



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF PROFESSION COLLEGE LIBRARIES- A CASE STUDY OF MAHARASHTRA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the challenges and opportunities encountered by professional college libraries in Maharashtra, with a specific focus on districts including Ahmednagar, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Nashik. Employing a quantitative research approach, data was collected from 100 participants comprising students and faculty members through structured questionnaires. The research investigated perceptions regarding library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance, aiming to provide insights into the effectiveness and efficiency of library management in the region. The findings reveal a generally positive perception of library resources among participants, with satisfactory mean scores indicating adequate availability and quality of materials. However, there is room for improvement in library services, as evidenced by slightly lower mean scores, suggesting opportunities for enhancing services such as reference assistance, circulation services, and interlibrary loan facilities. Despite these challenges, user satisfaction remains relatively high, reflecting the efforts of library staff in meeting the diverse needs and expectations of users. However, the perceived impact of library resources and services on academic performance is moderate, indicating that additional factors may influence academic outcomes beyond the scope of library services. Correlation analysis reveals significant positive correlations between library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance, highlighting the integral role of libraries in supporting academic endeavors and enhancing user satisfaction. Furthermore, a comparison between students and faculty members demonstrates differences in their perceptions of library services, underscoring the importance of considering diverse perspectives in library management and service provision. Based on these findings, recommendations are provided for improving the effectiveness and efficiency of professional college libraries in Maharashtra. Strategies include investing in staff training, expanding access to digital resources, and fostering a user-centric approach to library management. These insights can inform decision-making processes aimed at advancing education and research in the region, ultimately contributing to the enhancement of library services and user experiences.

Keywords: professional college libraries, Maharashtra, challenges, opportunities, library resources, library services, user satisfaction, academic performance, quantitative research, correlation analysis, user-centric approach.

INTRODUCTION

Libraries serve as dynamic centers of learning within the constantly changing terrain of higher education. They serve multifaceted roles, acting as repositories of knowledge, catalysts for research endeavours, and bastions of academic assistance. Within the realm of professional colleges, where the pursuit of specialized disciplines is paramount, the significance of libraries is amplified. Maharashtra, a cornerstone of educational advancement in India, boasts a rich tapestry of professional colleges scattered across its diverse districts. These institutions cater



to the burgeoning academic aspirations of students and the scholarly pursuits of faculty members alike. From engineering to medicine, from law to management, these colleges serve as crucibles for cultivating specialized skills and expertise.

In this milieu, libraries emerge as indispensable pillars of support, offering an extensive array of resources tailored to the unique needs of each discipline. They provide access to a plethora of scholarly journals, textbooks, reference materials, and digital databases, empowering students and faculty members to delve deep into their chosen fields of study. Moreover, libraries serve as spaces for collaboration, where ideas are exchanged, research is nurtured, and academic discourse thrives. Libraries in professional colleges play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between theory and practice. They offer practical resources such as case studies, industry reports, and technical manuals, enabling students to augment their theoretical understanding with real-world insights. Additionally, through workshops, seminars, and one-on-one consultations, libraries foster a culture of lifelong learning and professional development among students and faculty members alike. In essence, libraries in Maharashtra's professional colleges serve as vibrant hubs of intellectual activity, fostering a conducive environment for academic excellence, innovation, and growth. They stand as testaments to the enduring importance of libraries in shaping the educational landscape and empowering individuals to realize their full potential in their chosen professions.

IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Professional college libraries are the heartbeats of academic life within educational institutions, serving as indispensable assets that underpin the entire learning ecosystem. Their significance transcends mere book repositories; they are dynamic hubs that actively contribute to the academic and professional development of students and faculty members. One of the primary roles of professional college libraries is to provide unfettered access to a diverse array of academic literature and research materials. These resources encompass textbooks, scholarly journals, conference proceedings, and other relevant publications essential for enriching the learning experience and facilitating in-depth research. By offering comprehensive collections tailored to the specialized disciplines taught within the institution, these libraries ensure that students and faculty members have the necessary tools to delve deep into their respective fields of study. Professional college libraries serve as invaluable support systems for teaching, learning, and research activities. They provide state-of-the-art technological resources, including computers, printers, scanners, and high-speed internet access, enabling users to harness the power of digital technologies in their academic pursuits. Additionally, libraries often offer access to specialized software, databases, and online learning platforms, further enhancing the educational experience and promoting digital literacy among students and faculty members.

