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A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON LIBRARY USE HABITS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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Abstract

The library is an important academic resource in university education because it supports reading, self-study, assignment preparation, research work, and examination preparation. In the present digital age, university students use both physical and digital library resources. However, their library use habits differ according to their academic needs, awareness, time availability, reading interest, and access to electronic resources. The present descriptive study focuses on library use habits among university students. It examines how often students visit the library, the purposes for which they use it, the types of resources they prefer, their awareness of library services, and the difficulties they face while using the library. The study is descriptive in nature because it attempts to describe the existing pattern of library use without manipulating any variable. The study is useful for understanding students' academic behaviour and for improving library services according to their needs. A well-used library can improve students' learning habits, information literacy, independent study skills, and academic confidence. Therefore, the study highlights the importance of student-friendly library facilities, digital access, orientation programmes, and librarian support in higher education.

Keywords

Library use habits, university students, academic library, reading habits, information seeking behaviour, digital resources, information literacy

1. Introduction

A university library is one of the most important academic support systems in higher education because it provides students with the resources required for learning, reading, research, and academic growth. It contains textbooks, reference books, journals, newspapers, magazines, theses, dissertations, reports, electronic databases, and other learning materials. In university education, students cannot depend only on classroom lectures because higher education requires wider reading and independent understanding. The library gives students an opportunity to study beyond the syllabus and develop deeper knowledge of their subjects. It also provides a peaceful environment where students can read, think, write, and prepare their academic work with concentration. Therefore, the university library is not only a place for borrowing books but also a centre for academic development, self-learning, and intellectual growth.

In the present academic environment, the role of libraries has become much wider than before. Earlier, students mainly used printed books, newspapers, and reference materials available on library shelves. However, with the development of digital technology, students now use both printed and electronic resources. E-books, online journals, digital repositories, databases, and internet-based academic resources have become important parts of university library services. This change has made information more accessible and flexible for students. At the same time, it has also created some difficulties because many students do not know how to use academic databases properly. Some students depend only on general internet sources, which may not always be reliable for academic writing. Therefore, it is



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necessary to study how university students actually use library resources in their daily academic life.

Library use habits refer to the regular pattern of using library resources and services by students. These habits include visiting the library, borrowing books, reading newspapers and journals, using reference materials, searching catalogues, accessing digital resources, consulting librarians, and using reading rooms for study. Good library use habits show that students are serious about their studies and are willing to use available academic resources. A student who uses the library regularly develops better reading habits, better information-searching skills, and better academic confidence. Library use also helps students become independent learners because they learn how to search, select, evaluate, and use information for their studies.

In many universities, libraries provide many useful facilities, but students do not always use them fully. Some students visit the library only during examination time, while some use it only as a quiet place for sitting and reading personal notes. Some students use the library mainly for newspapers, internet access, or competitive examination books. On the other hand, serious students and research scholars may use journals, reference books, theses, and databases for academic work. These different patterns show that library use depends on many factors such as students' interest, course requirements, teacher guidance, availability of books, library environment, digital literacy, and support from librarians. Therefore, library use habits are not the same for every student.

A descriptive study on library use habits is useful because it helps to understand the present condition of library use among university students. This type of study does not try to prove cause-and-effect relationships. Instead, it describes how students use the library, how often they visit it, what resources they prefer, and what problems they face. Such a study can help university authorities and librarians improve library services according to students' needs. It can also help teachers encourage students to use library resources more effectively. In this way, the study is important for improving reading culture, academic performance, and research skills among university students.

2. Meaning of Library Use Habits

Library use habits mean the regular behaviour and practices of students related to the use of library resources and services. These habits include how often students visit the library, how much time they spend there, what type of books or materials they use, and for what purpose they use the library. It also includes whether students use printed books, journals, newspapers, digital databases, e-books, or other academic resources. Library use habits are not limited to borrowing books only. They also include reading inside the library, searching the catalogue, using OPAC, taking help from librarians, and using digital library services for academic purposes.

In simple words, library use habits show the relationship between students and library resources. A student who visits the library regularly, reads books, searches for academic information, uses reference sources, and asks for librarian guidance can be considered a regular library user. Such students usually have strong academic habits because they try to collect information from reliable sources. On the other hand, students who visit the library only during examinations or use it only as a sitting place may have weak or limited library use habits. This does not mean that such students are not interested in studies, but it shows that they may not be fully aware of the academic value of library resources.

Library use habits are important because they reflect students' academic discipline and learning attitude. Students who develop regular reading and information-searching habits are usually more confident in their studies. They are able to complete assignments, prepare presentations, write research papers, and understand subject matter in a better way. Regular library use also helps students improve their vocabulary, writing style, critical thinking, and general



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knowledge. Therefore, library use habits are directly connected with academic growth and personality development.

3. Importance of Library in University Education

The university library plays a very important role in higher education because it supports classroom teaching and independent learning. Classroom lectures provide basic knowledge about a topic, but the library helps students explore the topic in detail. In university education, students are expected to read beyond class notes and textbooks. They need to consult reference books, journals, research articles, and other academic sources. The library provides these materials in one place and helps students develop a deeper understanding of their subjects. Therefore, the library is an essential part of the teaching-learning process.

