

# Integrating Library Services into Pastoral and Therapeutic Practices: Perspectives from Theology, Counselling, and Physiotherapy

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## ABSTRACT

*This study presents an opinion-based and literature-driven examination of the integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices, drawing insights from theology, counselling, and physiotherapy. Rather than relying on primary empirical data, the study is anchored in secondary sources, including scholarly journals, theological texts, professional practice guidelines, policy documents, and existing conceptual frameworks. Through critical analysis and synthesis of related literature, the study argues that library services occupy a strategic yet underutilized position within pastoral care and therapeutic environments. The paper advances the opinion that curated information resources, bibliotherapy, patient education materials, and information literacy support can significantly enhance spiritual care, psychological counselling, and physiotherapy outcomes. From a theological perspective, libraries support spiritual formation and reflective healing; within counselling, they reinforce evidence-based interventions and client self-understanding; and in physiotherapy, they promote informed patient participation and rehabilitation adherence. The study concludes that integrating library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices fosters holistic care addressing spiritual, emotional, and physical dimensions of well-being. It recommends stronger interdisciplinary collaboration and institutional policies that formally recognize librarians as partners in care delivery, particularly within faith-based and healthcare settings.*

## KEYWORDS

*Library-Based Research, Pastoral Care, Therapeutic Practices, Interdisciplinary Integration*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the need for holistic approaches to human care that address spiritual, psychological, and physical dimensions of well-being. Within this context, pastoral care, counselling, and physiotherapy have increasingly emphasized integrative practices that go beyond isolated professional interventions. Theology underscores care of the whole person, counselling focuses on emotional and cognitive healing, while physiotherapy attends to physical rehabilitation and functional restoration. However, despite the shared concern for holistic well-being, limited scholarly attention has been given to the role of library services as a unifying support system within these helping professions.

Traditionally, libraries have been viewed primarily as repositories of knowledge that support academic learning and research. Contemporary librarianship, however, has expanded this

role to include information mediation, bibliotherapy, patient education, and evidence-based information support across professional domains (Rubin, 2016; Afolayan, 2020). Scholars argue that access to reliable information is central to informed decision-making, personal reflection, and behavioural change, all of which are critical elements in pastoral and therapeutic practices (Ranganathan, 2006; Brewster, 2014). This evolving perspective positions library services as active contributors to care-oriented environments rather than passive academic units. From a theological standpoint, pastoral care emphasizes spiritual formation, moral guidance, and emotional healing rooted in scriptural reflection and communal support. According to Lartey (2003), effective pastoral care requires resources that facilitate reflection, meaning-making, and spiritual growth. Libraries, through curated theological texts and devotional materials, provide structured access to such resources, thereby supporting pastors and care recipients alike. Similarly, Clebsch and Jaekle (1994) maintain that informed pastoral ministry depends on continuous engagement with theological scholarship, a function well served by library services.

In the field of counselling, literature highlights the therapeutic value of information and reading as tools for self-awareness and emotional regulation. Bibliotherapy, for instance, has been widely acknowledged as a supportive counselling technique that enhances insight and coping strategies (McMillen, 2006; Shechtman, 2009). Libraries contribute to this process by selecting and organizing materials that align with counselling goals and ethical standards. Access to evidence-based counselling resources also ensures that practitioners remain informed about current theories and best practices, reinforcing professional competence and client outcomes (Corey, 2017).

Physiotherapy practice equally depends on information access, particularly for patient education and rehabilitation adherence. Studies indicate that patients who understand their conditions and treatment plans demonstrate better compliance and recovery outcomes (O'Sullivan & Schmitz, 2016). Library services support physiotherapy by providing credible health information resources, clinical guidelines, and educational materials that empower both practitioners and patients. This informational support aligns with contemporary patient-centred care models that emphasize shared knowledge and active participation in treatment (WHO, 2010).

