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**EVALUATING LIBRARY RESOURCES IN NURSING AND  
ALLIED HEALTH INSTITUTES: COMPLIANCE WITH  
PAKISTAN NURSING COUNCIL STANDARDS IN KHYBER  
PAKHTUNKHWA**

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### Abstract

*The present paper assesses the level of library facilities and their adherence to Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) standards in the libraries of nursing and allied health sciences institutes in the state of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), in Pakistan. The information was gathered during my thesis research in MS and the paper was written under the instructions of my supervisor in research. The research design that was used quantitative descriptive research design where information on 40 library professionals in different institutions within the Malakand Division was used. The results show that (84.4 %) of the libraries are operated by competent professionals, but many of them have low standards of collection 1,500 books and at least 10 reference works per student seat based on the minimum collection required by PNC. The access to current research and evidence-based practice is also restricted as only 22.5 percent of the surveyed libraries subscribe to academic or scholarly journals. Also, only a quarter have sufficient reference collections implying that there is a great shortage in basic information resources that are vital to nursing and associated health education. On the aspect of technological integration, the outcomes indicate that 32.5 percent of libraries have undertaken at least some sort of library automation although most libraries continue to use manual systems to effect cataloging and circulation. Despite the fact that most institutions have access to the internet and computer facilities, they do not utilize all the resources because of the poor digital collections, poor e-resources through subscription plans, and poor technical infrastructure. All in all, the research finds that there exists a significant compliance gap between the practices in the present day libraries and the standards provided by the Pakistan Nursing Council. In order to improve the quality of academic programs and enable efficient teaching and learning, the paper suggests that more funds should be allocated to library development, more institutions should cooperate and share resources and modern digital devices and automated systems should be implemented. Enhancement of libraries in these locations is critical towards enhancing access to information and provision of high quality of nursing and allied health education in KP.*

**Keywords:** *Library resources, Nursing and allied health sciences colleges, Pakistan Nursing Council, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*

### Introduction

This study systematically examines library resources in nursing and allied health science institutes in the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Pakistan, with particular emphasis on compliance with the standards prescribed by the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC). The PNC establishes regulatory benchmarks for institutional libraries, including requirements related to physical and digital collections, qualified staffing, infrastructure, and library services that support teaching, learning, and research in health sciences education (Shah et al., 2021). Compliance with these standards is essential for institutional accreditation and for ensuring the quality and credibility of nursing and allied health education programs in Pakistan.

Academic libraries play a critical role in promoting information literacy, evidence-based practice, and research competencies among healthcare students (Ahmed & Khan, 2020). Despite their importance, many nursing and allied health institutes in KP face significant challenges in meeting PNC library requirements. Financial constraints are among the most persistent barriers, limiting institutions' capacity to update library collections and maintain subscriptions to current journals and electronic databases (Malik & Hussain, 2020). These limitations are more pronounced

in rural and under-resourced institutions, contributing to disparities in access to quality educational resources (Singh & Verma, 2018).

In addition to funding issues, uneven adoption of digital technologies further restricts effective library utilization. While contemporary academic libraries increasingly rely on electronic resources, many libraries in KP remain largely print-based due to inadequate technological infrastructure, unreliable internet connectivity, and insufficient staff training (Kaur & Sharma, 2017). This digital divide constrains students' access to current research literature and evidence-based clinical knowledge essential for modern healthcare education (Raza et al., 2019).

Physical infrastructure also influences library effectiveness. Insufficient study space, limited seating capacity, inadequate lighting, and inefficient organization systems reduce students' use of library resources and negatively affect learning outcomes (Malik & Hussain, 2020). Such infrastructural deficiencies are particularly evident in smaller and rural institutions, further exacerbating regional inequalities in educational support services.

