

A critical Examination of Library Services in Lesotho Maseru: A review of “The Analysis of the demand of Library services in Maseru”

Rethabile Constance Hlalele
MBA, Parul University

INTRODUCTION

In the digital age, libraries continue to play a vital role in promoting literacy, lifelong learning, and community development. As repositories of knowledge, libraries provide access to information, educational resources, and cultural heritage, thereby contributing to the socio-economic development of communities. Lesotho, a small country in Southern Africa, faces unique challenges in providing accessible and relevant library services to its population. With a high poverty rate, limited infrastructure, and a predominantly rural population, Lesotho's library sector requires careful planning, strategic investment, and a deep understanding of community needs.

In this context, a recent study, "The Analysis of the Demand of Library Services in Lesotho, Maseru," sheds light on the demand for library services in the capital city of Maseru. This research is timely and significant, as it provides valuable insights into the information needs and preferences of the Basotho people. By examining the demand for library services, the study aims to inform library development policies, improve service delivery, and enhance the overall impact of libraries on community development.

This article review aims to critically examine the study's findings, methodology, and implications for library service development in Lesotho. By exploring the demand for library services in Maseru, this review seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the role of libraries in promoting socio-economic development and improving the quality of life for Basotho people. Furthermore, this review will analyse the study's contributions to the broader literature on library and information science, highlighting its strengths, limitations, and areas for future research.

Furthermore, this review will not only examine the study's findings and methodology but also situate it within the broader context of library and information science research in Lesotho. To achieve a more nuanced understanding of the demand for library services in Maseru, this review will also analyse the contributions of another significant research study in the field of library studies, which has shed light on the information-seeking behaviours and needs of the Basotho people.

By synthesising the findings of these two studies, this review aims to provide a carefully constructed conclusion and analysis of the demand for library services in Lesotho. In doing so, this review will draw on the theoretical frameworks and empirical findings of numerous scholars who have contributed significantly to the research on library studies and demand in Lesotho.

Some of the notable scholars whose work will be examined in this review include Mokotso (2017), who investigated the information needs and seeking behaviours of students at the National University of Lesotho; Mojalefa (2015), who explored the role of libraries in supporting community development in Lesotho; and Khesa (2012), who analysed the impact of library services on the literacy levels of rural communities in Lesotho.

In addition to these local studies, this review will also engage with the conceptual frameworks of international library and information science scholars. For instance, Brophy's (2006) work on the evaluation of library services will be used to assess the effectiveness of library services in meeting the needs of the Basotho people. Kuhlthau's (2004) information search process model will be applied to understand the information-seeking behaviours of the Basotho people. Rowley's (1998) work on the management of library and information services will

be used to examine the management and organisation of library services in Lesotho.

By integrating the insights from these studies and theoretical frameworks, this review seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the demand for library services in Lesotho and inform evidence-based library development policies and practices. The review will also identify gaps in existing research and suggest areas for further investigation.

Ultimately, this review aims to contribute to the development of a more informed and effective library and information service in Lesotho, one that is responsive to the needs and aspirations of the Basotho people.

ANALYSIS

Mokotso's (2017) study on the information needs and seeking behaviours of students at the National University of Lesotho provides valuable insights into the information-seeking habits of students in Lesotho. Following the introduction, this paper will analyse the study's methodology, findings, and implications, drawing on relevant theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence.

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods. The use of a survey questionnaire to collect data from 150 students, followed by in-depth interviews with 20 students, allowed for a comprehensive understanding of students' information needs and seeking behaviours. However, the study's sample size and selection method may be seen as limitations. The study only sampled students from the National University of Lesotho, which may not be representative of the entire student population in Lesotho. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to biases and limitations.

The study's findings revealed that students at the National University of Lesotho have diverse information needs, including academic, personal, and social information. The study also found that students use various information sources, including libraries, internet, and social media. These findings are consistent with previous studies on information access and use in developing countries (e.g., Kiplang'at, 2015; Mugwanya, 2016). The study also

identified several barriers to information access, including limited internet connectivity, inadequate library resources, and lack of information literacy skills.

The study's findings have significant implications for library and information services in Lesotho. The study highlights the need for libraries to provide diverse information resources and services that cater to the varying needs of students. He also study emphasises the importance of information literacy skills training to enable students to effectively access and use information. Furthermore, the study's findings suggest that libraries in Lesotho need to invest in digital infrastructure, including internet connectivity and digital resources, to support students' information needs.

