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User Satisfaction and Utilization of Library Resources and Services in Government and Aided College Libraries

DR. Ganesh Dutt Shukla Associate Professor – Library & Information Science, JB Mahajan Degree college, Chauri Chaura, Gorakhpur (U.P.) India

Received-02.12.2025, Revised-09.12.2025, Accepted-15.12.2025 **E-mail: gdshukla74@gmail.com**

Abstract: ***User satisfaction is a critical indicator of the effectiveness of academic libraries, reflecting how well resources and services meet the information needs of students, faculty, and researchers. This article examines user satisfaction and the utilization of library resources and services in government and aided (government-aided) college libraries, with particular attention to users' perceptions, patterns of resource use, service quality, and overall satisfaction levels. Drawing on empirical surveys from Indian contexts-including studies of college libraries in the Gorakhpur Division of Uttar Pradesh and comparable investigations in other states-the analysis reveals that a majority of users (often around 80–90% in available data) express general satisfaction with core traditional services such as book borrowing, basic reading facilities, and staff assistance. However, utilization remains concentrated on print textbooks and general collections, while e-resources, advanced digital services, inter-library loan, and certain support services show lower use and comparatively lower satisfaction. Key user concerns include inadequate or outdated collections, limited seating and infrastructure, slow internet or Wi-Fi, insufficient e-resources, and gaps in specialized academic support. Differences sometimes appear between government and aided colleges, influenced by funding, collection strength, and infrastructure. The article discusses these dimensions in detail, identifies factors influencing perception and satisfaction, and offers recommendations for improving service quality, enhancing resource utilization, and aligning library offerings more closely with user expectations in the digital era. Strengthening user-centered approaches is essential for government and aided college libraries to fulfil their educational mission effectively.***

Key words:*critical indicator,academic libraries,library resources, services meet, empirical surveys, approache.*

Introduction- Academic libraries exist primarily to support teaching, learning, and research. Their success is ultimately measured not only by the size of collections or the sophistication of technology but by the extent to which users find the resources and services useful, accessible, and satisfactory. User satisfaction surveys have therefore become standard tools for evaluating library performance, identifying gaps, and guiding improvements.

Government and aided college libraries form a vital segment of India's higher education landscape. These institutions serve large numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students, many from diverse socio-economic backgrounds, and operate under varying degrees of public funding and regulatory oversight. In regions such as eastern Uttar Pradesh (including Gorakhpur Division), they play a particularly important role in expanding access to higher education. Yet these libraries often face constraints of budget, space, staffing, and technological infrastructure that can affect both the quality of services offered and users' experiences.

Recent studies examining college libraries in the Gorakhpur Division and similar settings report relatively high overall satisfaction with basic facilities (one survey of 33 colleges indicated approximately 88.9% of students were satisfied with library facilities), alongside clear areas of concern. Users frequently visit libraries for borrowing books, reading, and preparing for examinations or assignments. Satisfaction tends to be higher for traditional print resources and circulation services, while digital resources, internet quality, specialized services, and infrastructure limitations generate more mixed or negative feedback.

This article synthesizes findings from relevant empirical work to explore four interconnected dimensions: users' perceptions of library offerings; patterns of resource utilization; assessments of service quality; and measured levels of satisfaction. It highlights common strengths and weaknesses in government and aided college libraries, notes variations where data allow, and discusses implications for practice and policy. The goal is to provide an evidence-informed overview that can support librarians, college administrators, and higher education planners in enhancing user-centered library services.

Users' Perception of Library Resources and Services- Users' perceptions shape whether and how they engage with the library. Perception is influenced by prior experiences, expectations formed by comparison with other information sources (including the open internet and commercial platforms), awareness of available services, and the tangible quality of interactions with staff and facilities.

In surveys of government and aided college libraries, users commonly perceive the library as a place primarily for borrowing textbooks and studying in a relatively quiet environment. Staff helpfulness and courtesy frequently receive positive evaluations; many respondents appreciate the assistance received in

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e–I S S N NO.- 2582 – 2454 (Online)
Vol.-19 No.-IV, Issues-38, YEAR- Oct.-Dec.2025

locating materials or using basic services. Physical access to collections is often rated favourably when materials are available on open shelves.

However, perceptions of collection adequacy are more varied. A recurring theme is that resources are insufficient in quantity or currency for advanced study or research needs. Users report that developments in collections are sometimes hampered by limited demand articulation or by institutional purchasing processes that do not systematically evaluate relevance before acquisition. Awareness of specialized or digital services is often incomplete; many students, particularly undergraduates, remain unfamiliar with current awareness services (CAS), selective dissemination of information (SDI), inter-library loan, or available e-resources beyond basic internet searching.

