



**Bibliophobia and Its Effects on Library Patronage by Undergraduate Students of the
Faculty of Physical Sciences, Bayero University, Kano.**

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Abstract

This paper aimed to assess bibliophobia and its effects on library patronage by undergraduate students of the faculty of physical sciences, Bayero University, Kano. The study was specifically guided by three research questions, focusing on determining the prevalence of bibliophobia among Bayero University academic library users, how bibliophobia affects the frequency and pattern of library patronage among students, as well as the strategies to be implemented to mitigate bibliophobia and enhance library usage. A descriptive survey was employed, and data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The total population is five hundred and nineteen (519) Undergraduate Students of the Faculty of Physical Sciences, Bayero University, Kano. With a sample of 219 (42. %) drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. All 219 copies of the questionnaire distributed were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 100%. The data collected were analysed using simple percentages for clarity and ease of interpretation. The findings of this study indicate that the majority of the respondents reported feeling anxious about using the library and tended to avoid it unless necessary. Many respondents revealed that finding materials in the library is challenging,

making it a strong cause of avoidance and anxiety in using the library. Many respondents indicated that they rely more on lecture notes and internet sources than library books. Based on these findings, the study recommended that university management should provide an Enhanced Library Orientation program, organise periodic user education programs to strengthen students' information literacy and reduce anxiety associated with library use, Librarians should increase one-on-one assistance and user-friendly signage to make information retrieval easier for students, and Libraries should harmonize digital platforms with physical holdings to appeal to tech-inclined students while retaining traditional academic rigour.

Keywords: Bibliophobia, effect, Faculty of Physical Sciences, Bayero University, Kano, library patronage, undergraduate students

Introduction

Bibliophobia refers to an irrational fear, anxiety, or strong aversion toward books and reading activities, which can lead individuals to avoid engaging with written materials and academic texts, thereby affecting learning and academic performance (Liu, 2025; Oreagba & Lasisi, 2024). It often manifests in behaviours such as reluctance to read lengthy or complex texts, discomfort with library resources, and reliance on simplified materials like summaries or lecture notes rather than full academic sources. This condition is closely linked to factors such as low reading ability, limited information literacy skills, negative past reading experiences, and a lack of confidence in handling academic materials. In educational settings, particularly in Universities, bibliophobia can significantly hinder students' ability to conduct independent research, develop critical thinking skills, and fully engage with course content. Consequently, it not only affects students' interaction with library services but also limits their academic achievement and overall intellectual development.

Books are almost everywhere, and it's difficult to avoid them in everyday life. Bibliophobia can cause significant stress and even physical symptoms of unease. The condition can affect a person's education, social experiences and career path.

Bibliophobia is an intense, irrational fear of books, reading, or being around books, which causes significant anxiety and avoidance behaviors in affected individuals. This condition can have

several negative effects on libraries. Bibliophobia is a phobia of reading books, causing anxiety or panic, and a fear or hatred towards learning or reading books.

Academic libraries act as vital centres for learning, providing students with access to books, journals, and digital resources essential for academic achievement. Nonetheless, some students experience bibliophobia, a fear or dislike of books and reading, which can hinder their interaction with educational materials (Nyambaka, 2025). Bibliophobia may manifest as avoidance of the library, hesitation in handling reading materials, or feelings of anxiety when confronted with complex texts, ultimately impacting academic performance and intellectual growth (Oreagba & Lasis, 2020). At Bayero University, the academic library is central to supporting students' research and learning needs. However, preliminary observations suggest that some students shy away from frequenting the library or limit their use of reading materials due to feelings of intimidation, overwhelm, or lack of confidence in reading (Chihaya, 2025). Such behavior presents challenges for librarians who aim to cultivate a culture of reading and active resource utilization.

Understanding bibliophobia within the context of academic libraries is therefore essential. Investigating its causes, effects, and prevalence among students can help library management develop interventions such as reading orientation programs, user-friendly resource layouts, and personalized support that encourage engagement with academic materials. Moreover, examining bibliophobia contributes to broader discussions in library and information science about enhancing user engagement, promoting literacy, and reducing barriers to information access (Liu, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries are intended to be dynamic centres of learning, providing students with access to a wide range of resources essential for academic success. Ideally, these spaces should be welcoming and supportive, encouraging students to engage confidently with books and other academic materials. However, at many institutions, including Bayero University, some students show reluctance to use library resources. This avoidance has been linked to bibliophobia, a fear or aversion to reading, which can lead to reduced library patronage, limited engagement with research materials, and diminished academic performance (Chihaya 2025).