Mokotso's study can be situated within the theoretical frameworks of information behaviour and information literacy. The study's findings on students' information needs and seeking behaviours are consistent with the principles of Wilson's (1999) information behaviour model, which emphasises the importance of understanding users' information needs and behaviours. The study's emphasis on information literacy skills training is also aligned with the American Library Association's (ALA) information literacy competency standards, which highlight the importance of information literacy skills in supporting lifelong learning and academic success. However, some researchers have critiqued the study's methodology and findings. For example, Le Roux (2018) argued that the study's sample size was too small and that the study's findings may not be generalisable to the broader student population in Lesotho. Similarly, Masekela (2019) noted that the study's reliance on self-reported data may have introduced biases and limitations into the study's findings.

Despite these limitations, Mokotso's study provides valuable insights into the information needs and seeking behaviours of students in Lesotho. The study's findings have significant implications for library and information services in Lesotho, and highlight the need for libraries to provide diverse information resources and services, information literacy skills training, and investment in digital infrastructure.

Mojalefa's (2015) study on the role of library services in community development in Lesotho provides valuable insights into the potential of libraries to contribute to community development. The study's findings highlight the importance of libraries in providing access to information, promoting literacy, and supporting community development initiatives. These also included in the on going research of the Demand of Library services in Lesotho.

One of the key insights from Mojalefa's study is the recognition that libraries have the potential to play a transformative role in community development. As Mojalefa notes, "libraries can be a catalyst for community development by providing access to information, promoting literacy, and supporting community-based initiatives" (Mojalefa, 2015, p. 12). This insight resonates with the growing body of research that highlights the importance of libraries in promoting community development and social cohesion (Aabo, 2005; Holt, 2013).

The study's findings also underscore the importance of community engagement and participation in library services. Mojalefa notes that "community involvement is crucial in ensuring that library services are relevant and responsive to community needs" (Mojalefa, 2015, p. 15). This finding is supported by other researchers, such as Kruger (2012), who argue that community engagement is essential for the development of effective library services.

Furthermore, Mojalefa's study highlights the potential of libraries to promote literacy and support education in Lesotho. The study's findings show that libraries can play a critical role in promoting literacy among children and adults, and supporting education initiatives in communities. This finding is consistent with other research, such as Holt's (2013) study on the role of libraries in promoting literacy and education in the United States.

In addition to promoting community development, libraries also have an important role to play in promoting individual development. This is particularly important in today's society, where mental health and wellness are major concerns. Research has shown that libraries can provide a safe and supportive environment for individuals to access information, learn new skills, and connect with others (Kahn, 2015). Libraries can also provide access to

resources and services that support mental health and wellness, such as counselling services, stress management programs, and mindfulness workshops (Murray, 2018).

Moreover, libraries can play a critical role in promoting digital literacy and providing access to digital technologies, which are essential for individual development in today's digital age. Research has shown that digital literacy is a critical skill for individuals to succeed in today's economy, and that libraries can provide access to digital technologies and training programs that support digital literacy (Martin, 2018).

Mojalefa's (2015) study provides valuable insights into the role of library services in community development in Lesotho. The study's findings highlight the importance of libraries in promoting literacy, supporting education, and contributing to community development initiatives. The study's emphasis on community engagement, collaboration, and partnerships also underscores the need for libraries to work closely with community organisations, government agencies, and other stakeholders to support community development.

Furthermore, the importance of libraries in promoting individual development, particularly in the areas of mental health and wellness, digital literacy, and access to digital technologies, cannot be overstated. As society continues to evolve and new challenges emerge, the role of libraries in promoting community development and individual development will only continue to grow in importance

Khesa's (2012) study on the impact of library services on literacy levels in rural communities in Lesotho provides significant insights into the crucial role that libraries play in promoting literacy in rural areas. The study's findings underscore the profound impact of library services on literacy levels, particularly in terms of enhancing reading and writing skills.

One of the key takeaways from Khesa's study is the recognition that libraries are indispensable in promoting literacy in rural areas. As Khesa notes, "libraries can provide access to reading materials, literacy programs, and other educational resources that can help to improve literacy levels in rural communities" (Khesa, 2012, p. 12). This finding is corroborated by other researchers, such as Kruger

(2012), who argue that libraries are essential in promoting literacy and education in rural areas.

However, despite the significant impact of library services on literacy levels, recent trends suggest that literacy levels have been declining in many parts of the world, including Lesotho. One of the primary factors contributing to this decline is the rise of social media, which has led to a decrease in reading and writing skills among young people. As noted by researchers, such as Green and Hannon (2017), social media has created a culture of instant gratification, where young people are more likely to engage with short-form, visual content rather than longer, more complex texts.

This decline in literacy levels is a pressing concern, as it can have far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and society as a whole. As noted by researchers, such as Kirsch (2001), low literacy levels can lead to poor educational outcomes, limited employment opportunities, and reduced civic engagement.

In this context, the role of libraries in promoting literacy and education becomes even more critical. Libraries can provide access to a wide range of reading materials, including books, magazines, and online resources, that can help to improve literacy levels and foster a love of reading. Libraries can also offer literacy programs and other educational resources that can help to support individuals who are struggling with literacy.

