

Original Article

The Correlation between Library Resources and Services Utilization and the Academic Performance among Students of the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies

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Abstract

Theological libraries provide resources and services that support the students' academic, research, and formative development. This study examines the association of library resources and services with the academic performance of students of the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS). The study employed a convergent-parallel approach, including surveys, interviews, and direct observation of 57 IFRS students. Results revealed that library resources and services significantly influenced students' academic performance and formative development. Moreover, the IFRS students are generally satisfied with the quality of print and digital resources in the library. Furthermore, library services such as reference, circulation, use of library space, digital library services, printing and photocopying, and library information literacy program reported high utilization, indicating students' active involvement in library programs and services. The IFRS students occasionally use the OPAC service and computer and internet service, while the referral letter received the lowest utilization. However, challenges such as updating library resources, upgrading the institutes' technological infrastructures, time constraints, and difficulty in navigating digital resources were identified. Recommendations include improving technological infrastructure, updating print and digital resources, strengthening research support services, improving library

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spaces, sustaining the theological librarian's competence, and increasing promotion of library resources and services. The findings underscore the importance of continuously assessing and upgrading library resources and services to meet the evolving needs of theological and religious studies education.

Keywords: academic performance, library resources and services, library utilization, religious studies library, theological librarianship

1. Introduction

Access to resources and information is vital to students' academic achievement in higher education institutions (HEIs). Theological libraries, as specialized information hubs, play an important role in supporting students' academic success. According to the American Theological Library Association (2025), this type of special library promotes collaboration within religious communities worldwide to produce quality scholarly communication in religion and theology. Utilizing the library's specialized resources and services supports academic activities, such as producing high-quality research, engaging in insightful theological reflection, and delivering interactive class presentations. It fosters community spirit, which is essential in an academic learning environment. Further, it preserves history by collecting primary resources, ensuring religious history and traditions remain available and visible to future generations. These library services help them deepen their understanding of theological course materials, which translates into better grades and higher academic performance.

The Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS), as a theological institution under the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), is dedicated to providing specialized education in religious studies, preparing students for various roles within religious and academic communities. Students at theological institutions engage with a curriculum that demands critical and textual analysis, historical investigation, philosophical ideology, and theological reflections (Board and Stutzman, 2021). Lasig and Collantes (2022) emphasized that an academic library makes a significant contribution to every academic institution. In this new century, IFRS has continued to seek ways to update and expand its course programs to deliver high-quality educational services more effectively and efficiently. The institute's library (Helen Graham Library) therefore, plays an important role in supporting its curriculum and enhancing students' academic performance by providing access to relevant, adequate, and up-to-date resources and responsive services tailored to their theological needs.

While the literature strongly supports a positive correlation between library resources and services and students' academic performance, there remains a gap in examining this relationship within the context of theological and religious studies. Recent studies focused mostly on general academic libraries. Moreover, the studies mainly focus on a specific type of library resource or service. Consequently, little is known about how the combined use of library resources and services contributes to students' academic and formative development in religious institutions. Despite the centrality of libraries in educational institutions, research on religious formation settings, where the learning context, resource needs, and study habits differ from those in secular institutions, remains limited. Thus, investigating the connection between library utilization and academic performance in theological institutions is essential. Within theological and religious studies institutions, the library's role is significant not only in supporting information needs but also in contributing to their formative and ministerial engagements.

The main objective of this study was to investigate the influence of the use of specialized library resources and services on the academic performance of IFRS students. Furthermore, this study provides valuable insights into how theological and religious studies libraries function and evolve in response to the changing landscape of theological education. This study likewise supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4: Quality Education, by promoting effective and equitable access to learning resources that enhance academic performance and lifelong learning, and promoting quality, inclusivity, and innovation. It also aligns with SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by encouraging the modernization of library systems through technology integration, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by emphasizing the library's role in ensuring equal access to knowledge for all learners. Furthermore, in the context of a religious formation institution, the study supports SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) by fostering the development of morally grounded, responsible, and socially aware individuals.

This study's conceptual framework is grounded in the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, which serves as the organizing principle for investigating the impact of utilization of library resources and services on the academic performance of IFRS students.

The Input component of this model comprises the study's foundational elements. These include the various library resources and services provided by IFRS. These are the tools and support systems made available to students to aid their academic journey. The central component of the framework is the Process, which focuses on the utilization of library resources and services. It is not enough for resources to exist; they must be actively used. The study employed a survey and an interview schedule to gather the data. This examined students' perceptions of the library's value and accessibility, as these perceptions directly influence their decision to engage with the resources. The Output represents the outcome of interest, student academic performance. This is the dependent variable that the study aims to explain. Academic performance will be measured using quantifiable metrics such as the

student's GWA. This framework hypothesizes that a direct, positive relationship exists between higher effective utilization of the library's resources and services and improved student academic performance.