Despite these intersections, the integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices remains largely implicit and under-theorized. Existing literature often addresses these disciplines in isolation, overlooking the potential of libraries as interdisciplinary partners in holistic care delivery. This study, therefore, adopts an opinion-based approach grounded in secondary sources to critically examine and argue for the intentional integration of library services into pastoral care, counselling, and physiotherapy. By synthesizing insights from theology, counselling psychology, physiotherapy, and library and information science, the study seeks to contribute to scholarly discourse and professional practice on interdisciplinary collaboration and holistic well-being.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of this study is to examine the integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices from theological, counselling, and physiotherapy perspectives.

Specifically, the study seeks to:

- a) Examine theological perspectives that support the use of library services in pastoral care and ministry;
- b) Assess the role of library services in enhancing counselling and psychosocial therapeutic practices;
- c) Analyse the contribution of library and information resources to evidence-based physiotherapy practice;
- d) Explore interdisciplinary scholarly views on collaboration between librarians, pastors, counsellors, and physiotherapists in holistic care delivery.

### **III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- a) What theological perspectives support the integration of library services into pastoral care?
- b) How do library services contribute to effective counselling and therapeutic practices?
- c) In what ways do library and information resources support professional practice in physiotherapy?
- d) How does existing literature describe interdisciplinary collaboration involving library services in pastoral and therapeutic contexts?

### **IV. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices has increasingly been framed within the broader discourse of holistic care, which recognises the interconnectedness of spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical dimensions of human well-being. Scholars in theology argue that pastoral care is no longer limited to spiritual exhortation alone but now incorporates informed guidance, reflective resources, and evidence-based knowledge that support individuals facing complex life challenges. Within this context, libraries function as structured knowledge hubs that provide access to theological texts, devotional materials, ethical frameworks, and faith-informed counselling resources that enrich pastoral engagement and enhance the quality of spiritual care delivered to congregants and clients. From the perspective of counselling and psychotherapy, the literature highlights the critical role of accurate, timely, and relevant information in therapeutic outcomes. Counsellors increasingly rely on psych educational materials, self-help literature, assessment tools, and research-based interventions to support clients' mental and emotional health. Library services facilitate this process by curating authoritative counselling resources, offering information literacy support, and enabling practitioners and clients to navigate mental health information responsibly. Studies in library and information science emphasise that librarians, through selective dissemination of information and reader advisory services, contribute indirectly to therapeutic processes by guiding users toward credible and ethically appropriate resources that complement professional counselling practices.

Physiotherapy scholarship further extends the discussion by underscoring the importance of patient education and evidence-based practice in physical rehabilitation. Access to up-to-date clinical guidelines, rehabilitation manuals, exercise protocols, and patient-friendly informational materials is essential for both practitioners and patients. Libraries support physiotherapeutic care by providing these resources, fostering research literacy, and enabling interdisciplinary knowledge exchange between physiotherapists, counsellors, and pastoral caregivers. This information support strengthens continuity of care, particularly in contexts where physical recovery is closely linked with emotional resilience and spiritual motivation. Within library and information science, recent studies increasingly position libraries as active partners in health, wellness, and pastoral ecosystems rather than as passive repositories of books. Concepts such as bibliotherapy, information therapy, and wellness librarianship illustrate how curated reading materials and targeted information services can support emotional healing, stress reduction, and personal growth. Librarians are thus seen as collaborators who design inclusive information services that align with pastoral objectives and therapeutic goals, especially in faith-based institutions, hospitals, rehabilitation centres, and community settings.

Overall, contemporary literature reveals a growing convergence among theology, counselling, physiotherapy, and library services, driven by shared concerns for holistic well-being and client-centred care. Interdisciplinary collaboration is increasingly advocated as a means of maximising the impact of each profession, with libraries serving as integrative platforms that connect spiritual care, mental health support, and physical rehabilitation through accessible, reliable, and context-sensitive information resources. This evolving scholarship underscores the relevance of library services as strategic contributors to pastoral and therapeutic practices in both religious and healthcare environments.

