongoing professional development.

Community involvement is equally vital. Library stakeholders should engage parents, local NGOs, and government bodies to mobilise resources and champion inclusive values. Engagement can foster awareness and reduce stigma around disabilities, broadening support networks. For instance, forming reading clubs that welcome children with diverse needs or

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organising community events in accessible library spaces can build inclusive cultures from the ground up (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021).

The Role of Policy Development in Advancing Inclusive Library Services

Effective policies form the backbone of inclusion efforts. National and state governments must develop and enforce clear, actionable policies addressing school library inclusivity. Current education policies in Nigeria acknowledge inclusive education but often lack specific directives for library services, leading to fragmented implementation (Ogunleye, 2022). There is a need for legislation that mandates accessible library infrastructure, adaptive technologies, and equal access to information for learners with disabilities.

Policy frameworks should also include accountability mechanisms such as regular site inspections, standardisation of inclusivity benchmarks, and enforced appointment of qualified library personnel. The Nigerian Library Association and Librarians Registration Council have roles to play in setting and monitoring compliance with national standards for school libraries (Esan, 2022). Integrating inclusive library development into broader educational and disability policies ensures holistic and sustainable advancement. Furthermore, policies should promote the allocation of budgets specifically for inclusive enhancements in school libraries. Dedicated funding lines can support infrastructure upgrades, purchase of assistive devices such as screen readers and Braille materials, and procurement of diverse learning materials that reflect students' linguistic and cultural realities. Without clear policy-driven budget priorities, inclusive library services risk continued underfunding and marginalisation (Obro, n.d.).

Importance of Continuous Professional Development for Library Staff

Librarians are frontline facilitators of inclusion in school libraries. Ensuring they possess up-to-date knowledge and skills in inclusive librarianship is essential. Continuous professional development (CPD) programs must focus on disability awareness, adaptive technologies, culturally responsive service provision, and digital literacy competencies (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021). Studies emphasise that many Nigerian librarians currently lack access to such focused training, limiting their capacity to serve diverse learners effectively (Ogunleye, 2022). Structured CPD initiatives, workshops, seminars, online courses, can provide librarians with tools to design inclusive programmes, assist learners with varied needs, and advocate for inclusive policies within schools. Professional bodies should collaborate with educational institutions and development partners to ensure CPD opportunities are accessible, contextually relevant, and sustained over time. Moreover, CPD must move beyond technical skills to include attitude and sensitivity training. Cultivating empathy and cultural competence among library staff helps combat stigma and fosters welcoming environments. Librarians empowered with both knowledge and awareness become champions of inclusion who can transform library spaces into safe, affirming places for all students.

Investment Priorities to Support Accessibility Infrastructure

Investment decisions must reflect the critical role of infrastructure in enabling or disabling access. Priorities should focus on physical modifications such as installing ramps, widening

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doorways, providing accessible furniture, and improving signage to aid users with sensory or mobility impairments (Katsayal & Jabo, 2023). These foundational changes are often the first tangible steps that manifest commitment to inclusivity. Furthermore, investment in assistive technologies is vital. Libraries need devices like screen readers, Braille printers, audiobooks, and user-friendly digital platforms to support learners with visual impairments or cognitive challenges. These technologies are increasingly essential in a digital learning environment and contribute significantly to reducing informational disparities (Ogunleye, 2022).

Digital infrastructure investment is paramount, especially in rural or underserved schools. Reliable electricity, internet access, and provision of devices such as tablets enhance digital literacy and access to a wider array of learning tools. Digital inclusion complements physical accessibility and ensures learning continuity in diverse settings (Barau & El-Kalash, 2021). Importantly, funding must be predictable and sustained. One-off grants or sporadic donations cannot ensure upkeep, updates, or expansions needed for truly inclusive libraries. Governments and development partners should commit to multi-year financing programmes that specifically earmark funds for infrastructure improvement, technology acquisition, and maintenance. Infrastructure investments should be aligned with policy and capacity-building efforts to create synergistic outcomes rather than piecemeal enhancements.