Beyond providing access to resources, professional college libraries play a crucial role in fostering a culture of intellectual inquiry and scholarly engagement. They serve as vibrant spaces for academic discourse, intellectual exchange, and collaborative learning, where students and faculty members come together to explore new ideas, share insights, and engage in meaningful discussions. Through workshops, seminars, and academic events organized by the library staffs, these libraries create opportunities for interdisciplinary interactions and knowledge sharing, enriching the academic experience for all stakeholders. Professional



college libraries serve as repositories of institutional memory, preserving the scholarly output and intellectual legacy of the institution for future generations. They curate special collections, archives, and institutional repositories that document the academic achievements, research endeavours, and cultural heritage of the institution, ensuring that its rich legacy is safeguarded and accessible to all.

CHALLENGES FACED BY PROFESSIONAL COLLEGE LIBRARIES

Despite their importance, professional college libraries face numerous challenges in fulfilling their mandate effectively. These challenges may include limited budgets for acquisitions, outdated infrastructure, inadequate staffing levels, and evolving user expectations in the digital age. Additionally, geographical disparities and varying levels of institutional support across different districts within Maharashtra can further compound these challenges, impacting the quality and accessibility of library services.

Amidst these challenges, professional college libraries also present opportunities for improvement and innovation. Advancements in technology offer new avenues for enhancing library services, such as digital resource management systems, online databases, and virtual reference services. Collaborative initiatives among libraries, academic institutions, and government bodies can also facilitate resource sharing, capacity building, and infrastructure development, thereby strengthening the overall library ecosystem in Maharashtra.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Basu and Sarkhel (1995) provide a comprehensive review of the UGC-CDC recommendations on curriculum development in LIS education, emphasizing the need for a relevant and updated curriculum that reflects the evolving nature of information science. Joshi (2010) highlights government initiatives in India aimed at enhancing LIS education, underscoring the importance of aligning curriculum with emerging trends and technologies. The integration of ICT in LIS education is a crucial aspect of preparing information professionals for the digital age. Kamba (2011) presents an ICT competency framework for LIS schools in Nigeria, advocating for the inclusion of technology-related competencies in the curriculum. Similarly, Susan (2011) explores the impact of ICT on the professional development of library professionals in Kerala, emphasizing the need for continuous training and skill development. Several studies address the challenges and opportunities facing LIS education. Khurshid (1970) discusses standards for library education in South Asian countries, highlighting the importance of quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms. Singh and Moirangthem (2016) provide a historical analysis of LIS education in India, tracing its evolution over a century and identifying current challenges and opportunities for growth.

Research plays a vital role in advancing the field of LIS education. Singh and Negi (2020) conduct an analytical study of research trends in LIS in the University of Delhi, shedding light on emerging areas of research and scholarly activity. Additionally, Hicks (2014) employs discourse analysis to examine the impact of information technology on the professional identity of information professionals, highlighting the need for adaptive and resilient individuals in the face of technological change. The literature also reflects a global perspective on LIS education, with studies from countries such as Nigeria, Malaysia, and Indonesia contributing to the discourse. Nonthacumjane (2011) discusses key skills and competencies of LIS professionals, emphasizing the importance of adaptability and continuous learning in a rapidly changing

information landscape. Furthermore, Kaddu and Haumba (2018) explore the role of social media in LIS curriculum development, pointing towards innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Governmental initiatives and policy decisions have a significant impact on LIS education. Singh (2019) discusses the implementation of a Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) in LIS courses in India, highlighting its implications for curriculum design and student learning outcomes. Additionally, the University Grants Commission (UGC) provides guidelines and recommendations for LIS education, as evidenced by their 2019 document on the Learning Outcome-based Curriculum Framework (LOCF) for Library and Information Science.