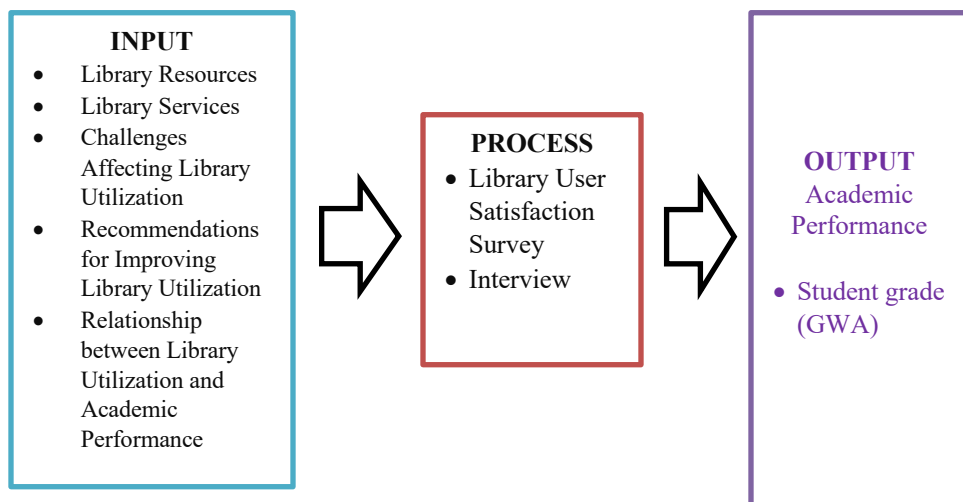


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the study.

1.1 Research Problem

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between the utilization of library resources and services and the academic performance of students at the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS). Specifically, it examined the respondents' demographic profiles in terms of respondent type, course program, and year level. It also assessed the students' level of utilization of printed and digital library resources and various library services, including circulation, reference, computer and internet, printing and photocopying, library information literacy, referral, library spaces, digital library, and Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) services. Furthermore, the study identified the challenges students encountered when utilizing library resources and services and gathered recommendations for their improvement. Finally, it determined whether a significant relationship existed between library utilization and the academic performance of IFRS students.

1.2 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are formulated in light of the study's objectives.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant relationship between library utilization and academic performance of the IFRS students.

Alternative Hypothesis: There is a significant relationship between library utilization and academic performance of the IFRS students.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a convergent parallel design, a mixed-methods approach in which quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then compared to derive comprehensive findings. In this study, a survey and an interview were utilized to gather comprehensive data.

For the quantitative method, the researcher used a descriptive and correlational survey design to establish relationships among the variables and to collect data from the sample using a research-developed questionnaire to determine the association between library utilization and the academic performance of IFRS students. For the qualitative aspect, thematic analysis was used to gain deeper insights into how library resources and services directly affect the quality and productivity of students' academic work, thereby contributing to high academic performance.

2.2 Research Locale and Participants

The study employed the census enumeration method to collect quantitative data from the entire target population. The census method refers to a systematic process of gathering data from the entire population to obtain comprehensive information (Eiriemiokhale & Sulyman, 2023). The respondents in this study are 57 students enrolled in IFRS for the first semester of the 2025-2026 academic year. The students come from different nations, including Malaysia, Indonesia, Vietnam, China, Timor-Leste, Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, and many more. Students from undergraduate and graduate programs, Credit and Audit programs, were included as participants. This study was limited to students enrolled at IFRS. Therefore, the result of this study may not be generalized to other theological education settings.

2.3 Instrument of the Study

The researcher developed the questionnaire based on the study's objectives and an extensive review of related literature and studies on the correlation between library utilization and academic performance in a theological context. The research instrument was designed to ensure that each key dimension of library utilization was aligned with the research questions and could provide comprehensive data necessary to examine the association between library utilization and learning outcomes.

This study employed a semi-structured survey and interview to collect pertinent data. The researcher organized the survey questionnaire into five sections, focusing on the demographic profile, utilization of library resources and services, challenges, and recommendations. A 4-point Likert scale was used to quantify user library utilization.

Table 1. Likert-scale description.

Scale	Range	Interpretation	Description
4	3.5 – 4.00	Always	Library users frequently utilized the library resources/services.
3	2.5 – 3.49	Often	Library users consistently utilized the library resources/services.
2	1.5 - 2.49	Sometimes	Library users occasionally utilized the library resources/services.
1	1 – 1.49	Never	Library users rarely utilize the library resources/services.

Furthermore, the interview comprised five questions focused on the personal experiences of IFRS students in using the library resources and services, and their contribution to students' learning outcomes.

To ensure the validity and relevance of the research instruments, the survey questionnaire and interview guide were reviewed by a panel of experts in Library and Information Science and Religious Studies Education. Each expert assessed the clarity, structure, and alignment of the questions with the study objectives. Feedback and recommendations from the reviewers were incorporated into the instrument revisions. The revised instruments underwent pilot testing with three IFRS alumni who are not part of the actual study sample. This pilot test helped evaluate the clarity, flow, and ease of response, allowing the researcher to make further adjustments if necessary. Due to the limited number of pilot-test participants, the reliability statistic is recognized as a limitation of the study.

2.4 Data Processing and Statistical Treatment

The researcher employed a mixed-methods approach to develop a comprehensive understanding of how to enhance the academic performance of IFRS students through library resources and services. For the quantitative aspect, descriptive statistics were used to interpret the frequency, awareness, and perceived utilization of library resources and services. Spearman's rho correlation was used to analyze the relationship between the utilization of library resources and services and the academic performance of IFRS students. For the qualitative aspect, thematic analysis was used to understand how library resources and services directly affect the quality and productivity of students' academic work, thereby contributing to high academic performance. Thematic coding helped identify patterns, themes, and recurring insights from IFRS students about their experiences engaging with library resources and services.