Preliminary observations by the researchers at Bayero University indicate that some students feel intimidated or anxious when approaching the library, often perceiving it as overwhelming or unapproachable. Such attitudes result in the underutilization of resources and limit opportunities

for developing critical thinking and information literacy skills. Studies have shown that a fear of reading and low library engagement can negatively impact students' academic outcomes and their overall learning experience (Cleveland, 2024).

This study, therefore, seeks to examine bibliophobia and its impact on library patronage among Bayero University Library users, with the intention of understanding how the fear of books influences library use.

Research Objectives

1. To determine the prevalence of bibliophobia among Bayero University library users.
2. To examine the impact of bibliophobia on students' library patronage and engagement.
3. To recommend strategies for reducing bibliophobia and promoting effective use of academic library resources

Research Questions

1. What is the prevalence of bibliophobia among Bayero University academic library users?
2. How does bibliophobia affect the frequency and pattern of library patronage among students?
3. What strategies can be implemented to mitigate bibliophobia and enhance library use?

Review of Related Literature

Prevalence refers to the extent to which a particular condition, behavior, or phenomenon occurs within a specific population at a certain point in time or over a defined period. It is often expressed as a percentage or proportion, showing how widespread the issue is.

In this study, prevalence refers to how common bibliophobia is among students of the Faculty of Physical Sciences at Bayero University and its relationship with library patronage. A higher prevalence of bibliophobia may lead to reduced visits, limited use of resources, and lower engagement with academic library services, directly affecting students' library patronage and learning outcomes.

Several studies were carried out on the prevalence of bibliophobia among library users. For example, DoveMed (2024) conducted a study among 244 undergraduate students at the University of Peshawar and found that the perceived intimidating attitude of library staff contributed to students avoiding library resources, which in turn affected their academic performance. Similarly,

Merriam (2024) surveyed 150 undergraduates and reported that both personal factors, such as limited information literacy skills, and institutional factors, including unfamiliarity with library systems, were major contributors to library anxiety, hindering students' effective use of library materials. Oreagba and Lasisi (2024) further highlighted that library anxiety was particularly prevalent among male students, non-native English speakers, and those experiencing high academic stress, noting that bibliographic instruction could help alleviate anxiety and encourage library engagement. In the context of medical sciences universities, Julianti et al (2022) found that students exhibited moderate levels of library anxiety, largely due to perceived complexity of library resources and lack of familiarity with library systems, which negatively influenced their willingness to utilize library services. Additionally, Nieves and Sweeney (2022) identified that 'at-risk' students, those with low self-confidence and higher anxiety, were more likely to experience library anxiety, resulting in decreased patronage and limited engagement with academic resources. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that bibliophobia is a prevalent issue among academic students, affecting their frequency of library use, engagement with resources, and overall academic performance. The findings underscore the need for academic libraries to implement strategies such as user-friendly layouts, supportive staff interactions, and bibliographic instruction programs to reduce anxiety and promote effective library patronage.

Impact of bibliophobia on students' library patronage and engagement.

Bibliophobia has been shown to directly influence the frequency and pattern of students' use of academic libraries. Studies indicate that students experiencing fear or anxiety toward books often avoid library spaces, limit consultations of resources, and underutilize digital and print materials, which negatively impacts their learning outcomes. For example, Hasanah et al (2024) found that students at the University of Peshawar avoided approaching library staff or using certain resources due to fear of judgment, leading to lower engagement with academic materials.

Oreagba and Lasisi (2024) similarly reported that students with higher levels of library anxiety were less likely to seek help, borrow books, or use journals, demonstrating a clear link between bibliophobia and reduced library patronage. Buttressing this, Ejiroghene and Onyekachi (2024) emphasized that anxiety influenced not only the quantity of library use but also the quality of engagement, with affected students often failing to explore key resources needed for research and coursework. In a study of medical sciences students, Afolayan (2022) found that library anxiety

caused some students to avoid research assignments or use shortcuts, limiting their exposure to essential academic resources.

