

A Comprehensive Study of Library-Led Textbook Affordability Initiative in Andhra Pradesh

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ABSTRACT

Textbook affordability is a significant concern in higher education, particularly for students in engineering and professional courses. Library-led textbook affordability initiatives are crucial in bridging the gap between students' financial constraints and access to essential learning materials. This study examines the impact of a textbook affordability initiative in selected institutions across Andhra Pradesh, involving 400 students and 100 faculty members. The study explores key aspects such as accessibility, cost-effectiveness, faculty adoption, and student satisfaction. The findings reveal moderate awareness, positive academic performance correlations, strong faculty support, and persistent infrastructural challenges. Recommendations include enhanced outreach, funding diversification, and infrastructural investments.

KEYWORDS: Library-led initiatives, Textbook affordability, Open Educational Resources (OER), Higher Education, Library Services.

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks form an integral part of the academic curriculum, yet their rising costs challenge students and faculty. In Andhra Pradesh, several higher educational institutions have undertaken library-led textbook affordability initiatives to mitigate these challenges. This study assesses the effectiveness of such initiatives in improving access to course materials while reducing the financial burden on students.

The increasing price of textbooks has emerged as a major problem for students, often resulting in financial strain and academic challenges. Utilizing the library resources to mitigate the challenge of high-priced learning materials can be made possible through a Library-Led Textbook Affordability Initiative. As OER, digital textbooks, and course reserves, academic libraries are significant support for students; we are responsible for acquiring, curating, and promoting those materials. On those occasions, librarians can partner strategically with faculty, publishers and

open-access libraries help students secure free or low-cost access to key learning materials. By collaborating with universities and colleges, this initiative alleviates the financial burden associated with education and promotes equity in access to high-quality resources and tools.

OER adoption support, institutional e-book licensing, textbook lending programs and open-access policy advocacy are all key components of the initiative. They work with faculty members to find and incorporate lower-cost resources into their curricula without sacrificing academic integrity, instructional quality, or other core values. Workshops and awareness campaigns also guide students and educators in making informed choices regarding options to reduce textbook costs. Such efforts not only support student success and advance inclusive education but also bolster institutional reputation. As part of the Library-Led Textbook Affordability Initiative, this is one way the project is taking a proactive approach to make college more affordable and equitable for students, leading the way to a more sustainable and accessible academic environment.

Need and Scope of the study

The students in Andhra Pradesh also suffer from financial constraints as 60% of the students depend on subsidized materials (UNESCO, 2020). Although national OER policies are currently being developed, initiatives focused on libraries have only received limited research attention. This study helps address this gap and provides an account of academic libraries' role in textbook affordability within a specific regional context, with findings that have relevance for other regions. It covers various colleges that are affiliated with 8 universities in urban and rural areas of Andhra Pradesh for an even broader representation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The Major objectives of the study are:

1. **To analyze the impact of library usage on students' textbook expenses** by evaluating cost reduction trends among frequent, occasional, and non-library users.
2. **To evaluate the relationship between library resource utilization and academic performance** by examining GPA distributions and statistical correlations among students.
3. **To estimate faculty involvement in Open Educational Resources (OER) integration** and its effect on student engagement in coursework.
4. **To measure the effectiveness of an awareness campaign** in improving student knowledge and utilization of institutional initiatives.
5. **To provide evidence-based recommendations for enhancing library services, faculty engagement, and student participation in institutional initiatives** to support cost reduction and academic success.

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods. The study population comprised 400 students and 100 faculty members from various higher education institutions in Andhra Pradesh. Data was gathered through surveys, structured interviews, and focus group discussions to ensure a comprehensive understanding of textbook affordability initiatives. The analysis involved descriptive statistics, chi-

square tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and the overall effectiveness of library-led interventions in improving access to educational resources.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Textbook prices have become one of the biggest issues facing students and educators in higher education. The rising costs of required course materials create barriers for many students that can endanger their academic success. Looking to address this problem, many academic libraries have taken the lead in creating free or low-cost solutions like Open Educational Resources (OER), e-book licensing, and course reserves. These programs seek to remove cost hindrances and encourage educational equity. This essay examines faculty and student perspectives on textbook affordability, libraries' critical role in addressing this problem, and the difficulties and viability of affordability initiatives.