According to updated PNC guidelines, accredited nursing and allied health institutes are required to maintain a dedicated library with adequate seating, ventilation, professional library staff, a minimum of 1,500 books, relevant reference materials, academic journals, and access to electronic resources (PNC, 2023). However, available evidence suggests that many institutions in KP do not fully meet these standards. Therefore, the present study assesses the extent of compliance with PNC library standards and identifies gaps in resources, digital access, staffing, and infrastructure. The findings aim to inform policy development and institutional planning to strengthen library services and enhance the quality of nursing and allied health education in the region.

### **Literature Review**

Libraries are integral to the education and professional development of nursing and allied health students. They provide access to diverse learning resources, including textbooks, journals, digital databases, and evidence-based materials, which are essential for both academic success and professional practice (Ahmed & Khan, 2020). The effective functioning of libraries ensures that students can engage with current research, develop critical thinking, and acquire competencies required for evidence-based practice. Several studies highlight the importance of academic libraries in healthcare education, emphasizing that access to high-quality information resources directly influences learning outcomes and research productivity (Raza, Ali, & Ahmed, 2019).

### **Library Compliance with PNC Standards**

Regulatory frameworks, such as the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) standards, play a crucial role in defining the minimum requirements for library resources in nursing and allied health institutes. These standards specify the need for adequate collections, access to electronic resources, qualified staff, and appropriate infrastructure to support teaching, learning, and research (Shah, Khan, & Rehman, 2021). Compliance with these standards ensures institutional accreditation and promotes quality education by facilitating evidence-based learning. Previous studies indicate that adherence to regulatory standards is often uneven across institutions, with urban institutes generally demonstrating higher levels of compliance compared to rural or under-resourced ones (Singh & Verma, 2018).

### **The Role of Libraries in Health Education**

Libraries are vital in facilitating evidence-based practice, research, and continuous learning in healthcare education. Nursing and allied health students rely on access to textbooks, journals, databases, and digital resources to develop competencies necessary for patient care and research (Ahmed & Khan, 2020). Libraries also contribute to critical thinking, information literacy, and lifelong learning skills. Globally, library infrastructure and staffing quality are considered central to educational effectiveness (Beyer et al., 2024; ALA, 2013). Studies in Pakistan (Jan, 2020; Haq, 2017) report that most academic libraries are under-resourced and face chronic issues such as

inadequate ICT tools, outdated facilities, and lack of automation. The Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) standards highlight library staffing and technology as key performance indicators for institutional accreditation. In developing countries, professional librarianship often lacks recognition in health sciences institutions (Husain & Al-Enezi, 2001). In Pakistan, most medical and nursing libraries depend on administrative personnel rather than trained LIS professionals, limiting user satisfaction and operational efficiency. Digital readiness—defined as the ability to adopt and manage digital tools and services—is particularly critical for bridging this gap (WHO, 2020).

## Regulatory Standards for Libraries in Pakistan

The Pakistan Nursing Council and other relevant authorities set minimum requirements for library resources, including:

- Adequate collections of textbooks and journals.
- Digital access to online databases and e-resources.
- Qualified and trained library staff.
- Proper infrastructure, including study spaces and cataloging systems.

Institutions failing to meet these standards may face accreditation challenges and negatively impact student outcomes (Shah et al., 2021).

## Previous Studies on educational Libraries

Research in South Asia indicates urban institutes typically have better-resourced libraries than rural counterparts, with disparities in digital access, staffing, and infrastructure (Singh & Verma, 2018). Studies in Pakistan confirm similar trends, highlighting challenges in rural and underfunded regions (Malik & Hussain, 2020). Research across South Asia and Africa highlights the persistent inadequacy of library collections and technology in medical and nursing institutions (Akintunde & Afolabi, 2014; Ikram ul Haq, 2017). Studies conducted in Pakistan (Jan, 2020; Anwar, 2014) demonstrate that budget constraints, shortage of professional librarians, and poor ICT infrastructure hinder service quality. According to PNC (2023), nursing libraries must provide dedicated seating for 30–50 students, updated resources, and access to digital databases such as the HEC Digital Library. However, compliance has not been systematically assessed in the province, necessitating an empirical investigation.