Furthermore, Adekunle and Ajiboye. (2023) highlighted that ‘at-risk’ students characterized by low self-confidence and high academic anxiety were less likely to visit the library frequently or engage deeply with reading materials. These findings collectively indicate that bibliophobia reduces library patronage by affecting both the frequency and depth of students’ interactions with academic library resources. Addressing this issue through interventions such as orientation programs, user-friendly library layouts, and supportive staff engagement has been shown to improve students’ comfort levels and encourage more regular and meaningful library use.

Strategies for reducing bibliophobia and promoting effective use of academic library resources

Several studies have examined interventions aimed at reducing bibliophobia and promoting effective library patronage among students. Orientation programs and bibliographic instruction have been widely recognized as effective strategies. Adeeko and Adetimirin (2022) noted that structured library instruction sessions, which familiarize students with library systems, resources, and research procedures, significantly reduced library anxiety and increased students’ confidence in using academic resources. Similarly, Afolayan, O. M. (2022) emphasized that teaching information literacy skills helped students navigate the library more efficiently, decreasing avoidance behaviors and encouraging consistent use of both print and digital materials.

The role of supportive and approachable library staff has also been highlighted. Ayeni (2023) found that students were more likely to engage with library resources when staff were perceived as friendly, approachable, and patient, indicating that positive human interactions can alleviate the fear associated with library use. Additionally, Hasanah et al (2024) suggested that designing user-friendly library layouts, providing clear signage, and organizing materials in a logical, accessible manner helped reduce students’ anxiety, making the library environment less intimidating.

Mohammed (2024) emphasized personalized support for ‘at-risk’ students, including mentoring, guided tours, and one-on-one assistance, as a critical factor in reducing library avoidance. Collectively, these studies indicate that a combination of instructional interventions, supportive staff engagement, and accessible library design can effectively mitigate bibliophobia and enhance

library patronage. Implementing these strategies can help academic libraries foster a more inclusive environment that encourages students to utilize available resources fully and confidently. This shows that bibliophobia is common among academic students and can significantly reduce library patronage. Students experiencing this fear often avoid library spaces, use fewer resources, and engage less with both print and digital materials, negatively affecting their academic performance. Studies also suggest that interventions such as library orientation programs, information literacy instruction, supportive staff interactions, and user-friendly library layouts can help reduce bibliophobia and encourage greater library use.

However, there is limited research on how bibliophobia specifically affects library patronage among students in Nigerian universities, particularly those in the Faculty of Physical Sciences at Bayero University, Kano. This study aims to address that gap by examining its prevalence, impact, and potential strategies to enhance library engagement.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive hybrid survey design, which is well-suited for identifying user patterns and challenges in library research. (Moyer and Goral, 2021). The approach enabled the systematic collection of quantitative data while ensuring respondent anonymity, thereby encouraging honest feedback. (Christopher and Udoh, 2020). The study's target population comprised all undergraduate students in the faculty of physical sciences at Bayero University, Kano. These include the Department of Mathematical Sciences, Pure and Industrial Chemistry, Biological Sciences, Microbiology, Physics, and Plant Biology. Because they are supposed to be regular library users for their academic and research work. Yet, their low level of library use draws the attention of the researchers to investigate the reasons behind the poor patronage and how it affects their learning and research activities. The total population is five hundred and nineteen (519), with a sample of 219 (42.%) drawn using the Krejcie and Morgan table, a method still widely endorsed in social science research and particularly recommended in African academic contexts (IFLA, 2024). A simple random sampling technique was adopted to give all participants equal chances of selection, which improved generalizability.

Data was collected using a self-administered questionnaire featuring closed-ended and Likert-scale items. The instrument was guided by established information behaviour frameworks and adapted from validated tools in current studies. (Mwantimwa et al., 2021). Content validity was ensured

through face validation by three professional librarians and a methodology expert. (Yudhistir, 2022). To address internet connectivity challenges, the questionnaire was distributed both online and in print, in line with recommended practices for hybrid data collection in low-bandwidth environments (World Bank, 2025). Online distribution through email and WhatsApp platforms reflected contemporary communication practices in Nigerian universities, improving accessibility and response rates (Shikalepo, 2020).

Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, frequencies, percentages, and mean scores on a 5-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree = 5 to Strongly Disagree = 1). Oriogu and Oriogu (2021) believe that this approach remains reliable for summarising behavioural trends and has been validated in recent investigations of student information. The use of mean scores further allowed for a nuanced interpretation of search patterns and challenges.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 219 questionnaires were used for the study. The data are presented in tables and analysed in line with the study's specific objectives and research questions.