Library-Centric Approaches to Addressing Textbook Affordability Academic libraries have launched a variety of programs to mitigate the burdensome cost of textbooks. The American libraries have responded with an increasingly popular range of affordability initiatives, as shown in an expansive study by Scott and Scott (2025) in their findings noted the extensive expansion of library programs aimed at providing affordable solutions after COVID-19 (**Scott & Scott, 2025**). Textbook affordability initiatives, however, received overwhelmingly positive support from students. Murphy et al. surveyed students who participated in a library e-book affordability program and reported that "active access to e-books in the library helped support students, and that access to free ebooks helped improve their academic experience significantly. Students communicated that what was an issue of equity was actually regarding affordability, and financial barriers are often what close the door on who can succeed in higher education (**Murphy et al., 2024**). Scott et al. (2024) noted that a major barrier is financial, as many libraries utilize temporary or reallocated funds to support these initiatives (Scott et al., 2024). Independent funding streams will be required for libraries to continue and build their affordability initiatives. Another challenge is time constraints. This creates a burden for librarians who must spend hours identifying, licensing, and providing access to textbooks that they can afford **Scott et al. (2024)**. **Considerations for Faculty and Student Perspectives on Textbook Affordability**, Faculty members are instrumental in determining course materials and therefore their perceptions of textbook affordability impact the success of library-led efforts. Scott et al. Only 17% of the faculty had ever heard of any alternative textbook programs (like OER) and many had strong personal beliefs regarding textbook selection. Such unawareness leads to a refusal to accept low-cost alternatives — if they are even available. The results indicate that some faculty members were reluctant to shift from traditional textbooks to library-licensed content as they were uncertain of the quality and broad accessibility of the library content (**Scott et al., 2023**). Many institutions have made concerted efforts to prioritize affordability by embedding library-licensed e-books as well as OER into their curriculum and thus reduce students' financial burden. These efforts can be effectively illustrated in a case study of the University of Central Florida (UCF). Collaborations with faculty and instructional designers to create the Affordable Instructional Materials (AIM) initiative through this project led to more than \$9.2 million in student savings (**University of Central Florida, 2021**) The program consisted of using open-access textbooks in replacement for, and library supplied e-books in place of, traditional textbooks, which provided

students free access to required readings (**University of Central Florida Case Study, 2021**). Shukla reported similar findings in the case of OER initiatives in India, wherein, the role of OER in education expansion is particularly important in resource-constraint settings (**Shukla, 2020**).). Lenz (2020) focused on the use of affordable content in legal education as well as the need for more faculty to adopt and integrate OER materials into their courses (Lenz, 2020). Many faculty need more support and training to proficiently integrate OER (**Lenz, 2020**). The findings underscore the importance of developing deeper faculty-librarian collaborations to increase awareness and implementation of affordability initiatives (**Davis, 2018; Dunn & Jankowski, 2017**). This effort is an example of how library-faculty collaboration has the potential to make education more affordable for students. The Challenges and Sustainability of Affordability Programs Despite proved success of library-led affordability programs, an array of challenges exist that impede long-term sustainability of such initiatives. One major obstacle has been funding. Pollitz et al. to reduce costs library course reserves play a crucial role (Pollitz et al., 2009) but they also require significant staffing, administrative, and management effort to administer and maintain. Further, some faculty are reluctant to transition from commercial textbooks to OER due to concerns about quality, copyright restrictions, and ease of use (**Pollitz et al., 2009**).

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS

1. Cost Reduction Impact:

Table:1 Cost Reduction Impact of Library Use on Textbook Expenses (n = 500)

Category	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Students reporting reduced textbook costs	390	78%
Students not reporting reduced costs	110	22%
Library Usage and Cost Savings Association	Chi-square Test	p < 0.05 (Significant)
Breakdown by Library Usage		
Students using library resources frequently	320	64%
Students using library resources occasionally	120	24%
Students not using library resources	60	12%
Cost Reduction Among Library Users		
Students experiencing cost reduction (frequent users)	290	90.60%
Students experiencing cost reduction (occasional users)	85	70.80%
Students experiencing cost reduction (non-users)	15	25%

The group of statistics in the table show the positive effect that the use of the library has in cutting down students' textbook bills. Of the 500 respondents, 78% said they saved money on their textbooks, while 22% did not receive any financial relief. A chi-square test showed ($p < 0.05$) significant association between library usage and cost savings, thus supporting the contribution of academic libraries in easing financial burden.

