



Perceptions of Secondary Stage Students of the Role of the School Library in the Development of Reading and Writing Skills in Kuwait

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Abstract

This study explores the perceptions of the role of the school library in supporting reading and writing development among secondary stage students in Kuwait. Employing a quantitative research method, this study uses a structured questionnaire to collect data from secondary stage students regarding their views, experiences, and attitudes toward the role of the school library in supporting their reading and writing skills development. This research contributes to improve reading and writing skills development among students in the secondary stage and to enhance understanding of the educational role of the school library. Moreover, the study places the school library within the broader educational context as a learning environment which supports literacy development and students' engagement. By highlighting students' perceptions, this research sheds a light on how school libraries are viewed not only as resource centers but also as potential active agents in the learning process, academic growth, and skill development. The findings provide insights that may inform educators, school leaders, and policy makers about the necessity of developing curriculum that integrate the school library effectively within the secondary stage education system, in particular reading and writing instruction. This research also offers implications for improving library practices and promoting effective usage of the school library as a crucial part of the learning process.

Keywords: school libraries; reading skills; writing skills; secondary stage students; Kuwait

1. Introduction

Reading and writing are the cornerstone of lifelong learning, personal development, and academic progress. They are not merely about decoding and recognizing words, but also involve critical thinking, understanding, and communication skills that enable the modern student to navigate the learning environment. In Kuwait, enhancing reading and writing remains an ongoing challenge, especially among secondary stage students, despite ongoing curriculum modifications. Many students still struggle to acquire the essential literacy skills needed for lifelong learning and academic success.

In an ever-changing technological world and an increasing flow of information, the importance of solid reading and writing skills cannot be overstated. Strong literacy skills influence students' educational progress and personal development as they shape academic trajectories, professional opportunities, and lifelong learning goals. These skills are also recognized as critical factors for sustainable development, which makes their cultivation a central priority for educational systems worldwide. In Kuwait, this challenge is compounded by diverse student backgrounds, varying levels of learning skills, and unequal access to learning resources, all of which create additional barriers to developing robust reading and writing competencies.

School libraries, rich in educational resources and potential learning support, have been neglected and underutilized over the years. This raises an essential question about how students perceive the contribution of school libraries to their reading and writing development. This study therefore aims to explore secondary stage students' perceptions of the role of the school library in supporting reading and writing skills development.

2. Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to bridge a key gap in understanding how school libraries are perceived to contribute to the enhancement of students' reading and writing skills within Kuwait's secondary education system. By exploring students' perceptions, the research highlights the educational value of libraries not only as repositories of knowledge but also as dynamic learning environments that can cultivate curiosity, critical thinking, and academic competence.

3. Problem Statement



Enhancing reading and writing skills among students in Kuwait, particularly secondary stage students, is an ongoing challenge. Although the Ministry of Education has implemented curriculum improvements, many students still struggle with these skills, especially as they are necessary for lifelong learning. Diverse student backgrounds and unequal access to educational resources have contributed to the complexity of skills development in Kuwaiti schools.

School libraries, despite their rich resources, are often neglected and underutilized. Over the years, the role of the school library in supporting the curriculum has diminished, raising a crucial question: how do secondary stage students perceive the role of school libraries in the development of their reading and writing skills? The research aims to explore these perceptions and highlight the perceived significance of library resources in enhancing reading and writing skills development.

4. Literature Review

Benefiting from school libraries in supporting the curriculum is widely recognized as a vital step toward enhancing students' literacy skills [1] [2]. Research emphasizes that the professional role, leadership, and self-efficacy of school librarians strongly influence students' information literacy because librarians guide them in locating, evaluating, and using information effectively [3] [1]. Studies in Kuwait similarly indicate that school librarians' practices—when aligned with curriculum goals and supported by adequate training—contribute to improved information literacy and academic growth through targeted activities and instructional support [2]. These findings position the school library as more than a repository of books; it is a structured learning environment that can scaffold students' engagement with reading and writing tasks [1] [2].

A substantial body of international research shows that well-resourced and professionally staffed school library programs are associated with higher levels of student achievement and reading motivation [4] [5] [7]. When libraries receive sufficient funding, maintain diverse and up-to-date collections, and employ qualified librarians, students tend to display stronger reading outcomes, higher test scores, and more positive attitudes toward reading [7] [8] [9]. Large-scale studies from multiple U.S. states and other countries report that students in schools with effective library programs and trained staff often outperform peers in schools where such provision is weak or absent [4] [7] [10] [12]. These effects are frequently observed even after controlling for socioeconomic factors, suggesting that the quality of the school library program can make an independent contribution to literacy outcomes [7] [10] [12].

The characteristics of effective school libraries are consistently highlighted across the literature. Key features include the presence of a full-time qualified librarian, a rich and varied print and digital collection, access to technology, and systematic collaboration between librarians and classroom teachers [4] [7] [8]. Conceptual work on school libraries describes them as “dynamic agents of learning,” arguing that their informational infrastructure supports deep learning when it is embedded in classroom instruction rather than treated as an add-on [13]. In such models, librarians co-design lessons, teach information literacy, and provide ongoing guidance on research and writing tasks, thereby strengthening students' independent learning skills [13] [14].