The library also helps students develop academic reading habits. Reading is one of the most important skills required in higher education. When students regularly read textbooks, reference books, journals, newspapers, and magazines, they improve their language, knowledge, and thinking ability. Regular reading also helps students understand different viewpoints and develop analytical skills. Students who use library resources regularly are more likely to perform well in classroom discussions, assignments, examinations, and seminars. In this way, the library contributes to the overall academic development of students.

The library is also important for research work. University students, especially postgraduate students and research scholars, need reliable and authentic sources for preparing research proposals, dissertations, theses, and research papers. Academic libraries provide access to peer-reviewed journals, theses, dissertations, reports, and databases. These sources are more reliable than random internet material. In academic writing, the quality of sources is very important. Therefore, the library helps students maintain academic seriousness and avoid weak or unreliable information.

Libraries also support equality in education. Not all students can afford to buy expensive books, journals, or online resources. Some students come from economically weaker backgrounds and depend heavily on library facilities. The university library provides common access to books, journals, newspapers, internet facilities, and reading space for all students. In this way, it reduces academic inequality and gives every student an equal opportunity to learn. Therefore, the library is not only an academic institution but also a democratic space for learning.

4. Purposes of Library Use among University Students

University students use the library for many different purposes according to their academic needs and personal interests. Some students visit the library to borrow textbooks related to their syllabus. Some use it for preparing assignments, seminars, presentations, and project work. Many students use the reading room because it provides a peaceful and disciplined environment for study. Some students read newspapers and magazines to improve their general awareness. Postgraduate students and research scholars often use journals, theses, dissertations, and digital databases for research purposes.

The most common purpose of library use is academic preparation. Students need books and reference materials to understand their syllabus clearly. During examination time, library use generally increases because students need textbooks, guides, previous question papers, and quiet study space. However, library use should not be limited only to examination preparation. If students use the library regularly throughout the semester, they can understand topics better and avoid pressure during exams. Regular use of the library makes learning systematic and continuous.



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Another important purpose of library use is assignment and project preparation. In university education, students are often required to prepare written assignments, reports, presentations, fieldwork reports, and research-based projects. For this, they need authentic and relevant information. The library helps students find proper sources and avoid depending completely on general internet material. Library resources also help students write better assignments because they can support their points with books, journals, and research articles.

Some students also use the library for general reading and personal development. Newspapers, magazines, biographies, competitive examination books, and general knowledge books help students improve awareness about society, current affairs, careers, and public issues. Such reading is useful not only for academic development but also for personality development. Therefore, the library supports both formal education and general intellectual growth.

5. Frequency of Library Visits

Frequency of library visits is an important indicator of students' library use habits. It shows how regularly students use the library and how closely they are connected with library resources. Students who visit the library daily or several times a week are usually more familiar with available books, services, rules, and facilities. Regular visits also help students develop reading discipline and time management. Such students are more likely to use the library not only for examinations but also for assignments, research, and general reading.

However, the frequency of library visits may differ from student to student. Some students visit the library daily because they are preparing for examinations, competitive tests, or research work. Some students visit two or three times a week for borrowing books or reading newspapers. Some students visit the library only when teachers give assignments or when they need specific books. There are also students who visit the library only during examination time. This irregular pattern shows that many students may not fully understand the academic importance of regular library use.

A descriptive study can measure library visit frequency through categories such as daily, weekly, monthly, occasionally, only during exams, and never. This type of classification helps the researcher understand the general pattern of library use among students. It also helps identify whether students have strong, moderate, limited, or weak library habits. If most students visit the library rarely, the university needs to improve awareness, facilities, and motivation for library use.

6. Types of Library Resources Used by Students

University libraries provide different types of resources for students. These resources include textbooks, reference books, newspapers, journals, magazines, reports, theses, dissertations, e-books, online databases, previous question papers, and institutional repositories. Students choose these resources according to their course, academic level, purpose, and personal interest. For example, a student preparing for an exam may use textbooks and notes, while a research scholar may use journals, theses, and databases.

Undergraduate students usually use textbooks, general reference books, and newspapers. Their main purpose is to understand the syllabus and prepare for examinations. Postgraduate students may use more advanced books, research articles, journals, and dissertations because their academic work requires deeper study. Research scholars need specialised resources such as peer-reviewed journals, citation databases, research reports, and theses. Therefore, the type of resources used by students depends largely on their academic maturity and research needs.



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Digital resources have become very important in modern university libraries. E-books, online journals, digital repositories, databases, and OPAC services allow students to search information quickly. These resources are especially useful for research work because they provide updated and wide-ranging information. However, students need proper training to use digital resources effectively. Without training, they may not know how to search by keywords, use filters, download articles, or identify reliable sources.

Many students still prefer printed books because they are easy to read and useful for long study hours. Printed books are especially helpful for examination preparation, conceptual understanding, and classroom-related reading. On the other hand, digital resources are useful for quick searching, updated research, and remote access. Therefore, both print and digital resources are important in university education. A good library should maintain a balance between traditional and modern resources.