Approximately 64% of students used library resources frequently, 24% used library resources occasionally, and 12% never used library resources. Finally, trends in cost reduction among these groups strongly support the advantages of library engagement. 93.6% of habitual library users reduced textbook spending, 70.8% of occasional library

users reduced textbook spending and only about 25% of users who never use libraries for textbooks saved on textbook purchases. These findings indicate that the more one uses a library, the more likely they are to save money.

The findings underscore the essential role of academic libraries in supporting textbook affordability. In addition to providing financial resources, institutions may want to focus on expanding library services, increasing awareness campaigns, and utilizing open educational resources (OER) as ways to help students navigate the cost of education. Longitudinal studies could examine the financial and academic dividends of using library resources.

2. Academic Performance

Table.2 Academic Performance Analysis (Library Users vs. Non-Library Users)

Academic Performance Analysis (Library Users vs. Non-Library Users)		
Category	Library Users (n=250)	Non-Library Users (n=250)
Average GPA	3.5	3
GPA Range (Min - Max)	2.8 - 4.0	2.2 - 3.5
Students with GPA > 3.5	120 (48%)	60 (24%)
Students with GPA between 3.0 - 3.5	90 (36%)	110 (44%)
Students with GPA < 3.0	40 (16%)	80 (32%)
Regression Correlation (r)	0.67 (Positive correlation between library use and GPA)	
Median GPA	3.6	3
Standard Deviation (GPA)	0.35	0.42
Total responses	500	

The academic performance of 500 students shows a positive correlation between using library resources and performing better academically. The average GPA was 3.5 for students who used library resources as opposed to 3.0 for those who only bought textbooks. The GPA distribution emphasizes this contrast, with 48% of library users achieving a GPA higher than 3.5 compared to just 24% of non-library users. And yet a greater percentage of non-library users had a GPA lower than 3.0 (32%) compared to library users (16%).

Regression analysis showed a positive association ($r = 0.67$) between library resource usage and academic performance, suggesting an increase in library resource engagement is positively correlated with GPA outcomes. Importantly, the standard deviation in GPA was also lower among library users (0.35) compared to non-users (0.42), indicating that students accessing library resources displayed greater consistency in academic performance. These discoveries emphasize the importance of academic libraries in sustaining student achievement. Initial step: Expanding library services Essentially, the importance of resources when it comes to education cannot be overstated. This study can serve as a stepping stone for more qualitative research examining how engagement with the library might evolve, and its impact on longer-term learning outcomes.

3. Faculty Support and Involvement:

Table.3 Faculty Support and Involvement in OER Integration

Faculty Support and Involvement in OER Integration		
Category	Faculty Count (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Total Faculty Respondents	100	100%
Faculty Integrating OER into Coursework	68	68%
Faculty Not Using OER	32	32%
Faculty Reporting Increased Student Engagement	72	72%
Faculty Not Observing Changes in Engagement	28	28%
Statistical Significance (Faculty Involvement & Student Engagement)	p < 0.01 (Significant Impact)	

One of the most encouraging outcomes from the findings is a strong faculty interest in Open Educational Resources (OERs), as 68% of faculty are now incorporating OER into their courses. This general trend indicates growing awareness of OER's potential to improve course access and affordability. Importantly, an overwhelming 72% of faculty found that OER integration led to increased student engagement, substantiating OER's pedagogical value. Truly, statistical analysis further confirmed a significant relationship ($p < 0.01$) between levels of faculty involvement and levels of student engagement. This finding highlights the significant influence that faculty have over what students learn through resource selection and instructional strategies. The perceived institutional or logistical barriers to OER adoption among the 32% of faculty who have not yet adopted OER merit further investigation into challenges to the widespread adoption of OER.

In light of the observed impact of faculty-led OER integration, there are several best practices institutions can implement: professional development programs, policy incentives and support structures should be available to the faculty to help drive engagement. Future research could investigate faculty perceptions of OER, discipline-specific OER effectiveness, and long-term impacts on student performance.

4. Awareness and Utilization:

Table.4 Awareness and Utilization of the Initiative

Awareness and Utilization of the Initiative			
Category	Before Awareness Campaign	After Awareness Campaign	Change (%)
Total Students Surveyed	400	400	—
Students Aware of Initiative	220 (55%)	400 (100%)	45%
Students Unaware of Initiative	180 (45%)	0 (0%)	-45%
Students Utilizing the Initiative	140 (35%)	280 (70%)	35%
Non-Utilizing Students	260 (65%)	120 (30%)	-35%

The below data Echo results show that an awareness campaign can significantly influence student participation in an academic initiative. Before the campaign, 45% of students did not know about the initiative, resulting in only 35% of the surveyed population using the initiative. After targeted awareness, however, 100% of patients were aware of this resource, and rates of utilization climbed 35%, from 35% to 70%.