Table 1

Research Question 1:**What is the prevalence of bibliophobia among Bayero University academic library users?**

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
I feel anxious when I think about using the library.	51	63	46	40	19	3.52
I avoid visiting the library unless necessary.	56	66	41	36	20	3.58
I feel uncomfortable when I have to consult books for research.	46	51	56	45	21	3.23
I believe library resources are difficult to understand or use.	36	61	51	46	25	3.04
I often prefer digital sources over physical books to avoid using the library.	61	56	41	31	30	3.53

This result has revealed that bibliophobia is moderately common among undergraduates at Bayero University. Many Students revealed feeling anxious about using the library and tended to avoid it unless necessary. Other Students, on the other hand, also expressed discomfort when consulting books for research, while the remaining found library resources difficult to access or use. Additionally, a significant number preferred digital sources over physical books, reflecting a coping strategy to limit their use of libraries. Overall, these findings suggest that anxiety, avoidance, and reliance on digital alternatives are key indicators of bibliophobia among the students. This was confirmed by the study of Ismail and Ahmad (2021), which revealed that bibliophobia may hinder students' academic performance by limiting their access to essential library resources, reducing study time, weakening research skills, and leading to over-dependence on digital sources. This can result in less comprehensive academic work and lower overall achievement.

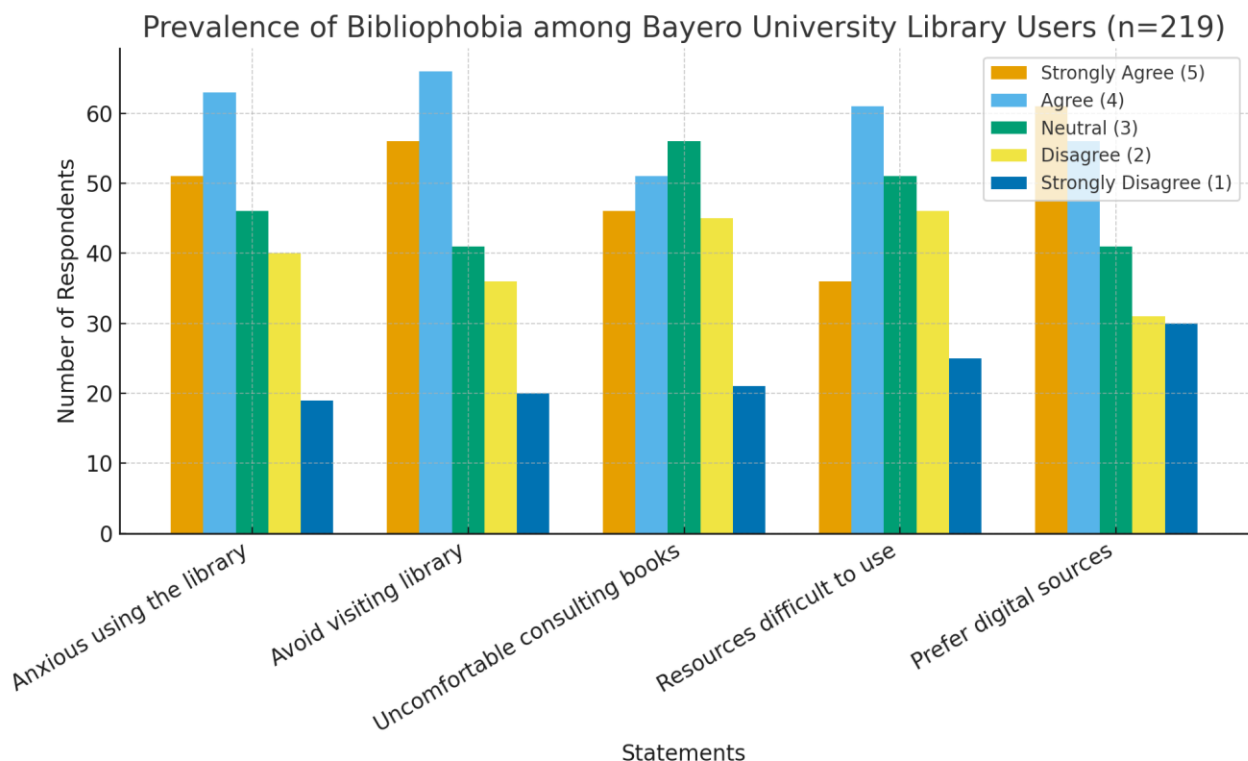


Table 2

Research Question 2:

What are the causes of bibliophobia among Bayero University academic library users?