Information literacy frameworks further underline the central role of school libraries in teaching students to locate, evaluate, and ethically use information [1]. Evidence shows that many students rely heavily on search engines and rarely apply critical evaluation criteria, which underscores the need for explicit instruction in information and digital literacy [15]. School libraries that integrate structured information literacy programs into the curriculum help address these gaps by offering guided practice in evaluating sources, using digital platforms, and citing materials appropriately [1] [13].

The literature also establishes a close link between reading proficiency, academic success, and lifelong learning, with poor reading skills placing students at continued risk of underachievement [6]. School library programs that provide diverse, age-appropriate materials, promote both curricular reading and reading for pleasure, and ensure equitable access to books can mitigate these risks [7] [9]. Time spent reading, supported by library resources, has been shown to improve vocabulary, writing style, grammatical competence, and spelling, particularly for students who may not have alternative access to books at home [9].

Finally, collaborative relationships between librarians and teachers emerge as a recurring factor in successful library programs [8] [13] [14]. When librarians are recognized as instructional partners, and when library activities are integrated into classroom assignments, school libraries are more likely to contribute meaningfully to students' reading and writing development [7] [8] [13]. These international and local findings provide an important foundation for examining how Kuwaiti secondary school libraries can function as active agents in promoting literacy skills and supporting quality education.



5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

This study uses a quantitative research design to explore students' perceptions of the school library's role in developing reading and writing skills through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was selected for its ability to gather data from a larger group efficiently and to provide an accurate representation of participants' views and experiences.

5.2 Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to students through the online learning management system MyU. Responses were recorded electronically through Google Forms. The questionnaire included closed-ended and Likert-scale items, and students were informed of the purpose of the study, assured of anonymity, and participation was voluntary.

5.3 Participants and Sampling

The participants consisted of secondary school students enrolled in grades 10, 11, and 12 at one selected secondary school. The school was chosen based on accessibility and institutional cooperation. A total of 62 students completed and submitted the questionnaire and constituted the final sample. A convenience sampling technique was employed due to accessibility and feasibility within the research timeframe.

5.4 Instrument

The data collection instrument was a structured electronic questionnaire created using Google Forms. It included sections on demographic information, school library habits, perceptions of the school library, reading skill support, writing skill support, and one open-ended question for further comments. The questionnaire items were adapted from established instruments used in studies of school library impact and collaboration. They were reviewed to ensure clarity and relevance to the Kuwaiti secondary education context and organized into sections measuring students' school library habits, perceptions of library resources, and perceived support for reading and writing skills [4] [5] [8].

6. Findings

6.1 Demographic Information

Table 1. Demographic Information

		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	100%	
	Male		
Grade	10	20	32.3%
	11 Arts Track	18	29%
	11 Science Track	17	27.4%
	12 Arts Track	-	-
	12 Science Track	7	11.3%

All participants were female students. In terms of grade level, 32.3% were from grade 10, 29% from grade 11 arts track, 27.4% from grade 11 science track, and 11.3% from grade 12 science track, while there were no participants from grade 12 arts track.



6.2 School Library Habits

Table 2. School Library Habits

Statement	Frequency (n)		Percentage (%)
How often do you visit the school library?	Daily	-	-
	Several times a week	8	12.9%
	Once a week	4	6.5%
	Several Times a month	4	6.5%
	Rarely	25	40.3%
	Never	21	33.9%
On average, how much time do you spend in the school library per visit?	Less than 15 minutes	37	59.7%
	From 15 to 30 minutes	23	37.1%
	From 30 to 60 minutes	2	3.2%
	More than an hour	-	-
What is the primary reason for visiting the school library?	Reading for fun	22	35.5%
	Research and Academic Work	11	17.7%
	Use of library computers	3	4.8%
	Attend a library event	4	6.5%
	Meet friends/Socialise	17	27.4%
	other	5	8.1%
Did you visit the school library this academic term?	Yes	42	67.7%
	No	20	32.3%
How do you usually hear about library activities or new resources?	School Advertisements	23	37.1%
	Teachers	12	19.4%
	Friends	13	21%
	Library Staff	1	1.6%
	Posters	13	21%
Do you have a library membership/card?	Yes	1	1.6%
	No	61	98.4%

The findings indicate limited school library use. While 12.9% of students visited the school library several times a week, 40.3% reported visiting rarely and 33.9% reported never visiting. Most students spent less than 15 minutes per visit. Reading for fun was one of the most common reasons for visiting the library, but nearly all students reported not having a library membership card.