#### A. *Library Services and Holistic Well-Being*

Recent studies in library and information science emphasise the expanding role of libraries as environments that actively contribute to holistic well-being, extending far beyond their traditional academic and informational functions. Brewster and McNicol (2020) conceptualised libraries as therapeutic landscapes, highlighting how physical space, atmosphere, and access to thoughtfully curated information resources collectively foster emotional comfort, reflection, and psychological stability. According to their argument, libraries provide safe and non-judgmental spaces where users can engage in quiet contemplation, self-directed learning, and restorative reading, all of which are critical to mental and emotional health. This perspective aligns closely with pastoral and therapeutic practices that prioritise calm, trust, and reflective engagement as foundations for healing.

Building on this understanding, Tukhareli (2024) demonstrated that structured library-based wellness initiatives such as bibliotherapy sessions, mindfulness-oriented reading programmes, and guided reflective reading play a measurable role in reducing stress and enhancing emotional resilience among diverse user groups. These initiatives reposition libraries as proactive wellness partners rather than passive service points, particularly within educational, healthcare, and faith-based institutions. The findings suggest that when library services are intentionally aligned with well-being goals, they can complement pastoral care and therapeutic interventions by providing reliable information, emotionally supportive materials, and environments conducive to personal growth. Consequently, library services emerge as strategic resources that can reinforce pastoral counselling and therapeutic objectives through sustained user engagement and targeted resource provision.

### *B. Bibliotherapy and Therapeutic Information Use*

Bibliotherapy has gained significant scholarly recognition as a critical intersection between library services and therapeutic practice, particularly in counselling and pastoral care contexts. Pehrsson, McMillen, and Pehrsson (2021) observed that bibliotherapy is increasingly employed as a supportive intervention that encourages self-reflection, emotional processing, and positive behavioural change. Within pastoral settings, faith-based texts, devotional literature, and reflective narratives are often used alongside counselling conversations to help individuals interpret their experiences, find meaning in adversity, and develop coping strategies. In therapeutic contexts, carefully selected reading materials serve as tools that reinforce counselling goals, facilitate emotional expression, and support personal insight. More recently, Candra, Agniya, and Mardiyanto (2025) highlighted the evolving role of librarians as facilitators of mental health support through the design and implementation of bibliotherapy programmes. Their study emphasised that librarians possess unique expertise in information selection, reader advisory services, and ethical information mediation, positioning them as valuable collaborators in therapeutic care. However, they also stressed the importance of maintaining ethical boundaries, noting that bibliotherapy initiatives should be implemented in collaboration with trained counsellors, therapists, or pastoral caregivers to ensure professional accountability and user safety. Together, these studies underscore the relevance of library-managed reading interventions as structured, ethically grounded tools that can enhance pastoral counselling and therapeutic care frameworks, particularly when embedded within interdisciplinary collaboration models.

### *C. Pastoral Care, Theology, and Interdisciplinary Support*

Contemporary pastoral theology literature increasingly presents pastoral care as an interdisciplinary practice that responds to the complexity of human experience in modern societies. Swinton and Mowat (2020) argued that effective pastoral care can no longer be confined to purely theological reflection or spiritual exhortation but must engage meaningfully with insights from psychology, health sciences, and the social sciences. Their position reflects a shift toward integrative models of care in which spiritual accompaniment is combined with an informed understanding of mental health, emotional distress, and social realities. Within this framework, pastoral caregivers are expected to draw on diverse bodies of knowledge to support individuals facing grief, trauma, illness, and relational challenges. Similarly, Lartey (2021) emphasised a contextual and intercultural approach to pastoral care that recognises the influence of culture, social structures, and lived experience on spiritual and emotional well-being. He advocated for pastoral practices that integrate spiritual guidance with psychosocial resources, allowing care to be responsive to the specific contexts in which individuals and communities live. This approach underscores the need for access to varied and credible information sources that inform culturally sensitive pastoral interventions. Recent African scholarship reinforces this perspective. Obi and Igeleko (2025) found that pastoral counselling practices increasingly incorporate psychoeducational materials, self-help resources, and therapeutic tools to enhance care delivery. Their findings highlight the growing reliance on reliable information to support pastoral work, positioning libraries as critical intermediaries that provide access to authoritative theological, psychological, and counselling resources needed for effective interdisciplinary pastoral care.