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
I find it difficult to locate materials in the library.	60	70	40	30	19	3.62
I do not understand how to use library resources effectively.	55	65	45	30	24	3.53
Limited guidance from library staff makes research stressful.	50	60	50	35	24	3.39
The large volume of information in the library overwhelms me.	48	57	55	40	19	3.36
I prefer digital sources over books because library use is stressful.	61	63	40	28	27	3.55

Data presented in the above table revealed several factors contributing to bibliophobia among students. Many Students reported that finding materials in the library is challenging, making it a strong cause of avoidance and anxiety. They also indicated difficulty in using library resources effectively, which adds to their discomfort when conducting research. Other factors included limited guidance from library staff and feeling overwhelmed by the large volume of information available, both of which increase stress during library use. Additionally, a significant number of students preferred digital sources to physical books to avoid the stress associated with library use. Overall, these findings suggest that both structural challenges in the library and personal difficulties with resource use drive bibliophobia among the respondents. Limiting access to the library resources hinders students' academic performance by reducing research quality and increasing reliance on digital sources, which may lower confidence and overall academic achievement Lawal and Onakoya, 2016).

Table 3

Research Question 3:

What are the effects of bibliophobia on the academic work of Bayero University students?

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
I submit assignments late due to limited use of the library.	50	65	45	35	24	3.44
Bibliophobia affects the quality of my research work.	55	60	40	35	29	3.48
I rely more on lecture notes and internet sources than library books.	62	63	35	28	31	3.55
My academic performance is negatively affected by avoiding the library.	58	61	40	30	30	3.52
I feel less confident in academic tasks that require library research.	54	59	45	35	26	3.45

The result has shown that bibliophobia has notable effects on students' academic work. Many students indicated that they rely more on lecture notes and internet sources than library books and that avoiding the library negatively affects their academic performance, showing clear academic consequences. Other effects included late submission of assignments, reduced quality of research work, and lower confidence in tasks requiring library research. Overall, these findings suggest that bibliophobia not only limits students' engagement with library resources but also impacts the quality, timeliness, and confidence in their academic work. Bibliophobia affects the respondents by limiting their use of library resources, leading to over-reliance on lecture notes and digital sources, reduced quality of research, delayed assignment submission, and lower confidence in academic tasks requiring library engagement (Dilinika, 2023).

Summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations

Summary of the findings

1. The majority of the respondents reported feeling anxious about using the library and tended to avoid it unless necessary.
2. Many respondents revealed that finding materials in the library is challenging, making it a strong cause of avoidance and anxiety in using the library.
3. Many respondents indicated that they rely more on lecture notes and internet sources than library books

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes that bibliophobia remains a growing concern among undergraduate students at Bayero University, Kano. Both psychological and structural factors shape the condition; students' anxiety toward library environments, limited search skills, and inadequate staff support all contribute to avoidance behaviors. The consequences of this fear extend beyond mere library use, influencing students' research output, learning habits, and confidence in academic work. Addressing bibliophobia, therefore, requires a combined effort from librarians, faculty members, and university administrators to create a more supportive, user-friendly, and skill-oriented library environment.

Recommendations

Recommendations were made based on the findings of the study, in which libraries are recommended to;

1. Organize regular orientation programs: The university library should organise periodic user education programs, such as virtual tours and peer-mentored orientation sessions.

To strengthen students' information literacy and reduce anxiety associated with library use, such programs should be conducted in the information literacy and multimedia units and the ICT department of the university library.

2. Provide Staff Guidance: Librarians should increase one-on-one assistance and user-friendly signage to make information retrieval easier for students. Such programs include hands-on workshops, train-the-trainer interactive sessions and other career-boasting activities for professional development for the library staff.

3. Integration of Digital and Physical Resources: Libraries should harmonize digital platforms with physical holdings to appeal to tech-inclined students while retaining traditional academic rigour, such as social media platforms, including telegrams or WhatsApp, etc., to engage the students with intellectual information resources in their areas of study.

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