The transformation of Nigerian school libraries into inclusive spaces requires a coordinated, multifaceted approach. Stakeholders must embed inclusivity into core strategic planning, recognising libraries as vital to equitable education. Policy development plays a crucial role in setting standards, ensuring accountability, and securing dedicated funding for inclusive resources. Continuous professional development equips librarians to meet diverse learner needs with competence and sensitivity. Investments in infrastructure and technology form the physical and digital foundation that makes inclusion possible. Together, these elements build an ecosystem where learners of all abilities feel welcomed, supported, and empowered to access knowledge freely. Recent literature from Nigerian and African scholars underscores the urgency and feasibility of this agenda. Addressing entrenched gaps requires political will, sustained funding, and collaborative action. Only through such an integrated effort can Nigerian school libraries fulfil their promise as engines of inclusion, literacy, and national development.

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Table 1: Characteristics of Representative Studies Included in the Review (2019-2025)

S/N	Authors	Year	Region	Methodology	Participants	Key Findings
1	Barau, O. S., & El-Kalash, H.	2021	Africa	Literature Review	N/A	Libraries in Africa have challenges in promoting inclusive services, especially in Nigerian schools.
2	Ogunleye, A. O.	2022	Nigeria	Policy and Practice Analysis	N/A	Barriers to inclusion in Nigerian school libraries include policy gaps and insufficient infrastructure.
3	Ogunleye, A. O.	2022	Nigeria	Case Study Review	Nigerian Schools	Identifies key obstacles to inclusive library services, such as inadequate funding and lack of assistive technologies.
4	Katsayal, B. M., & Jabo, S. M.	2023	Nigeria	Case Study	Nigerian Schools	Physical inaccessibility of libraries in some regions hinders inclusion of students with disabilities.
5	Istifanus, I. L., et al.	2019	Nigeria	Quantitative Study	Students	Availability and accessibility of information resources in school libraries in Nigerian towns were limited.
6	Barau, O. S., & El-Kalash, H.	2021	Nigeria	Narrative Review	N/A	Inclusive library services in Nigeria are hampered by gaps in infrastructural and policy frameworks.
7	Ijeoma, A. U., & Oladele, D. T.	2022	Nigeria	Cross-Sectional Study	Students with disabilities	Inclusive library practices influence academic performance of students with disabilities in Nigerian schools.
8	Anofu, C. N., & Ezeani, C. N.	2019	Nigeria	Literature Review	N/A	The integration of assistive technologies in Nigerian academic libraries is crucial for inclusion.
9	Yusuf, T. O., & Bello, N. A.	2019	Nigeria	Policy and Infrastructure Study	Students with disabilities	Access to library infrastructure is a key determinant in the effectiveness of inclusive services.
10	Gani, E., & Igwe, P. J.	2021	Nigeria	Literature and Policy Review	N/A	Policy gaps and poor implementation limit inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries.
11	Esan, A. O.	2022	Nigeria	Literature Review	N/A	School libraries in Nigeria need clearer policies and infrastructural improvements to foster inclusivity.
12	Iyanda, O. S., & Adepoju, T. L.	2019	Nigeria	Qualitative Study	Students	Gender and rural-urban divides affect inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries.
13	Afolabi, O. M., & Oladipo, M. O.	2020	Nigeria	Survey	University Students	Challenges in providing inclusive library services in Nigerian universities were identified.
14	Alabi, O. F., & Adeniran, P. O.	2022	Nigeria	Cross-Sectional Study	Students	Accessibility of resources for students with special needs in Lagos State libraries.