### *D. Counselling Practice and Information Literacy*

Counselling scholarship has also increasingly recognised the central role of information access and information literacy in enhancing therapeutic effectiveness. McLeod (2021) noted that contemporary counselling practice is strengthened by evidence-based approaches that draw on current research, validated interventions, and systematic knowledge. He further emphasised client empowerment through access to relevant information, arguing that informed clients are better positioned to understand their experiences, participate actively in therapy, and sustain positive outcomes beyond the counselling encounter. In line with this perspective, Ijantiku, Ubogu, and Ejimonye (2024) demonstrated that information literacy significantly enhances counselling and guidance services by equipping both practitioners and clients with the skills to locate, evaluate, and apply information effectively. Their study highlighted that information-literate counsellors are better able to integrate research findings into practice, while information-literate clients can engage more meaningfully with therapeutic materials and psychoeducational resources. This body of scholarship positions library services as essential partners in counselling and pastoral care, particularly through the provision of information literacy instruction, curated resource support, and collaborative engagement with counselling and pastoral professionals.

*E. Physiotherapy, Health Care, and Spiritual Dimensions*

Recent physiotherapy and health literature increasingly adopts a biopsychosocial-spiritual model of care, reflecting a more comprehensive understanding of human health and recovery. Nicholls et al. (2021) argued that contemporary physiotherapy practice is moving beyond a narrow focus on physical impairment to acknowledge the influence of psychological states, social context, and spiritual beliefs on rehabilitation outcomes. This shift recognises that pain perception, treatment adherence, motivation, and overall recovery are often shaped by patients' emotional resilience and spiritual outlook, particularly in cases of chronic illness, long-term disability, or traumatic injury.

Koenig (2020) further established that spirituality plays a significant role in clinical settings by positively influencing coping strategies, emotional stability, hope, and motivation during illness and recovery. Spiritual beliefs and practices can provide meaning, comfort, and a sense of purpose, which in turn enhance patients' engagement with treatment and their capacity to endure physical challenges. Within this integrated care model, access to accurate patient education materials, credible health information, and spiritually sensitive resources becomes essential. Libraries support this process by providing evidence-based health information, patient-friendly educational materials, and faith-sensitive resources that align with both clinical goals and spiritual care needs. In this way, library services contribute to integrated therapeutic care that complements physiotherapy while aligning closely with pastoral and counselling interventions.

*F. Interprofessional Collaboration and the Role of Libraries*

Studies on interprofessional collaboration increasingly highlight the expanding and strategic role of librarians within healthcare and supportive care teams. Marshall et al. (2023) found that librarians contribute directly to clinical and therapeutic outcomes by supporting evidence-based practice, delivering health literacy education, and collaborating with healthcare professionals in decision-making processes. Their findings demonstrate that librarians function as knowledge intermediaries who ensure that practitioners and patients have access to current, reliable, and context-appropriate information, thereby enhancing the quality of care. Similarly, Farukuoye (2023) observed that health sciences librarians are

increasingly integrated into interdisciplinary teams, working alongside clinicians, therapists, and educators to support patient care, research, and professional practice. This model of collaboration is particularly transferable to faith-based and community settings, where librarians can work alongside pastoral caregivers, counsellors, and physiotherapists. By facilitating access to interdisciplinary resources and supporting information literacy across professional boundaries, libraries serve as connective platforms that strengthen collaboration and continuity of care. These findings reinforce the argument that integrating library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices enhances holistic care delivery by bridging spiritual, psychological, and physical dimensions of well-being.