6.3 Perceptions of the School Library

Table 3. Perceptions of the School Library

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school library provides activities or programs that	-	11.3%	29%	41.9%	17.7%



contribute to my literary development					
The school library offers learning materials and resources that support my academic success	3.2%	1.6%	33.9%	41.9%	19.4%
The school library staff provide assistance that helps students feel supported and included.	1.6%	-	21%	51.6%	25.8%
I regularly use the school library for reading or writing-related activities.	4.8%	14.5%	33.9%	30.6%	16.1%
The library's resources are up-to-date and relevant for developing reading and writing skills.	4.8%	12.9%	24.2%	38.7%	19.4%

Students generally expressed positive views about the school library's resources, staff support, and contribution to academic success. Many agreed that the library provides activities and materials that support literacy development and that staff assistance helps students feel supported and included. However, regular use of the library for reading or writing-related activities was weaker than these positive perceptions.

6.4 Reading Skill Support

Table 4. Reading Skill Support

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school library provides effective resources (such as books, reading lists, or digital materials) that help improve my reading skills.	4.8%	6.5%	30.6%	43.5%	14.5%
The school library organizes reading programs or events that motivate me to read more often.	6.5%	12.9%	19.4%	35.5%	25.8%
The school library provides quiet and comfortable spaces suitable for focused reading.	-	6.5%	16.1%	38.7%	38.7%
The school library recommends books that match my reading level and interests.	1.6%	4.8%	25.8%	40.3%	27.4%
The school library provides access to digital reading platforms (e.g., e-books or audiobooks) that support my reading practice.	6.5%	14.5%	25.8%	35.5%	17.7%
The school library staff assist me in finding reading materials that support classroom learning.	-	11.3%	32.3%	40.3%	16.1%
The school library displays reading materials that promote a reading culture among students.	3.2%	4.8%	32.3%	45.2%	14.5%

Students' perceptions of the library's contribution to reading development were largely positive. Many agreed that the library provides effective reading resources, quiet and comfortable spaces, suitable recommendations, digital reading platforms, and materials that promote a reading culture among students.

6.5 Writing Skill Support

Table 5. Writing Skill Support

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The school library offers reference materials (e.g.,	1.6%	8.1%	30.6%	46.8%	12.9%



grammar guides, writing manuals) that help me improve my writing skills.					
The school library provides access to digital tools or research materials that support academic writing.	1.6%	6.5%	37.1%	41.9%	12.9%
The library staff assist students in locating materials that strengthen research and writing assignments.	1.6%	3.2%	33.9%	46.8%	14.5%
The school library organizes workshops or sessions focused on improving writing skills.	6.5%	11.3%	22.6%	43.5%	16.1%
The library provides access to citation tools and writing software (e.g., Grammarly, Turnitin, etc.).	4.8%	6.5%	38.7%	37.1%	12.9%
The library offers examples of high-quality student essays or research projects for guidance.	1.6%	8.1%	33.9%	37.1%	19.4%
The school library collaborates with teachers to support writing assignments and projects.	3.2%	1.6%	29%	38.7%	27.4%

Students also reported generally positive perceptions of the library's role in supporting writing skills. Many agreed that the library offers reference materials, digital tools, staff assistance, workshops, examples of student work, and collaboration with teachers to support writing assignments and projects. Nevertheless, writing-related support appeared less visible in practice than reading-related support.

7. Discussion

This study shows a clear contrast between students' positive perceptions of the school library and their low level of actual use. Students generally recognized the value of the library's resources, spaces, and staff support, especially for reading development, but many did not visit the library regularly. This suggests that the availability of resources alone does not guarantee regular use or strong engagement. The very low rate of library membership and the limited frequency of visits indicate a weak library culture within the selected school. This implies that, despite the presence of resources and supportive staff, students may not perceive the library as an integral part of their everyday learning practices. The disconnect between positive attitudes and actual usage mirrors international findings that passive provision of resources alone does not foster engagement; rather, integration into classroom activities, active promotion, and clear alignment with curriculum tasks are needed to encourage regular library use.

The findings also indicate that reading support appears stronger and more visible than writing support. Responses to the open-ended question suggest that students want dedicated library periods, more workshops, more active promotion, and a wider variety of books and resources. These suggestions point to the need for stronger integration of school libraries into classroom learning and daily school life, where librarians and teachers work together to design activities that support both reading and writing development.

8. Conclusion

This research investigated secondary stage students' perceptions of the role of school libraries in developing reading and writing skills in Kuwait. Using a questionnaire with 62 female students from one selected secondary stage school, the study found that although students recognize the importance of school libraries, actual usage remains limited. The findings highlight the need for stronger promotion, better visibility of services, and closer collaboration between librarians and teachers.

Future initiatives should focus on positioning the school library as an active part of the curriculum rather than a supplementary facility. This can be supported by integrating library resources into classroom activities, promoting regular library visits, strengthening staff support, and improving access to resources for both reading and writing.



For educational professionals, the findings underscore the importance of treating the school library as a collaborative partner in teaching rather than an optional add-on. Strengthening collaboration between librarians and teachers, investing in digital and print resources that support both reading and writing, and promoting structured programs such as dedicated library periods, workshops, and reading or writing competitions can help transform the library into an active learning hub. For policymakers and school leaders, the results highlight the value of funding, staffing, and policy frameworks that support sustained library-based literacy initiatives in Kuwaiti secondary schools.

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