2.5 Data Analysis

After securing permission from the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies, the researcher coordinated with the students to schedule data collection. Informed consent letters were sent to participants. Questionnaires were administered via pen and paper and conducted during breaktime. The researcher explained the study's objectives and the instructions for answering the survey. Completion took about 15 minutes per respondent. Furthermore, the researchers assured participants' confidentiality and voluntary participation. The interviews were administered in a private room with comfortable ventilation. Completion took about 30 minutes per respondent.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

The study complied with the ethical guidelines. The researcher submitted duly accomplished forms and documents, which were thoroughly reviewed, verified, and approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of La Consolacion University Philippines under Approval Number [REC- 1711/202509-TenorioM01] on November 26, 2025. The researcher ensured that all resources were properly cited both in-text and in the reference list, thereby providing appropriate acknowledgment and credit to the rightful owners. To formally introduce and conduct the study, the researcher obtained permission from the President of the Institute of Formation and Religious Studies (IFRS). Likewise, the researcher obtained permission and coordinated effectively with the Academic Dean and the Registrar to include the respondents' General Weighted Average (GWA) in the survey questionnaire. Furthermore, the researcher submitted duly accomplished forms to the Research and Quality Assurance Office (RQAO) for ethical compliance under Approval Number [IFRS-QA-RP-15.02] on December 02, 2025. The researcher declared no conflicts of interest in the study. The data gathered were stored in a separate password-protected file, accessible only to the researcher and the adviser. No personally identifiable information was used in any reports or publications. In accordance with the principles of justice and fairness, the participants were treated without judgment or prejudice.

All research data, including survey responses and transcribed interview data, were permanently deleted after validation and transcription completion. Proper disposal of all data was ensured. Physical data, such as survey questionnaires, were disposed of by cross-cut shredding. Digital data was permanently removed from all storage devices, including hard drives, flash drives, Google Drive, and other cloud storage.

3. Results

Table 2. Student classification.

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate Student	35	61.4%
Graduate Student	11	19.30%
Audit Student	11	19.30%
Total	57	100.00%

Table 2 presents a summary of the respondents' demographic profile by student classification. Out of the fifty-seven (57) respondents, thirty-five (35) respondents (61.4 %) were classified as undergraduate students, and eleven (11) students (19.30 %) were under the Graduate classification. The remaining eleven (11) students (19.30%) are currently enrolled in the Audit Program.

Table 3. Classification of course programs.

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies (BARS)	29	50.88%
Audit Program	11	19.30%
Master of Arts in Religious Studies (MARS)	11	19.30%
Certificate in Religious Studies	5	8.77%
Credit Program	1	1.75%
Total	57	100.00%

Table 3 summarizes the demographic profile of the respondents by institute course programs. The majority of the students (50.88%) are pursuing the Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies Program. Both the Audit Program and the Master of Arts in Religious Studies are represented with eleven (11) respondents (19.30%). Additionally, five (5) students (8.77%) are enrolled in the Certificate in Religious Studies Program, and one (1) student (1.75%) is currently taking the Credit Program. These reflect the diverse educational backgrounds within the religious studies settings.

Table 4. Classification of year level.

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
1st year	31	54.39%
2nd year	14	24.56%
3rd year	10	17.54%
4th year	2	3.51%
Total	57	100.00%

Table 4 presents a summary of the respondents' demographic profile by year level. The data show the distribution of respondents by year level. The majority of the respondents are 1st year students (54.39%). The second-highest number of respondents is represented by 2nd year students (24.56%). Ten (10) students (17.54%) are classified as 3rd year, while two (2) students (3.51%) are from 4th year classification.

Table 5. Library resources.

Library Services	Mean Score	Interpretation
Printed Resources	3.25	Often
Digital Resources	3.06	Often

The mean score of 3.25, categorized as "often," indicates that most IFRS students use printed materials in the library, particularly biblical, theological, and commentary resources. This suggests that the physical library resources remain in frequent use and play a vital role in meeting students' academic needs. This finding highlights the relevance of traditional printed resources in supporting the academic and theological formation of IFRS students. On the other hand, the overall mean score of 3.06, interpreted as "often," indicates that respondents often use digital materials, specifically the virtual library, e-books, and e-journal requests. This indicates that IFRS students actively use digital library materials as part of their learning habits, supporting their educational needs.

The IFRS students shared their personal experiences with using the library's physical and digital resources. One of the themes that emerged is the complementary use of physical and digital resources. This creates a hybrid environment for the students that maximizes user experience, convenience, and access to information.

"I used both books and e-books. It is very useful, and I gain new knowledge and discoveries. E-books are useful for me because the books I can't find in the library are available in online resources, which is good for me. I'm now writing research for "Church History". The books I borrowed help me to gain more information about my topic. The book helps me with my oral exam, too. The books are complete and help me to gain more knowledge" (Student A).

This highlights the commitment and active engagement of library services in supporting the academic needs of IFRS students.

Table 6. Summary of library services.

Library Services	Mean Score	Interpretation
A. Reference Service	3.53	Always
B. Use of Library Spaces	3.40	Often
C. Library Information Literacy Service	3.37	Often
D. Circulation Service	3.32	Often
E. Digital Library Services	3.04	Often
F. Printing and Photocopying Services	2.84	Often
G. OPAC	2.46	Sometimes
H. Computer and Internet Services	2.39	Sometimes
I. Referral Service	1.07	Never

Reference Service

Based on the quantitative findings, the overall mean of 3.53, with an interpretation of "always," indicates high student satisfaction with the reference service as part of their academic life at IFRS. This highlights the dedication and commitment of the IFRS librarian in serving the information needs of the IFRS community. The qualitative findings explain this rating by highlighting the librarian's professionalism, skills, and competencies in promptly responding to students' library concerns. Student D shared her personal experiences in dealing with the librarian's support and guidance. According to her, the librarian's assistance in providing e-books saved her time from having to search blindly.