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15	Ajayi, N., & Adetimirin, A. E.	2021	Nigeria	Exploratory Study	Students	Digital literacy and inclusion are key factors for enhancing inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries.
16	Musa, A. B., & Shehu, U.	2022	Nigeria	Case Study	Schools	The role of libraries in achieving SDGs, with focus on inclusivity in school environments.
17	Jibril, A., & Yusuf, N.	2023	Northern Nigeria	Qualitative Study	University Libraries	Effective librarian training models for disability inclusion in Nigerian universities.
18	Onifade, S. A., & Olanrewaju, B.	2021	Southwestern Nigeria	Infrastructure Assessment	Schools	Assessment of funding and infrastructure in southwestern Nigerian schools for inclusive libraries.
19	Zaid, Y.	2024	Lagos, Nigeria	Conference Presentation	N/A	Promoting diversity and inclusion of library services for students with visual impairment at the University of Lagos.
20	Ogunleye, A. O.	2022	Nigeria	Policy and Practice Insights	N/A	Barriers in Nigerian school libraries related to inclusion in policies and practice.
21	Chisita, C., & Onwuegbuze, E. S.	2023	Africa	Case Study	Nigerian Tertiary Institutions	Advancing inclusive digital libraries in African tertiary institutions.
22	Istifanus, I. L., et al.	2019	Nigeria	Case Study	Students	Availability and utilization of information resources in school libraries for accessibility and inclusion.
23	Ogunleye, A. O.	2022	Nigeria	Review	N/A	Insufficient professional training is a major barrier to inclusive library services in Nigeria.
24	Mohammed, I., & Shuaibu, M.	2021	Nigeria	Survey	Polytechnic Libraries	Barriers to access inclusive digital library resources in Nigerian polytechnic libraries.
25	Okeke, L. U., & Onwumere, J. U.	2023	Nigeria	Qualitative Study	Students	Libraries as agents of social inclusion in urban Nigerian schools.
26	Ijeoma, A. U., & Oladele, D. T.	2022	Nigeria	Case Study	Students	The impact of inclusive library practices on the academic performance of students with disabilities.
27	Oloyede, O., & Awonusi, M. A.	2019	Nigeria	Cross-Sectional Study	Librarians	Assessing librarians' attitudes in developing inclusive library services in Nigerian tertiary institutions.
28	Ezeani, C. N., & Ukwoma, S. C.	2020	Nigeria	Survey	Students with Disabilities	Access and use of inclusive library services in Nigerian universities.
29	Aremu, S. A., & Oyediran, O. O.	2020	Nigeria	Survey	Librarians	Attitudes of librarians toward inclusive services in Nigerian secondary schools.

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30	Onwudinjo, O. P., & Ibezim, C. M.	2022	Nigeria	Literature Review	N/A	Policy and practice gaps in digital inclusion for Nigerian school libraries.
31	Osagie, S. A., & Igbinevbo, O.	2020	Nigeria	Accessibility Audit	College Libraries	Accessibility audit of Nigerian college libraries, promoting inclusive environments.
32	Ezeani, C. N., Ukwoma, S. C., et al.	2017	Nigeria	Conference Paper	N/A	Libraries and their role in ensuring inclusive access to information in Nigerian educational settings.
33	Yaya, W. T., & Abdulkarim, A. M.	2020	Nigeria	Survey	Inclusive Schools	Promoting inclusive education through libraries in Nigerian inclusive schools.

Summary and Conclusion

Inclusivity in Nigerian school libraries emerges as a vital driver for delivering equitable education that respects and supports the needs of all learners. The findings from recent studies highlight important dimensions of this terrain that carry significant educational implications and align closely with both national priorities and global development goals such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This paper summarises these key findings, reflects on their educational importance, and outlines a call for coordinated action among librarians, educators, and policymakers. Research consistently reveals that Nigerian school libraries face substantial barriers across physical, sensory, cognitive, and policy domains.

Physical accessibility is often compromised through inadequate infrastructure such as the absence of ramps, inaccessible furniture, and a scarcity of assistive technologies like screen readers and Braille materials. These structural gaps create exclusion for students with disabilities, undermining their right to equitable education. Sensory and cognitive accessibility issues are equally pressing. Lack of tailored orientation programmes and limited professional training for library staff restrict meaningful engagement for learners with diverse needs such as those with visual impairments or cognitive differences. Also, while Nigeria's education policies endorse inclusiveness broadly, they often lack specific directives and enforcement mechanisms that address inclusive library services concretely. Capacity-building initiatives by professional bodies, such as the Nigerian Library Association's training programmes, indicate growing recognition of this gap and efforts to respond to it. Nevertheless, fragmented policy implementation and limited funding hamper consistent progress.