Furthermore, libraries can play a vital role in promoting digital literacy, which is essential in today's technology-driven world. By providing access to digital technologies and training programs, libraries can help individuals develop the skills they need to navigate the digital landscape and access the information they need to succeed.

In addition, libraries can serve as community hubs, providing a safe and welcoming space for individuals to come together and engage in literacy-related activities. By partnering with community organisations and other stakeholders, libraries can help to promote literacy and education throughout the community.

In conclusion, Khesa's (2012) study provides significant insights into the impact of library services

on literacy levels in rural communities. The study's findings underscore the critical role that libraries play in promoting literacy and education, particularly in rural areas. However, the decline in literacy levels due to the rise of social media is a pressing concern that requires urgent attention. Libraries can play a vital role in promoting literacy and education, and it is essential that they are supported and funded to provide the resources and services that are needed to promote literacy and education.

The importance of literacy in today's society cannot be overstated. Literacy is the foundation upon which all other learning is built, and it is essential for individuals to be able to read and write in order to fully participate in society. However, despite its importance, literacy levels have been declining in many parts of the world, including Lesotho. One of the primary factors contributing to this decline is the rise of social media, which has led to a decrease in reading and writing skills among young people.

In this context, the role of libraries in promoting literacy and education becomes even more critical. Libraries have long been recognised as essential institutions for promoting literacy and education, and they continue to play a vital role in this regard. Khesa's (2012) study on the impact of library services on literacy levels in rural communities in Lesotho provides significant insights into the crucial role that libraries play in promoting literacy in rural areas.

The study's findings underscore the profound impact of library services on literacy levels, particularly in terms of enhancing reading and writing skills. Khesa notes that "libraries can provide access to reading materials, literacy programs, and other educational resources that can help to improve literacy levels in rural communities" (Khesa, 2012, p. 12). This finding is corroborated by other researchers, such as Kruger (2012), who argue that libraries are essential in promoting literacy and education in rural areas.

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However, despite the critical role that libraries play in promoting literacy and education, they face numerous challenges in providing effective services to rural communities. One of the primary challenges is the lack of resources, including funding, infrastructure, and personnel. This can make it difficult for libraries to provide the range of services and resources that are needed to support literacy and education in rural areas.

Another challenge facing libraries in rural areas is the lack of access to digital technologies. Many rural communities lack access to reliable internet connectivity, which can make it difficult for libraries to provide digital literacy training and other online resources. This can exacerbate the digital divide, which can have serious consequences for individuals and communities that are already disadvantaged.

In conclusion, Khesa's (2012) study provides significant insights into the impact of library services on literacy levels in rural communities. The study's findings underscore the critical role that libraries play in promoting literacy and education, particularly in rural areas. However, libraries face numerous challenges in providing effective services to rural communities, including the lack of resources and access to digital technologies. Despite these challenges, libraries remain essential institutions for promoting literacy and education, and they will continue to play a vital role in this regard for many years to come.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the trio of studies by Khesa (2012), Mokotso (2017), and Mojalefa (2015) have collectively shed light on the pivotal role that libraries play in promoting literacy, education, and community development in Lesotho. Like a tapestry woven from diverse threads, these studies have intertwined to reveal a rich narrative of the transformative power of libraries in rural communities.

Khesa's (2012) study illuminated the impact of library services on literacy levels in rural communities, highlighting the critical role that libraries play in enhancing reading and writing skills. Mokotso's (2017) research built upon this foundation, exploring the information needs and seeking behaviors of students in Lesotho and underscoring

the importance of libraries in providing access to information and promoting academic success.

Meanwhile, Mojalefa's (2015) study took a broader view, examining the role of library services in community development and highlighting the potential of libraries to serve as catalysts for social change. By providing access to information, promoting literacy, and supporting community-based initiatives, libraries can help to empower individuals and communities, fostering a more equitable and just society.

As we reflect on the collective insights of these studies, a compelling narrative emerges. Libraries are not merely repositories of knowledge, but vibrant hubs of community activity, sparking imagination, creativity, and innovation. They are sanctuaries of learning, where individuals can access information, develop new skills, and connect with others.

In an era marked by rapid technological change, social media saturation, and declining literacy levels, the importance of libraries as guardians of knowledge and promoters of literacy cannot be overstated. As we look to the future, it is clear that libraries will continue to play a vital role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural fabric of Lesotho and beyond.

Ultimately, the studies by Khesa, Mokotso, and Mojalefa remind us that libraries are not just buildings or collections, but dynamic, living entities that pulse with the rhythm of community life. As we celebrate the transformative power of libraries, we must also recognise the urgent need to support and strengthen these institutions, ensuring that they continue to thrive as beacons of knowledge, literacy, and community development.

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