In the Gorakhpur Division context, while basic services such as borrowing, internet access, and Wi-Fi are widely available and generally recognized, users still perceive gaps in digital depth and infrastructure quality. Perceptions of service quality are closely tied to reliability-slow internet, power interruptions, or crowded seating can quickly lower overall impressions even when core print services function adequately. Faculty members and postgraduate students typically hold higher expectations regarding research support and e-resources than undergraduate students, leading to more critical perceptions among the former groups. Positive perceptions of staff and traditional services provide a foundation of goodwill. Negative or neutral perceptions regarding digital offerings, collection depth, and physical comfort indicate areas where targeted communication, orientation programmes, and service enhancements can shift user views and encourage greater engagement.

Utilization of Library Resources- Utilization patterns reveal what users actually do with library offerings and where demand is strongest. Across multiple studies of government and aided college libraries, the most frequent purposes of library visits are borrowing books (especially textbooks and general reading materials), reading in the library, preparing assignments or notes, and consulting reference materials. Daily or frequent visits are common among a substantial proportion of students during examination periods or peak academic activity.

Print collections dominate usage- Textbooks and general books consistently record high utilization rates. Reference services and newspapers or magazines also see regular use. In contrast, utilization of e-journals, e-books, online databases, and institutional digital repositories tends to be lower, often constrained by limited subscriptions, inadequate promotion, insufficient user training, or bandwidth issues. Inter-library loan and document delivery services are used infrequently, reflecting both limited availability and low awareness.

In surveys covering Gorakhpur Division colleges, borrowing facilities are available in the large majority of institutions (around 91% in one study), and users actively employ them. Internet and Wi-Fi facilities, present in nearly all surveyed libraries, support some online activity, yet the depth of e-resource engagement remains modest. Problems reported by users during utilization include shortage of relevant resources (the most frequently cited issue in one analysis), slow internet speed, inadequate seating, power supply interruptions, and time-consuming manual processes where automation is incomplete.

Differences by user category are evident: undergraduate students focus heavily on textbooks and exam preparation materials; postgraduate students and faculty make relatively greater use of journals, reference works, and any available research-oriented resources. College type can also influence utilization intensity-better-resourced aided or larger institutions sometimes show higher or more varied use patterns than smaller or more constrained government colleges, although this is not uniform.

Low utilization of digital and specialized services does not necessarily indicate lack of need; it more often signals barriers of access, awareness, skills, or quality. Increasing utilization therefore requires both expanding relevant resources and actively guiding users toward them through orientation, information literacy sessions, and convenient interfaces.

Service Quality- Service quality in academic libraries encompasses multiple dimensions: the reliability and responsiveness of staff (affect of service), the adequacy and accessibility of information resources and tools (information control), and the physical and virtual environment of the library as place. Users evaluate quality through both objective experiences (whether a needed book is available, whether internet works) and subjective impressions (staff attitude, cleanliness, comfort).

Empirical findings indicate that core circulation and reference services generally receive favourable quality ratings. Users appreciate straightforward borrowing and return procedures and the help provided by library staff in locating materials. Basic physical facilities-lighting, drinking water, and seating-when present in adequate measure, contribute positively to perceived quality.

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Quality concerns arise more sharply in other areas. E-resource access and internet performance are frequently rated lower; slow speeds, limited terminals, or unreliable connectivity diminish the utility of digital services. Inter-library loan, specialized academic support (thesis/dissertation guidance, advanced literature searching), photocopying or printing facilities, and mobile-based or remote services often show moderate to low satisfaction, signalling quality shortfalls. Infrastructure limitations-inadequate separate library buildings (reported in nearly half of surveyed institutions in one Gorakhpur study), insufficient seating relative to user numbers, and outdated collections-further constrain service quality.

In comparative data from degree college libraries, aided colleges sometimes report higher overall resource satisfaction than government colleges, linked to stronger collections or better facilities in particular institutions. Government colleges may excel in certain ICT indicators in other studies, yet user-facing quality still depends on consistent maintenance, staff capacity, and user orientation. Service quality gaps are compounded when libraries lack trained personnel capable of delivering advanced assistance or when automation remains partial, leading to slower or less reliable transactions.

Improving service quality requires attention to both "hard" elements (collections, technology, space) and "soft" elements (staff training in user engagement, clear communication of services, responsive feedback mechanisms). Regular assessment using tools such as structured questionnaires or adapted LibQUAL+-style dimensions can help libraries monitor quality from the user's perspective.