#### G. *Summary and Research Gap*

Although recent literature supports interdisciplinary integration among theology, counselling, physiotherapy, and library science, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical studies that explicitly examine structured models for integrating library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices. Most existing studies address these areas independently rather than collaboratively. This gap justifies the present study, which seeks to explore how library services can be intentionally integrated into pastoral and therapeutic frameworks to promote holistic well-being.

#### H. *Methodology*

This study employed a qualitative, opinion-based, and literature-driven methodology grounded in secondary data. It relied on the critical review of scholarly and professional literature drawn from library and information science, theology, counselling, and physiotherapy, as well as theological texts, policy documents, and professional guidelines relevant to holistic care. Relevant sources were identified through systematic searches of academic databases and repositories using key terms related to library services, pastoral care, therapeutic practices, and holistic care. The selected literature was analysed using qualitative content analysis and thematic synthesis to identify recurring themes and conceptual relationships across theology, counselling, and physiotherapy, highlighting the interdisciplinary role of library services in pastoral and therapeutic contexts.

## V. **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

Using thematic content analysis, the reviewed literature reveals several interrelated themes that illuminate the role of library services in pastoral and therapeutic practices. These themes collectively demonstrate that libraries occupy a strategic yet under-recognized position within holistic care frameworks that integrate spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical dimensions of well-being.

#### A. *Library Services as Catalysts for Holistic Well-Being*

A dominant theme across the literature is the positioning of library services as active contributors to holistic well-being rather than passive repositories of information. Studies by Brewster and McNicol (2020) and Tukhareli (2024) consistently portray libraries as therapeutic environments that foster emotional support, reflection, and stress reduction. The findings suggest that when libraries intentionally curate wellness-oriented resources and create supportive spaces, they align closely with pastoral and therapeutic objectives.

This reinforces the view that libraries can serve as extensions of care environments, supporting healing processes that transcend academic or informational functions.

*B. Bibliotherapy as a Bridge between Library Services and Therapeutic Care*

The literature strongly identifies bibliotherapy as a critical mechanism through which library services intersect with counselling and pastoral care. Findings from Pehrsson, McMillen, and Pehrsson (2021) and Candra, Agniya, and Mardiyanto (2025) indicate that structured reading interventions facilitate self-awareness, emotional healing, and behavioural change. The thematic analysis highlights bibliotherapy as both a therapeutic tool and a collaborative practice, requiring ethical oversight and interdisciplinary cooperation. This positions librarians not as therapists but as informed facilitators who support therapeutic goals within clearly defined professional boundaries.

*C. Interdisciplinary Orientation of Contemporary Pastoral Care*

Another key theme emerging from the analysis is the growing interdisciplinary orientation of pastoral theology. The works of Swinton and Mowat (2020) and Lartey (2021) reveal that pastoral care increasingly integrates psychological and social science resources to address complex human needs. African scholarship, particularly Obi and Igeleko (2025), further demonstrates the practical incorporation of psychoeducational and therapeutic materials in pastoral counselling. These findings suggest that access to credible information resources—often mediated through libraries—is essential for effective pastoral practice in contemporary contexts.

*D. Information Literacy as an Enabler of Counselling Effectiveness*

The literature consistently underscores information literacy as a foundational element in effective counselling and guidance services. McLeod (2021) and Ijantiku, Ubogu, and Ejimonye (2024) emphasize that informed clients and evidence-aware practitioners achieve better therapeutic outcomes. The thematic analysis reveals that libraries contribute significantly by equipping both counsellors and clients with skills to locate, evaluate, and apply relevant information. This theme strengthens the argument that library services enhance therapeutic autonomy, informed decision-making, and professional competence within counselling and pastoral settings.

*E. Integration of Spirituality within Physiotherapy and Health Care*

Findings from physiotherapy and health literature reveal an emerging recognition of spirituality as a component of rehabilitation and recovery. Nicholls et al. (2021) and Koenig (2020) demonstrate that bio psychosocial-spiritual models improve patient motivation, coping, and adherence to treatment. The analysis indicates that library-provided patient education materials and spiritually sensitive health information support this integrated model of care. This theme highlights the indirect yet critical contribution of libraries to physiotherapy outcomes through informed patient participation and spiritual sensitivity.