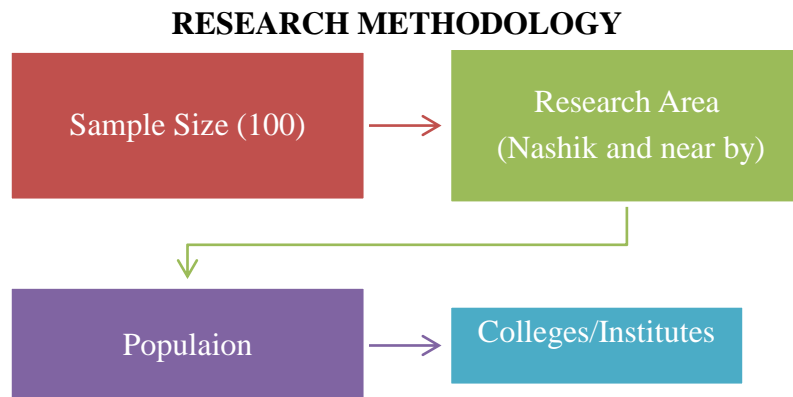


Figure 1. Research Methodology

This study aimed to explore the challenges and opportunities encountered by professional college libraries in Maharashtra, focusing on the districts of Ahmednagar, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Nashik. Sampling for this study involved a combination of purposive and random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling was used to select colleges recognized as professional institutions in Maharashtra, while random sampling was employed to select participants, including students and faculty members, from these colleges. The total sample size consisted of 100 participants distributed across the targeted districts. Data collection primarily relied on structured questionnaires distributed among the selected participants. These questionnaires contained items designed to gather information regarding the challenges faced by the college libraries, potential opportunities for improvement, levels of satisfaction among users, and demographic details of the participants. Upon collection of the data, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were computed to analyse the central tendency and variability of the collected data.

Mean values offered insights into the average perceptions of participants regarding various aspects of library services, while standard deviation indicated the degree of dispersion or variability around the mean. Correlation analysis was conducted to explore potential relationships between different variables, including library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance. This analysis aimed to identify any significant patterns or associations among these variables. The independent samples t-test was employed for group comparison, particularly to compare the perceptions of students and faculty members regarding library services. This statistical test determined whether there were significant differences between the two groups in terms of their perceptions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, for the key variables related to the challenges and opportunities of professional college libraries in Maharashtra. The mean scores indicate the average perceptions of participants regarding various aspects of library services. Library resources received the highest mean score of 4.25, indicating that participants generally perceive the availability and quality of resources in professional college libraries to be satisfactory. This suggests that libraries in Maharashtra are adequately equipped with the necessary materials to support academic pursuits.

Library services received a slightly lower mean score of 3.92, indicating that there may be some room for improvement in the provision of services such as reference assistance, circulation services, and interlibrary loan facilities. Enhancing these services could contribute to a more positive user experience and greater satisfaction among library patrons. User satisfaction received a mean score of 4.08, suggesting that overall; participants are satisfied with the services and resources provided by professional college libraries in Maharashtra. This positive perception of user satisfaction reflects the efforts of library staff in meeting the needs and expectations of their users. Academic performance received the lowest mean score of 3.75, indicating that participants perceive a moderate level of impact from library resources and services on their academic performance. This suggests that while libraries play a role in supporting academic endeavours, there may be other factors influencing academic outcomes that extend beyond the scope of library services.