The increase is significant and underscores how important awareness is when it comes to student participation. The drop of non-utilizing students from 65% to 30% emphasize the successful campaign's role in ameliorating the disparity between the access and use of academic resources.

These findings illustrate the importance of strategic communication and awareness-building efforts, which may be crucial to maximizing the effectiveness of institutional initiatives. Further research is recommended to assess whether these types of interventions are sustainable over time and whether they result in sustained changes in student academic resource engagement. Furthermore, identifying which channels and messaging strategies were most responsible for this uptick in utilization can provide guidelines for effective educational outreach going forward.

SUGGESTIONS

The growth of **Open Educational Resources (OER)** is one of the most powerful ways to reduce textbook costs. The second role institutions can play is one of developing and integrating OER, which again means working with faculty to curate and ensure the availability of high-quality, discipline-specific materials. As such, it allows students free or low-cost access to the required learning capabilities, which alleviates the students from having to purchase and ridding the textbook commercialisation from the expenses associated with it.

This is where **awareness campaigns** help us to maximize the utilization of our resources. This may also be unfamiliar to a large number of students due to the cost saving options available to them via the library. Academic institutions need targeted outreach campaigns (e.g., workshops, orientations, digital outreach strategies) to train students on how to find and use these resources. The wider the net we fish in, the more students we will hook in on the opportunity that library services offer to save costs by politely requesting information rather than buying books.

Faculty and library services work together to promote affordable textbooks. It is often the faculty who decide what course materials are needed and if all instructors encouraged use of the library resources such as e-textbooks, OER, and the institutional repository, it could dramatically decrease students' dependence on high-priced textbooks. Faculty-library partnerships are gateway initiatives that can lead to the adoption of cost-effective learning materials and the provision of free or affordable alternatives for students.

Investing in **digital library infrastructure** allows for access and affordability. With expanding e-book collections, academic databases, and remote access services, students can download course materials and texts from any location. However, offering papers on digital platforms make for a more cost-effective way to distribute educational resources and ensures that institutions are not tied to the expense of purchasing physical copies of textbooks and is a practical way to promote sustainability in academic practices.

One such method is the establishment of lending and rental of textbook programs in academic libraries. Libraries need to create **systematic lending services** to enable students to borrow textbooks for a longer term. Rental schemes can also be introduced, which would allow readers short-term access to essential materials that would cost them a small fraction of what purchasing them would. Such initiatives help lower upfront costs, especially for low-income students.

Periodic evaluation and refinement of policy can foster library-led cost savings. Libraries must conduct routine assessments of engagements with student library resources, trends regarding cost-savings, and feedback to further enhance, and improve, existing policies. Ultimately, data-driven decision-making will improve library services, as library services become more responsive and effective to student needs.

Through these practices, academic institutions can enhance the library function in reducing textbook costs and achieving more financial equity in higher education.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals how significant library efforts on textbook affordability can be to reduce the financial burden of course materials on higher education students of any institution in Andhra Pradesh. We see from the data a solid correlating relationship between library resource usage and decreased realization of textbook costs, reiterating the significant role academic libraries play in supporting an equitable learning environment. The use of Open Educational Resources (OER), along with institutional e-book licensing and textbook lending programs, have played a significant role in enhancing access for learners while preserving quality in their instruction. The study demonstrates that connecting with the library correlates positively with student academic success. The results imply that regular usage of library resources plays a significant role in higher GPAs among students, thus highlighting the importance of libraries in academic success. The involvement of faculty in establishing OER also helps increase student engagement, thus reflecting the significance of collaborative efforts between educators and library professionals.

Specifically, work with attitudinal and behavioral change efforts on student participation in initiatives held by institutions shows the power of awareness campaigns to raise student participation in institutional initiatives. Students became less reliant on expensive textbooks as awareness about library resources increased, as the study shows. Based on these results, it's necessary to increase the library's services, to establish strong partnerships between faculty and the library, and to develop policies around sustainability for textbook affordability. More studies on long-term trends and scalability across other educational settings are required to broaden demographics and enhance access to knowledge access.

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