"Reference service is excellent. The librarian is very supportive, approachable, and helpful with my studies. The librarian is very helpful and very quick to respond. The response is quick and sufficient, and he assists us more than we need. He also provides e-books when we need them. I consider the librarian's approachability and the easy access of books and library resources to be most beneficial to my academic work. The librarian is responsive to emails, so I can access online resources. He even helps find articles and PDF copies of books (Student D)".

The integration of data suggests that high utilization of reference services is driven not only by the availability of library resources but also by the librarian's professionalism, competence, and personalized assistance, which fosters a positive learning environment that significantly benefits the IFRS community's academic outcomes.

Use of Library Spaces

Based on the quantitative findings, the use of library spaces received an overall mean score of 3.40, interpreted as "often," indicating that students are actively utilizing library spaces for their academic activities. While numerical results indicate frequent use of library facilities, the qualitative findings provide a deeper insight into this pattern. Student B described library spaces as quiet, comfortable, and well-ventilated spaces that support study and reflection.

"I valued the quiet study spaces, the long, silent afternoons in the library became part of my rhythm of study and prayer. The place is also conducive for learning, it is quiet, clean, and the ventilation is good. The library is a comfortable space for studying and research (Student B)."

The integration of data suggests that the students actively utilize the library facilities because it fosters concentration, contemplation, and increases academic

productivity. Thus, the qualitative result explains that the library is a well-designed, contemplative study space that promotes effective learning and sustains academic engagement among IFRS students.

Library Information Literacy Service

Based on the quantitative findings, the overall mean score of 3.37, interpreted as "often," indicates that students use the library instruction service, in which the librarian provides research and user-guidance assistance to develop students' information literacy skills. The qualitative result provides further insight into why IFRS students highly value this service. Student D recalled participating in a library orientation during the "Crafts of Research" class, wherein the librarian demonstrated how to navigate digital resources using a "virtual library", and how to access and locate reliable resources remotely. Student D noted that the orientation enabled her to gather relevant readings for her research topic more efficiently.

"There was a time during our class in "Crafts of Research and Writing" where the IFRS librarian was invited to teach us how to use the virtual library to search for related readings and references. Although the orientation was only brief, he made the most of the time and taught us how to search for references using free online resources, which helped me gather some readings for my research (Student D).

The integration of data explains that information literacy programs conducted by the library equip students with practical knowledge in research, increasing their ability to write scholarly output and to evaluate a wide range of resources independently.

Circulation Service

The quantitative result indicates an overall mean score of 3.32, which explains that students at IFRS often availed of the circulation services. Complementing this, the interview responses reveal that IFRS students consider circulation service as one of the most beneficial offerings of the library. Printed materials are beneficial for their studies, as they help them gather reliable references to complete their academic outputs. Students A and F described the circulation services as a gateway to discovering more ideas in theological and religious studies.

The library collection is aligned with the course program we have here in IFRS. I have seen some professors visiting the library to borrow books for our class. Some students also borrow the Bible and commentaries needed for our class. More importantly, the references provided on their syllabus are available in the library and can be borrowed for reading (Student A and F).

The integrated data reveals the students' active utilization of library resources. The adequacy, relevance, and quality of printed materials help them in completing their academic tasks. Ultimately, these resources facilitate a deeper understanding of class discussions and enhance their theological knowledge, ultimately contributing to more meaningful learning outcomes.

Digital Library Services

Based on the quantitative findings, the digital library services obtained an overall mean score of 3.04, interpreted as "often," indicating students' frequent use of the virtual library, e-book, and e-journal requests, and online reference assistance. Similarly, the qualitative responses provide a deeper understanding of the significance of this service to students' academic work. Student I shared the importance of access to digital resources for distance learning. This explains why this service is actively utilized, as it enables them to navigate digital information regardless of their location.

"Another service that I deeply appreciated was the access to online databases and e-journals. It helped me during community/apostolate days and periods of limited campus presence (Student I)".

The integration of data highlights the importance of digital platforms and remote access tools to facilitate the student's research and learning process. Utilizing online library services significantly improved the academic output of the IFRS students.

Printing and Photocopying Services

The overall mean score of 2.84, with an interpretation of often, indicates that students often use the printing and photocopying services provided by the IFRS library. This shows students' reliance on the library for printing and photocopying their handouts, assignments, and research materials to meet day-to-day coursework demands. This confirms the interview responses, which repeatedly cited the frequent use of the printing and photocopying services. Students A and C described this service as convenient and helpful to their academic studies.

"I avail printing and photocopying services to reproduce our class handouts. This also serves as a reviewer for me when quizzes and oral recitations are required. I'm glad there's a service like this in the library (Student A)".

There's no need for me to worry about where I will go to print my academic outputs. It is convenient and very helpful for me. I can focus more rather than using the PDF copy or capturing images (Student C)".

The integration of data shows that active use of this service is driven not only by coursework demands but, most importantly, the students' preference for using physical resources that support comprehension and academic preparation.