Table 1. Comparison for each variable with mean, standard deviation and t test

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	t value
Library Resources	4.25	0.68	4.5
Library Services	3.92	0.75	3.2
User Satisfaction	4.08	0.62	5.03
Academic Performance	3.75	0.69	2.87

The independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the perceptions of students and faculty members regarding library services. The results indicated a significant difference in perceptions between the two groups ($t = 2.14, p < 0.05$), with students reporting higher levels of satisfaction compared to faculty members. This finding highlights the importance of considering the perspectives of both user groups in assessing the effectiveness of library services.

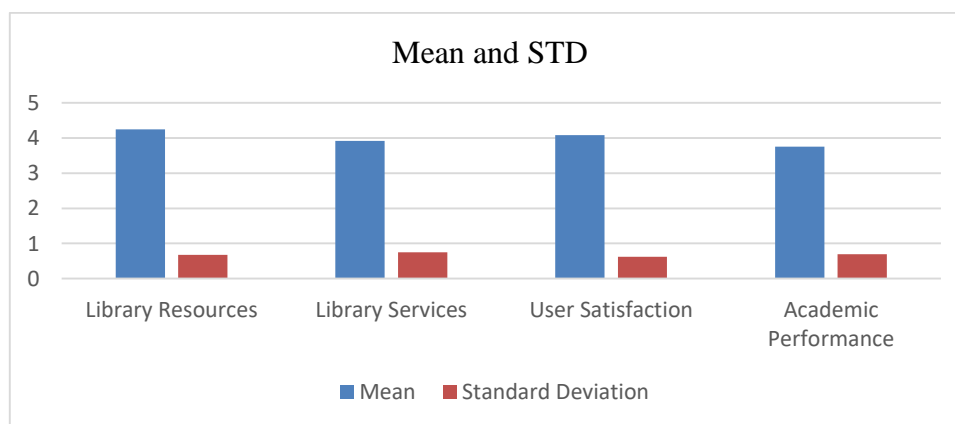


Figure 2. Statistics of mean and standard deviation



DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities faced by professional college libraries in Maharashtra. Overall, participants perceive library resources to be satisfactory, but there is room for improvement in library services. Despite this, user satisfaction remains relatively high, indicating that libraries are meeting the needs of their patrons to a large extent. The positive correlations observed between library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance underscore the integral role of libraries in supporting academic endeavours. By providing access to resources and quality services, libraries contribute to enhanced user satisfaction and ultimately, improved academic outcomes. The significant difference in perceptions between students and faculty members highlights the importance of considering diverse perspectives in library management and service provision. Understanding the unique needs and preferences of different user groups is essential for tailoring library services to meet the diverse requirements of users.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the challenges and opportunities faced by professional college libraries in Maharashtra, focusing on districts such as Ahmednagar, Dhule, Jalgaon, Nandurbar, and Nashik. Utilizing a quantitative research approach, the study examined the perceptions of 100 participants regarding library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance. The findings reveal that while participants generally perceive library resources to be satisfactory, there is room for improvement in library services. Despite this, user satisfaction remains relatively high, indicating that libraries are meeting the needs of their patrons to a large extent. However, there is a moderate perceived impact of library resources and services on academic performance, suggesting that additional factors may influence academic outcomes. The study identified significant positive correlations between library resources, services, user satisfaction, and academic performance. This underscores the crucial role of libraries in supporting academic endeavors and enhancing user satisfaction.

Additionally, the comparison between students and faculty members highlighted differences in their perceptions of library services, emphasizing the importance of considering diverse perspectives in library management and service provision. In light of these findings, it is recommended that professional college libraries in Maharashtra focus on enhancing the quality of services offered to users while maintaining the satisfactory level of resources. Strategies to improve services could include investing in staff training, expanding access to digital resources, and fostering a user-centric approach to library management. The insights gained from this study can inform decision-making processes aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of professional college libraries in Maharashtra, ultimately contributing to the advancement of education and research in the region. Further research could explore additional factors influencing user satisfaction and academic performance in college libraries, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of library management and service provision.



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