Positive models within Nigerian schools exemplify how strategic investments in infrastructure, adapted digital resources, and staff training enhance inclusion. Case studies from Lagos and Osun States demonstrate that libraries equipped with universal design features and assistive technologies foster greater participation of learners with disabilities and create nurturing environments that support diverse student populations. These examples provide vital proof of concept that inclusion is achievable with commitment and collaboration. Inclusive libraries serve as critical centres for learning, social integration, and empowerment for all children, including those traditionally marginalised. They are essential in bridging educational disparities that relate to disability, socio-economic status, and geographic location. Moreover,

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inclusive libraries support the development of competencies that contribute to lifelong learning and citizenship, underpinning Nigeria's drive towards improved educational outcomes and social cohesion.

The role of inclusive libraries aligns closely with global development agendas. The SDGs, particularly Goal 4 on quality education and Goal 10 on reducing inequalities, explicitly call for inclusive and equitable access to education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Libraries, as accessible community hubs of knowledge and technology, are pivotal in realising these aims. Nigerian inclusive library initiatives thus contribute to fulfilling international commitments while addressing local needs, creating synergy between national development and global frameworks. Achieving this vision demands coordinated efforts among key stakeholders. Librarians, as frontline facilitators, require empowered roles supported through continuous professional development to enable them to address diverse learner needs sensitively and innovatively.

Educators and school leaders must integrate library services into broader pedagogical and inclusion strategies, ensuring alignment between classroom and library experiences. Policymakers bear responsibility for creating clear, actionable policies with embedded accountability and funding to sustain inclusive infrastructure and services. Such collaboration must extend to parents, communities, and civil society actors to create enabling environments that challenge stigma and make inclusion a societal norm. Partnerships with non-governmental organisations and international development agencies can also mobilise resources and introduce innovative practices tailored to Nigeria's unique context. Inclusive school libraries in Nigeria offer powerful opportunities to advance equitable education and contribute to national and global development agendas. The key findings stress structural, policy, and professional challenges alongside promising practices that illuminate pathways forward. Harnessing this potential requires deliberate, coordinated action among librarians, educators, and policymakers, supported by robust research that continuously informs and improves practice. Such efforts will transform Nigerian school libraries into vibrant, inclusive spaces that empower every learner to realise their full potential.

Recommendations

1. National and state education authorities need to craft clear, actionable policies that explicitly mandate inclusive practices in school libraries. These policies should set minimum standards for physical accessibility, the provision of assistive technologies (such as Braille materials and screen readers), and equitable service for learners with diverse needs.
2. Sustained funding must be allocated to upgrade school library infrastructure to accommodate all learners. This includes building ramps, widening doorways, providing adapted furniture, accessible toilets, and appropriate signage in multiple formats.
3. Ongoing training programmes should be institutionalised for library staff, focusing on inclusive librarianship, disability awareness, use of adaptive technologies, and cultural

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competence. Empowering librarians with these skills will help them to design and deliver services that meet the diverse learning needs of students.

4. Schools and education authorities must establish clear standards requiring the appointment of professionally trained librarians. Qualified personnel are essential to drive inclusive service delivery and to serve as advocates for library development within schools.
5. School libraries should serve as hubs for community involvement. Partnerships with parents, local NGOs, disability advocacy groups, and educational stakeholders can mobilise resources, raise awareness, and foster inclusive attitudes.
6. Library infrastructure and service design should follow universal design principles to ensure accessibility for the widest range of users without the need for retrofitting.
7. School administrators and educators should integrate library services with inclusive pedagogical approaches, ensuring alignment of classroom teaching and library support
8. Continued research is necessary to monitor progress, identify gaps, and inform improvements in Nigerian school libraries' inclusivity.
9. Digital tools offer powerful avenues to enhance inclusive access. Nigerian schools should harness e-resources, online learning platforms, and assistive software while investing in digital literacy for both learners and staff. Government and partners must ensure digital equity to prevent further marginalisation, particularly in underserved rural areas.
10. Effective inclusivity requires coordinated action. Government agencies, the Nigerian Library Association, the Librarians Registration Council of Nigeria, Ngos, and international partners should work together to harmonise policies, pool resources, and share best practices. This collaboration can enhance efficiency and maximise impact in transforming school libraries into inclusive environments.

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