OPAC

The use of the Online Public Access Catalog (OPAC) received a mean score of 2.46, interpreted as "sometimes," indicating that students sometimes utilize the OPAC to search for library materials. Given the lower mean score compared to other library services mentioned, the qualitative findings explain some reasons for its low utilization. Similar responses from students B, F, and G recommended providing an orientation on how to fully maximize the use of the OPAC system in locating and retrieving information. Some students may not be sufficiently aware of its features and benefits for searching for information. As a result, students may prefer direct assistance from the librarian to locate the books they need.

"Provide an orientation on how to access the OPAC (Student B, F, and G)".

The integration of data implies that the limited use of the OPAC system may be attributed not to a lack of usefulness, but rather the lack of user education to library users on how to effectively utilize this system for locating library resources. This finding suggests strengthening the user education and library instruction to effectively integrate the OPAC use into students' research and information-seeking practices.

Computer and Internet Services

The overall mean score of 2.39, interpreted as "sometimes," indicates that the students use computers and internet services. While the library provides computers and internet access to meet its technological needs, low utilization of these services was observed. In relation to this, the qualitative result explains that one of the reasons for the underutilization of this service is the preference of students to use their own personal devices, such as tablets and laptops. Most of the students bring their own gadgets, resulting in low demand for utilizing the library computers.

"I bring my own laptop to do my assignments and other academic tasks (Student G)."

The integration of data shows that personal ownership of electronic devices reduces the need for library computers. This highlights that modern technological devices directly influence the utilization of computer and internet services in the library.

Referral Service

The use of referral services to conduct research in other theological libraries had a mean of 1.07 (never), indicating low utilization of this library service. This suggests that students are satisfied with the library services and resources offered by IFRS, or they may not be aware of the purpose of referral services. Similarly, the qualitative result reveals low utilization of the referral service. However, the combined responses from students reiterate that they were satisfied with the comprehensive collection, digital access, and assistance provided by the IFRS librarian.

“I think the library has done its best to support the students' academic success. The library is very helpful and effective for my academic research (Student B)”.

I am satisfied with the library resources and services available in the IFRS library. The librarian's assistance is sufficient for me (Student D).

IFRS library has an adequate and comprehensive collection (Student B)”.

The integration of data suggests that low utilization of the referral service is not necessarily due to a deficiency, but rather because IFRS students do not need to seek resources from other theological institutions, as the library provides a comprehensive collection and innovative services that sufficiently support their academic engagements.

Table 7. Challenges affecting library utilization.

Classification	Frequency	Percentage
Difficulty in accessing online resources	3	5.26%
Lack of awareness of available resources/services	4	7.02%
Lack of time to visit the library	18	31.58%
Limited number of updated books	16	28.07%
Slow computers in the library	6	10.53%
Slow internet connection in the library	4	7.02%
None	25	43.86%

Table 7 shows the challenges experienced by IFRS students that affect their use of library resources and services. Most students selected “none” (43.86%), indicating they do not experience any difficulty using library resources and services. This reflects students' high satisfaction with the library resources and services offered by the institute. The most frequently cited challenge in using the library resources and services is the student's lack of time to visit the library (31.58%). This challenge limits their ability to maximize the library services. The limited number of updated books in the library accounted for 28.07% of the total. This suggests the continuous acquisition of updated books and other resources to ensure alignment of instructional resources

with accreditation and academic standards. Some students reported slow computers (10.53%) and slow internet connections (7.02%), which may affect efficient research and academic work. Slow internet connectivity can hinder theological students' access to digital resources and online classes. Difficulty accessing online resources got 5.26%, along with a lack of awareness of the availability of library resources and services (7.02%).

Based on the provided responses, the IFRS students appreciate the librarian's responsiveness in addressing library concerns and the ease of locating resources, both of which contributed to their learning process.

"My experience in the library, I find it easier, conducive to the learning process. The books I need are here. The library is easy to find. The sources are sufficient for my academic needs. Everything is provided in the library. The books are organized, and the place is conducive, and the librarian is always ready to help".

Students expressed their appreciation to the institute for improving the library's internet connection. The new Wi-Fi was installed in September 2025 in response to students' recommendations, reflecting the institution's commitment to improving its technological infrastructure.

"There's a strong Wi-Fi connection in the library".

Students value the visibility of printed and digital resources in supporting their academic engagements. However, students expressed their concern about the limited number of updated books available in the library.

"There are already some, but I hope the collection will continue to be updated. I recommend that the school library continue updating its book collection, not just for convenience, but for equitable access to information.

Students E, G, H, and I had difficulty accessing digital materials or independently searching for online resources.

"Sometimes I do not know how to find an e-book that I need on my own. The difficulties I have experienced when I use the library's resources are that I do not know how to download the journals from other universities for my reference".

Despite the underutilization of computers, as indicated in the findings, and students' appreciation of the newly installed W-Fi in the library, students C and E reported slow computers and unstable internet connections.

“Upgrading the computers should be done”.

One of the difficulties experienced by the students D, F, and G was the lack of time to visit the library. According to them, time constraints affect their utilization of library resources and services. This is due to a busy schedule and other tasks/responsibilities in their congregation.

“For me, lack of time is one of the challenges I encountered because of the tasks assigned to me in my congregation. This hinders me from visiting the library frequently”.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative responses, the identified key themes related to the students’ recommendations to improve the resources and services of the IFRS library are the following:

High Satisfaction with Existing Library Resources and Services. The responses revealed that most of the students expressed high satisfaction with the current library resources and services provided by the IFRS. This indicates that the IFRS library effectively supports students' academic needs. This is evidenced by the students responding to “none” or “no recommendation”, which reflects service adequacy and quality.