## Methodology

A quantitative descriptive survey design was used for this study. The information was collected during my MS research thesis, and also developed a research article under the guidance of my thesis supervisor. The study population consisted of 45 librarians working in nursing and allied health sciences colleges in the Malakand Division of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, total 40 librarians responded. Data were gathered using a structured questionnaire that was distributed to participants via email and WhatsApp. The questionnaire related to library accessibility, usability, and services, technology, and staff qualifications. The collected data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel, which was employed to generate descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages.

## Findings

### Staff Qualification

Most libraries (84.4 %) were run by qualified library professionals, though the majority had less than five years of experience (Table 1). Two libraries (5 %) were managed by non-professional staff.

**Table 1. Staff Qualifications in Nursing and Allied Health Science College Libraries (N = 40)**

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
AD-LIS	2	5 %
BLIS	1	2.5 %
BS-LIS	4	10 %
MLIS	25	62 %
MS/MPhil-LIS	6	15 %

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PhD-LIS	0	0 %
Other	2	5 %

## Availability of Printed Resources

Half of the libraries (50 %) met the PNC requirement of having at least 1,500 books, while the remaining (50%) fell short. Only (22.5%) subscribed to five or more academic journals, and (35%) had no subscriptions at all show in Table 2.

**Table 2. Availability of Printed Resources**

Resource Type	Adequate Availability (%)	Inadequate/None (%)
Books ( $\geq$ 1500)	50	50
Research Journals	22.5	77.5
Reference Books	25	75
Newspapers	83	17

## Digital and Technological Resources

Access to technology was relatively strong (90%) of libraries had (1–15) computers and (85%) had internet connectivity. However, only (32.5%) had adopted automation software.

## Physical Infrastructure

Only (55%) of libraries reported having standard furniture, and (47%) had sufficient seating capacity. Approximately (50%) provided separate offices for librarians, while (75%) had heating and cooling systems. Show in Table 3.

**Table 3. Physical Infrastructure in Nursing and Allied Health Science College Libraries**

Facility Type	Adequate Availability (%)	Not Available (%)
Standard furniture	55.5	44.5
Reading room seating	47.5	52.5
Librarian office	50	50
Heating and cooling	75	25
Cupboards/racks	62.5	37.5

The findings demonstrate that libraries generally lack modern physical layouts conducive to collaborative learning or extended study hours, a concern echoed in Anwar (2014).

## Digital and Technological Infrastructure

Digital resources and ICT tools were found to be available in varying degrees. Most libraries had computers (90%) and internet access (85%) but automation was implemented in (32%) only one-third of institutions. (45%) libraries lacked printers, scanners, and photocopy machines, which limited service delivery.

**Table 4**

## Availability of Technological Resources in Nursing and Allied Health Science College Libraries

Resource	Percentage Available
Internet access	85%
Printers	60%
Scanners/Photocopiers	65%
Library automation systems	32.5%

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While the basic technological setup is common, the integration of automation systems and resource management remains limited, hindering efficient operations and user engagement.

## **Accessibility and Usability of Table 1, 2, 3 and 4**

Two-thirds (67.5 %) of libraries had access to the Digital Library resources and approximately (70) had borrowing services that were open to students. The research also found a moderate position of library resources and infrastructure in institutions of nursing and allied health sciences. In terms of printed materials, 50% of the libraries (Pakistan Nursing Council PNC) had more than 1,500 books as required, and the other 50% had less than 1,500 books. It was found that only 22.5% of libraries subscribed to five or more academic journals with (35) not subscribing to any of the academic journals (Table 2). Digitally and technologically, access to technology was seen as relatively good with (90%) of libraries reported to have 1-15 computers and (85%), to have access to the internet, but (32.5) had embraced automation software, indicating a poor level of technological integration. The physical infrastructure conditions were also varied with (55%) of libraries being provided with standard furniture, 47% reported to have enough seating capacity, (50) separate office to librarians, and 75% of libraries had access to heating and cooling (Table 3). There was inconsistency with digital and ICT infrastructure, computers and access to the internet were very common, with only one in three (32) libraries having implemented automation systems and (45) having no necessary equipment like printers, scanners, and photocopiers. This low level of integration of technology and automation still disrupts the efficiency of operation, services delivery, and engagement of users in these academic libraries. In spite of these mechanisms, the majority of libraries had obsolete design that did not support collaborative learning and longer working hours, an issue that was also identified by Anwar (2014).