Satisfaction Levels- Overall satisfaction levels in the available studies of government and aided college libraries are generally positive but not uniformly high. In the Gorakhpur Division survey covering multiple colleges, approximately 88.9% of student respondents expressed satisfaction with library facilities, while 11.1% reported dissatisfaction. Other Indian studies of similar institutions report majority satisfaction with traditional services and facilities, alongside clear dissatisfaction pockets regarding digital resources, internet quality, and specialized offerings. Satisfaction is typically highest for:

- General books and textbooks
- Circulation/borrowing services
- Basic reference assistance
- Staff cooperativeness
- Certain physical amenities (when adequate)

Satisfaction is lower or more mixed for:

- E-resources and digital collections
- Internet speed and reliability
- Inter-library loan and document delivery
- Support for research, theses, and advanced assignments
- Adequacy of seating, space, and overall infrastructure in constrained settings

Variations appear by user category and institutional type. Faculty and research-oriented users often register lower satisfaction on information control dimensions because their needs are more specialized. Aided colleges in some samples show higher proportions of "highly satisfied" users regarding resources than government colleges, reflecting differences in collection strength or facilities. Frequency of use also correlates with satisfaction: regular users who successfully obtain needed materials tend to report higher satisfaction, while those encountering barriers report lower levels.

User suggestions consistently point toward practical improvements: faster and more reliable Wi-Fi/internet, expanded and updated collections (both print and electronic), better seating and space, more computers, enhanced digital services, and greater staff support or training. Addressing these priorities has the potential to raise already substantial satisfaction levels further and to convert neutral or dissatisfied users into active, satisfied patrons.

Factors Influencing Satisfaction and Utilization- Several interrelated factors shape the observed patterns:

- **Collection relevance and currency:** Outdated or insufficient materials directly reduce both use and satisfaction.
- **Infrastructure and environment:** Space, seating, lighting, power reliability, and cleanliness affect the library-as-place experience.
- **Technology and connectivity:** Internet speed, number of access points, and availability of e-resources determine digital engagement.
- **Staffing and service delivery:** Qualified, approachable staff improve perception and help bridge gaps in user skills.

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- **Awareness and information literacy:** Users cannot utilize services they do not know about or cannot navigate effectively.
- **Institutional context:** Funding levels, college type (government versus aided), location (urban/rural), and administrative priority influence resource availability and maintenance.
- **User characteristics:** Level of study, discipline, and prior library experience moderate expectations and evaluations.

In the Gorakhpur and broader Uttar Pradesh context, the combination of high basic connectivity with limited advanced digital depth and infrastructural constraints creates a characteristic profile of moderate-to-high overall satisfaction tempered by specific frustrations.

Conclusion and Recommendations- User satisfaction and resource utilization in government and aided college libraries present a nuanced picture. A clear majority of users express satisfaction with traditional core services particularly book borrowing, basic reading facilities, and staff assistance and actively utilize print collections for academic purposes. This foundation of goodwill is valuable. At the same time, utilization of e-resources and advanced digital or specialized services remains limited, and satisfaction is lower in domains of digital access, collection depth, infrastructure comfort, and research support. Data from Gorakhpur Division colleges and comparable studies underscore both the strengths of widespread basic facilities and the persistent gaps that constrain fuller user engagement.

To enhance satisfaction and promote more effective utilization, the following measures are recommended:

- Conduct regular, structured user surveys (including perception, use frequency, satisfaction ratings, and open suggestions) and close the feedback loop by communicating actions taken.
- Strengthen print and electronic collections through needs-based acquisition, weeding of outdated materials, and active participation in national consortia (e.g., N-LIST) and open educational resources.
- Upgrade physical infrastructure-seating, space, lighting, power backup-and improve internet bandwidth and reliability within library premises.
- Expand and promote digital services, including remote access where feasible, mobile-friendly interfaces, and systematic user orientation and information literacy programmes.
- Invest in staff development so that library personnel can deliver higher-quality reference, research support, and technology assistance.
- Foster collaboration among government and aided colleges for resource sharing, joint training, and shared digital platforms.
- Align library development plans with institutional academic priorities and national digital education initiatives, ensuring sustained funding and administrative support.

By placing users' perceptions, actual utilization patterns, service quality, and satisfaction levels at the centre of planning, government and aided college libraries can evolve from primarily transactional spaces into more dynamic, responsive learning environments. Higher satisfaction and broader, deeper utilization will, in turn, strengthen the contribution of these libraries to student success and institutional educational goals.

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