Updating Print and Digital Collection. The majority of the students recommended updating the printed and digital resources, particularly theological resources. Although they are satisfied with the existing library collection, they emphasize the need for an updated, expanded one, particularly in theological resources.

Enhancement of Technological Infrastructure. The students strongly emphasize the need to strengthen internet connectivity and computer facilities to support their research, academic work, digital access to online resources, and learning modalities.

Strengthening Research Support Services and Information Literacy Support. The quantitative data emphasized the importance of conducting regular orientation sessions, and workshops focused on research writing, citation skills, familiarization with various library resources, and the institute's services. These suggestions were echoed in the qualitative responses, which emphasized the value of benchmarking against other theological practices to identify best practices in theological librarianship. Moreover, exploring partnerships with other theological libraries enables the library to build networks that increase resource availability and expand services for partner institutions. Currently, the IFRS library collaborates with other institutions, including Loyola School of Theology (LST), Maryhill School of Theology (MST), Saint Vincent School of Theology (SVST), and the Institute of Consecrated Life in Asia (ICLA), through a journal exchange program. Further

expanding these partnerships to improve library resources and services would significantly benefit the students and the entire community.

IFRS Library as Learning Environment and a Partner to Academic Success. The IFRS students found the IFRS library to be a sacred space that contributes to their academic productivity. The quantitative result emphasizes the library's role as a space to focus on their studies without distractions. The students agreed that the library is conducive to their academic tasks. Aside from the orderly environment, the students considered the library a sacred space to contemplate. The qualitative responses reported the need to maintain silence in the library.

Sustained Librarian Guidance for Students. The IFRS librarian plays a significant role in efficiently and effectively implementing library resources and services, as evidenced by students' high satisfaction.

Holistic Formation. The library in theological institutions is not only a predictor of academic success. It is a sacred space where holistic formation is developed through the integration of theological resources into ministry practice. A statement from student G signifies how theological resources in the library significantly influenced and shaped her approach to missions with her ministry.

"I used the books in my apostolate ministries. With these books, it is easy for me to explain the church to the youth in my parish (Student G)".

This testimony shows that library resources, specifically in the theological category, facilitate a clearer understanding of the church's teachings for communities. Theological books are used not only for academic purposes but also to prepare for congregational missions, which enhances their confidence in effectively serving their communities.

Table 8. Academic performance of the respondents based on GWA.

General Weight Average	Frequency	Percentage
1.00	5	8.77%
1.25	15	26.32%
1.50	16	28.07%
1.75	7	12.28%
2.00	6	10.53%
2.25	2	3.51%
2.50	4	7.02%
2.75	1	1.75%
3.00	1	1.75%
Total	57	100%

Table 8 presents the academic performance of the IFRS students based on their actual GWA. The result shows that most students had a GWA of 1.50 (28.07%), followed by those with a GWA of 1.25 (26.32%), indicating high academic performance among the participants. Furthermore, 12.28% of the students received a

GWA of 1.75, while 10.53% attained a GWA of 2.00. Few respondents achieved GWAs of 1.00 (8.77%), 2.50 (7.02%), and 2.25 (3.51%). The remaining students obtained a GWA of 2.75 and 3.00 with a percentage of 1.75%.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of GWA.

Variable	N	Mean	Median	SD	Maximum	Maximum
General Weighted Average	57	90.6	92	5.56	98	75

Table 9 presents the descriptive statistics of GWA of the IFRS students. The students obtained a mean score of 90.6 (SD = 5.56), with grades ranging from 98-75. The distribution shows that the majority of the students achieved GWAs between 1.25 and 1.50, indicating high performance among the respondents.

Table 10. Spearman's Rho interpretation.

Variables	Statistical Measure	Result
Academic Performance and Library Utilization	Spearman's rho	0.575
	Correlation Interpretation	Strong Positive
	Degrees of Freedom (df)	55
	p-value	< .001
	Significance Interpretation	Significant
	Decision	Reject H_0

Table 10 represents the relationship between library utilization and the academic performance of IFRS students. Correlation was the statistical technique used to determine the relationship between library utilization and academic performance. Based on the table, the coefficient is 0.575, which indicates a strong positive relationship between library utilization and academic performance. This suggests that as library utilization increases, the academic performance tends to improve as well. The p-value is less than 0.001, indicating a statistically significant correlation. With a degree of freedom (df) of 55, the evidence is strong enough to reject the null hypothesis.

Based on this evidence, the researcher concludes that there is a positive association between library utilization and the academic performance of IFRS students. This finding highlights the theological library's value as a reliable source of information that enriches students' overall learning experience.

The quantitative and qualitative results emphasized students' high satisfaction with access to the printed and digital resources provided by the IFRS library. These resources help them to complete their academic requirements. Based on participants' sharing, library resources and services are among the factors that contributed to their academic performance. Research assistance from the librarian helped the students improve their information literacy, an important factor in writing high-quality scholarly work. Some of the responses described how the librarian assisted them with their research, including one-on-one assistance, proper citation, orientation to the virtual library, and suggestions for references relevant to their topics. The library in theological institutions is not only a predictor of academic success. It is a sacred space

where holistic formation is developed through the integration of theological resources into ministry practice.