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results indicate an imbalanced allocation of resources development among the nursing libraries and other allied health science libraries in KP. Most of the institutions have competent personnel but the collections and facilities are below the standards of PNC. It is possible that students do not have access to relevant research literature that is crucial to clinical education and evidence-based practice, as the proportion of journals (22.5 percent) and reference books (25 percent) is low.

In agreement with Ikram ul Haq (2017) and Jan (2020), the results emphasize the fact that institutional negligence and financial constraints are the leading deterrents to compliance. Libraries are not considered as part of the nursing education, but rather as an addition. Moreover, the process of the integration of the technology is not fully accomplished despite the availability of internet (85%) because of poor maintenance, limited automation, and staff training. The research results suggest the partial adherence to PNC standards in regard to staffing, infrastructure, and digital preparedness. The fact that professionally trained librarians work in (84%) of libraries is a good improvement, but their experience and the absence of continuous improvement of professional skills make the services inferior. Dissatisfaction with salaries (57.5%) and lack of promotion processes discourages retention hence resulting into turnover and poor performance.

The lack of infrastructural facilities adequacy continues to exist with small institutional funding and decreased administrative focus on libraries. Lack of special reading areas and furniture of inferior quality hinder user comfort and interaction. The same can be said about technological adoption, although access to computers and the internet is not problematic, automation is more of a rarity, which is mostly because of the lack of sufficient funding and training.

This scenario is congruent with the national and international conclusions made before (Haider, 1998; Bloss et al., 2022), stating that digital transformation is a process that demands financial and human investments.

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The nursing colleges of KP are also staffed with librarians who have numerous administrative and academic functions, yet do not have access to resources to be creative with library processes or go digital.

The availability of HEC resources is good news in its own right but due to the disparate infrastructure coverage of colleges the access to learning is also uneven. The researchers also discovered that most libraries work with small budgets and lack individual library areas and security infrastructures, which is directly against the requirements of PNC (2023).

The research finds that although the college libraries in the field of nursing and the allied health sciences in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have achieved significant gains in staffing and basic access to ICT, they are still miles away in terms of full-fledged compliance with the Pakistan Nursing Council standards. The key shortcomings are small sets of books and journals, insufficient automation, and unproportioned access to the digital sphere. KP libraries of nursing and allied health sciences colleges show improvement in staffing but have structural and technological constraints that slow complete adherence to PNC standards. The following recommendations are suggested in order to increase efficiency and digital preparedness.

1. Increase funding towards development of libraries in order to comply with minimum resource requirements of PNC.
2. Enhance digital infrastructure by providing access to HEC and open access databases.
3. Train librarians on automation permanently and on digital literacy.
4. Provincial library consortium of nursing and health institutes to be developed to promote sharing of resources.
5. Implement ongoing LIS education to address the issues of digital literacy, and library automation.
6. Upgrade library facilities to conform to PNC seating, lighting and furniture needs.
7. Provide centralized funding of automation software, subscriptions of e-resources and integrated library management systems.
8. PNC must enforce compliance in the institutions through regular audits that dwell on the competency of staff and digital infrastructure.

It concludes that in the absence of strategic investment in technology and human capital, libraries will not be ready to support the changing needs of nursing education in Pakistan. These recommendations will benefit the nursing library in Pakistan to facilitate academic excellence and healthcare education in the country.

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