*F. Librarians as Interprofessional Partners in Care Delivery*

A final theme centres on interprofessional collaboration and the evolving role of librarians within care teams. Studies by Marshall et al. (2023) and Farukuoye (2023) reveal that librarians contribute meaningfully to healthcare delivery through evidence-based information support and health literacy initiatives. The thematic synthesis suggests that this collaborative model is transferable to pastoral and therapeutic settings, where librarians can

function as information partners supporting counsellors, pastors, and physiotherapists. This finding reinforces the study's central argument that librarians should be formally recognized as contributors to holistic care delivery.

#### *G. Overall Interpretation of Findings*

Collectively, the thematic findings indicate that library services are strategically positioned to enhance pastoral and therapeutic practices, yet remain underutilized in formal care frameworks. While the literature affirms the value of interdisciplinary collaboration, it also exposes a gap in structured models and institutional policies that integrate library services into pastoral and therapeutic environments. The discussion therefore supports the study's conclusion that intentional collaboration and policy recognition are necessary to maximize the contribution of libraries to holistic well-being.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

This study examined the integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices through a thematic analysis of interdisciplinary literature drawn from theology, counselling, physiotherapy, and library and information science. The findings demonstrate that library services play a strategic yet underutilized role in supporting holistic care that addresses spiritual, emotional, psychological, and physical dimensions of well-being. Across the reviewed literature, libraries emerged as therapeutic spaces, facilitators of bibliotherapy, providers of information literacy support, and partners in interprofessional care delivery.

The study further revealed that contemporary pastoral care and therapeutic practices increasingly adopt interdisciplinary and bio psychosocial-spiritual models, creating opportunities for meaningful collaboration with library services. Bibliotherapy, patient education materials, and evidence-based information support were identified as key mechanisms through which libraries enhance counselling effectiveness, spiritual formation, and physiotherapy outcomes. Despite these contributions, the literature indicates a lack of formal frameworks and institutional recognition for integrating library services into pastoral and therapeutic settings. Consequently, the potential of libraries to contribute to holistic care remains insufficiently explored and systematically applied.

Overall, the study concludes that intentional integration of library services into pastoral and therapeutic practices can strengthen holistic care delivery, promote informed participation by clients and patients, and support interdisciplinary collaboration. However, achieving this integration requires deliberate institutional support, professional collaboration, and policy development.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed:

Faith-based institutions, healthcare organizations, and counselling centres should formally recognize librarians as partners in pastoral and therapeutic care delivery. Institutional policies should define collaborative roles for librarians in supporting spiritual care,

counselling services, and rehabilitation programs through information provision and literacy support.

Structured interdisciplinary collaboration models should be developed to facilitate cooperation among librarians, pastors, counsellors, and physiotherapists. Regular case conferences, joint program planning, and referral pathways can enhance coordinated care while respecting professional boundaries and ethical standards.

Libraries serving pastoral and therapeutic environments should intentionally develop and curate specialized collections that support bibliotherapy, spiritual formation, mental health education, and patient rehabilitation. These collections should be culturally and spiritually sensitive, particularly within faith-based and African contexts.

Training and professional development programs should be established to equip librarians with competencies in health information services, ethical bibliotherapy facilitation, and interdisciplinary communication. Similarly, pastoral caregivers and therapists should receive orientation on how to effectively utilize library services in their practice.

Information literacy programs tailored to counselling and therapeutic contexts should be implemented to empower clients, patients, and care providers. Such programs can enhance evidence-based decision-making, self-understanding, and adherence to therapeutic interventions.

Future research should move beyond conceptual and opinion-based studies to include empirical investigations that examine the outcomes of integrated library–pastoral–therapeutic models. Quantitative and mixed-methods studies are recommended to assess effectiveness, user experiences, and best practices across diverse institutional and cultural settings.

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