4. Discussion

The convergent findings of the library resources utilization revealed that the students experienced a “hybrid library,” meaning they extensively used both physical and digital resources for their academic tasks, which was positively associated with their academic performance. This is consistent with the findings of Gados and Lascano (2021), and Banjo and Ikonne (2021), which demonstrate the ability of seminary students in Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Inc. to perform information search and retrieval using library collections effectively. On the other hand, Ajibola (2024) investigated the integration of modern digital learning materials as an illustration of the evolving landscape in religious studies and theological education and found that using digital tools improves students’ engagement and critical thinking, leading to higher academic standing. This aligns with the study by Edogiawerie (2020), which highlights the use of electronic information sources to provide better access to a wide range of theological resources. The findings imply that a theological library like IFRS should continue to develop and maintain a balanced collection of both print and digital resources to support the intellectual and formative development of IFRS students.

The convergent interpretation of the reference service shows high satisfaction of IFRS students with the guidance and support provided by the IFRS librarian, which directly supports their academic activities. This confirms the study by Gados and Lascano (2021), which found that seminary students at Casiciaco Recoletos Seminary, Inc. rated the library's reference service as the most outstanding among the services provided. Likewise, Ojo et al. (2024) and Flierl and Henkaline (2023) explain that theological librarians are equipped with the professional knowledge and skills to fulfill their responsibilities effectively. According to the responses, the IFRS Librarian demonstrates a welcoming attitude, making it easy for students to ask library-related questions or seek consultation. This characteristic clearly reflects the core values of IFRS: community spirit and participative leadership. This positive interaction fosters a supportive learning environment and encourages students to make full use of library services to improve learning outcomes. The implication of this finding for theological libraries is the need to maintain and promote the professionalism of theological librarians.

The convergent result of the use of library space revealed high student satisfaction with the use of library spaces as part of their academic journey at IFRS. This highlights the library as a well-designed, contemplative study space that promotes effective learning and sustains academic engagement among IFRS students. This substantiates the findings of Fernando et al. (2024) that Religious Education Teachers in Asian countries actively encourage their students to use library resources and services to enhance their knowledge in theology and religious studies. Likewise,

Gados and Lascano (2021) conducted a study at a seminary in the Philippines on seminarians' satisfaction with the library facilities. Similarly, Fabbrini (2024) and Grenert (2020) emphasized the role of theological libraries as spaces that foster academic compassion and support spiritual connection and formation. Theological libraries should invest in improving library facilities, as this directly influences students' academic and learning outcomes. Well-equipped facilities create an environment conducive to deep theological reflection, scholarly works, and formation.

The convergent interpretation of the information literacy service revealed the effectiveness of library instruction in improving the research skills and information literacy of IFRS students, thereby enabling them to achieve high academic performance. This corresponds with the findings of Holly (2022), that seminary students can analyze, evaluate, and fact-check media and information, which is a vital skill for future ministry. Similarly, O'Kelly et al. (2023) conducted a study on library instruction and found that research consultations and workshops, library orientation, one-on-one consultations, and information literacy programs significantly improve students' academic achievement. High utilization of the library's information literacy service demonstrates active collaboration between the IFRS librarian and students, which helps them to improve their writing skills and deepen their understanding of theological foundations and formations. Theological libraries should further cultivate this service to help users develop essential research skills, improve their ability to locate and evaluate theological and religious studies resources, and foster independent learning.

The convergence of findings of the circulation service highlights the library's crucial role in supporting students' academic needs by maintaining a specialized theological collection aligned with the institute's curriculum and course offerings. According to Gados and Lascano (2021), seminary students rated the circulation service as "very satisfactory" as students are given the privilege to borrow and return the books they need. Moreover, the findings corroborate the studies by Stutzman (2024), Sembiring et al. (2024) and Belhida et al. al (2025), Gurgur (2025), Ladwig (2024), and Tinabo and Bakiri (2025) discussed the importance of promoting healthy theological printed collections aligned with 21st-century theological education. The finding indicates that IFRS students are satisfied with the theological and religious studies collection available in the IFRS library. In addition, the collection's comprehensiveness and alignment with the institute's course offerings provide a strong justification for its active use of the circulation service. This suggests that the library's collection effectively supports students' academic needs.

Both quantitative and qualitative results of the digital library services illustrate the high utilization rate of this service. This reflects the findings of Solanke and Olatoye (2025) and Shari (2024), which explain that integrating relevant religious digital learning resources to facilitate religious literacy can increase students' engagement in classes and motivate them to learn and participate actively. Furthermore, KC and Aravind (2025) conducted research to assess the online library information that supports theological education in Kerala. These results highlighted

the importance of online library services in supporting students' theological foundation and education. Despite the lack of budget for a database subscription, the IFRS librarian still provides a digital service through creating a virtual library that supports online access to digital materials. To broaden the use of library resources, the IFRS librarian is providing online academic support to help students access the e-resources available in the school's virtual library. The provision of digital library services is essential in theological libraries to ensure responsive and innovative library operations.

The convergent interpretation of the printing and photocopying service revealed that IFRS students actively utilized this service. The result affirms the study by Belhida et al. (2025), which described printing and photocopying as library services that support diverse learning styles and aid retention and comprehension, which are essential for succeeding in their theological coursework. Moreover, Ladwig (2024) indicates that the visual quality of printed works positively influences grading, especially in theological education, where the writing of high-quality theological reflections and research is emphasized. This service facilitates their comprehension and active participation in class discussions and enables them to complete their academic requirements effectively. Some of the implications of printing and photocopying services for the theological libraries are enhanced learning and research, convenience and accessibility, and resource optimization.

The quantitative finding of the use of the OPAC system shows occasional student engagement with this service to search for materials. The qualitative responses illustrate students' interest in fully maximizing OPAC use. This finding implies that IFRS students are aware of the OPAC system's functionality. Edward et al. (2023) investigated students' attitudes towards using the OPAC at Kwara State University. The result shows that the students' attitude towards the use of OPAC was positive. They were interested in the benefits of OPAC for easily searching for library materials. Anggraeni et al. (2025) demonstrated the impact of the digital literacy campaign in enhancing students' awareness and proficiency in utilizing the OPAC system as an effective tool for retrieving information. Given the occasional use of the OPAC system, strong promotion of this service through orientation is recommended to help integrate this library service into their research practices. Implementing a library system in theological and religious studies institutions can improve overall library operations. It allows the students, faculty, and the entire community to locate biblical and theological resources effectively and efficiently.

The convergent interpretation of the referral service revealed the underutilization of this service. However, the low utilization of this service reflects students' perception that their academic needs are sufficiently met within the IFRS library, reducing the need to avail the reference services. Moreover, these are strongly mentioned in qualitative responses, indicating their satisfaction with the librarian's strong reference support and the accessibility of library resources. Gados and Lascano (2021) found that seminarians were satisfied with the library services, facilities, and staff. The findings of Ogunbodede et al. (2020) show high satisfaction among seminary students

with the library's resources and services. Furthermore, some students express interest in using this service in the future, especially those pursuing the MARS program. The result aligns with Holy (2022), which found that connecting students to other theological schools for library resources helps them enhance their research output, access a wide range of theological collections, and improve their information literacy, leading to high academic performance. Based on the findings, comprehensiveness and alignment of the library collections with the institute's course offerings are identified as the reasons for the low utilization of the referral service. IFRS students reported being satisfied with the theological collection in the IFRS library, which leads them to forgo exploring other theological libraries. However, student responses indicate interest in using this service in the future, especially among those pursuing the MARS program. To increase the visibility of this service among IFRS students, extensive promotion, orientation, and integration into library instruction should be implemented to maximize access to other theological library collections and improve information access. Referral service is significant in theological libraries as it enhances resource sharing and active collaboration with other theological institutions, bridges information gaps, expands access to theological and religious studies resources, and promotes deeper engagement with partner institutions.

The convergent interpretation revealed several challenges experienced by students, including a limited number of new books, difficulty accessing digital resources, technological upgrades, and time constraints that hinder the effective use of library resources and services. Addressing these concerns could further optimize library utilization and academic success. Consistently, from the book "Innovation in Seminary Theological Education", Cunningham (2022) elaborated on the technology-related obstacles, such as the potential student's lack of internet connectivity, the cost of technological devices or connectivity, or the lack of technological fluency, and library collection development. Similarly, Depnag (2025) observed an inadequate number of computers for accessing information. Moreover, poor internet speed hinders students' access to electronic information resources (Gados & Lascano, 2021). Slow internet connectivity can hinder theological students' access to digital resources and online classes. This may lead to reduced engagement and reliance on physical resources, which may not be sufficient to complete their academic engagements. Digital literacy plays a significant role in the students' academic growth and theological formation. Without digital skills, students may struggle to utilize digital resources, limiting their engagement with the diverse theological resources. Furthermore, students may experience difficulty in locating and evaluating digital resources for their research. Moreover, the findings revealed that the most frequently cited challenge in using library resources and services is the limited number of new collections, which can hinder access to recent and relevant materials for their studies. Currently, the IFRS is experiencing low enrolment due to a low number of vocations across many congregations. In connection with this, the budgets for all departments, including those for library programs and services, have been affected. Despite facing

challenges, IFRS has remained steadfast in its mission of improving the services for the community.

The student's recommendations indicate that while the library obtained high satisfaction with IFRS students due to its supportive and conducive environment, several areas are identified that require enhancement, including continuous acquisition of library collection, upgrading of technological infrastructure (computer and internet), promoting digital literacy, benchmarking with other theological libraries for innovative practices, institutionalizing research instruction, and maintaining a conducive environment. Addressing these recommendations will ensure smooth library operations for the IFRS community. The IFRS library ensures that the students' recommendations are considered in drafting the library's strategic and operational plans. Updating the printed theological collection may reflect IFRS students' reliance on traditional resources for academic research, especially in theological studies. The results imply that theological libraries in today's world are undergoing significant transformation to adapt to the changing needs and expectations of students. This ongoing transformation emphasizes a student-centered approach, ensuring accessible, interactive, and responsive library programs necessary for achieving academic success.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that library resources and services in IFRS significantly contribute to improving students' academic performance and formative development. This is evident in students' active use of both printed and digital resources and their engagement with various library services. Ultimately, the librarian's dedication to guiding and supporting students significantly increases engagement with library resources and services, leading to improved academic performance. However, despite the high satisfaction of IFRS students with the library services, recommendations on acquisition, technological upgrade, and time constraints remain areas for improvement. The findings underscore the importance of continuously assessing and upgrading library resources and services to meet the evolving needs of theological and religious studies education. To effectively address these challenges, strategies such as enhancing digital literacy training, integrating OPAC use as a resource discovery tool, fostering resource sharing with other theological institutions, library awareness programs, conducting user-satisfaction surveys regularly, upgrading technological infrastructure, continuous professional development for the librarian, and allocating sufficient budget for continuous improvements should be implemented. Implementing these strategies can significantly improve the library operations, thereby supporting students' academic and formative development.

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Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the conduct and publication of this research.

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