7. Use of Digital Library Services

Digital library services have changed the way students use academic libraries. Earlier, students had to visit the library physically to search books and collect information. Now, many library services are available through computers and mobile devices. University libraries provide online catalogues, e-books, e-journals, databases, digital repositories, previous question papers, and remote access facilities. These services save time and make academic information more accessible to students.

Students use digital library services for different academic purposes. They search research articles, download study materials, prepare assignments, collect references, and find literature for projects and dissertations. Digital resources are especially useful for postgraduate students and research scholars because they need current and research-based information. Digital library services also help students access material outside library hours, which makes learning more flexible.

However, all students are not equally skilled in using digital library services. Some students do not know how to use OPAC, search databases, apply keywords, or identify peer-reviewed sources. Some students may also face problems due to poor internet access, lack of computer skills, or lack of awareness. This creates a gap between available resources and actual use. Therefore, digital literacy training is very important for university students.

One major challenge is that students often confuse general internet searching with academic searching. Searching information through Google is easy, but academic databases require proper search techniques. Students need to learn how to use keywords, Boolean operators, filters, citation tools, and subject databases. If they do not learn these skills, they may depend on weak or unreliable online sources. Therefore, university libraries should organise training programmes to improve students' digital library use.

8. Awareness of Library Services

Awareness of library services is very important for effective library use. If students do not know what services are available, they cannot use them properly. Many students are aware of basic services such as book borrowing, reading rooms, and newspapers. However, they may not know about other useful services such as reference service, OPAC, digital databases, plagiarism checking support, reprography, current awareness service, inter-library loan, and library orientation programmes. Lack of awareness reduces the usefulness of the library.

Low awareness can create a wrong impression among students that the library has limited resources. Sometimes,



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students may say that the library does not have enough material, but in reality, they may not know how to find available resources. This happens when students are not trained in catalogue searching, shelf arrangement, or digital database use. Therefore, awareness is necessary to connect students with library resources.

The awareness gap can be reduced through proper communication. Libraries can organise orientation programmes for new students at the beginning of the session. Notices, posters, library websites, brochures, classroom announcements, and social media groups can also be used to inform students about services. Teachers can also play an important role by encouraging students to use library resources for assignments and class preparation.

Librarians play a major role in increasing students' awareness. A helpful and friendly librarian can guide students in searching books, using catalogues, finding journals, and accessing digital resources. If students feel comfortable asking questions, they are more likely to use library services regularly. Therefore, awareness of library services depends not only on facilities but also on the support and guidance provided by library staff.

9. Role of Librarians in Developing Library Use Habits

Librarians are not only responsible for issuing and returning books. They are important academic guides who help students find, understand, and use information properly. A librarian can explain how to search the catalogue, how to locate books on shelves, how to use reference sources, and how to access digital databases. In this way, librarians help students become better users of information.

Librarian support is especially important for new students. First-year students may feel confused when they enter a university library because the system is usually different from a school library. They may not understand classification numbers, accession numbers, catalogue systems, journal sections, or digital resources. Without guidance, they may feel uncomfortable and avoid using the library. Therefore, librarians must provide proper orientation and personal assistance to new users.

A helpful librarian can reduce fear and hesitation among students. Some students feel shy while asking questions because they think their doubts are very basic. If the librarian behaves politely and patiently, students feel more confident. Library orientation programmes, user education sessions, library tours, and one-to-one guidance can improve students' confidence. When students receive proper help, they are more likely to visit the library regularly and use resources effectively.

Librarians also help students develop information literacy. They teach students how to identify reliable sources, avoid plagiarism, use citations, and search academic databases. These skills are very important in higher education. Therefore, the role of librarians is not limited to library management. They also contribute to students' academic success and research development.

10. Problems Faced by Students in Using the Library

Students may face several problems while using the university library. These problems may be related to resources, infrastructure, technology, staff behaviour, or personal confidence. Common problems include shortage of latest books, limited copies of textbooks, lack of seating space, poor internet connection, limited library hours, difficulty in using catalogues, lack of awareness, and insufficient guidance. Such problems reduce students' interest in library use. One common problem is the non-availability of required books. Sometimes, books are outdated, damaged, unavailable, or already issued to other students. If the library has only a few copies of important textbooks, many



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students cannot access them at the same time. This problem becomes more serious during examination periods. Students may also face difficulty in finding subject-specific journals or research articles if the library does not subscribe to proper databases.

Some students may also face language-related problems. In many university libraries, most reference books and journals are available in English. Students from regional language backgrounds may find it difficult to understand such material. This can reduce their interest in using library resources. Libraries should try to include books in both English and regional languages where possible, especially for undergraduate students.

Another important problem is library anxiety. Some students feel nervous or uncomfortable while using the library because they do not understand the system. They may not know where books are kept, how to use OPAC, how to ask for help, or how to use digital services. This anxiety can stop students from using library resources fully. Therefore, libraries should create a friendly and supportive environment where students feel comfortable and confident.

11. Library Use and Academic Development

Library use has a strong connection with academic development because it provides students with access to knowledge beyond classroom teaching. Students who use the library regularly get more opportunities to read, compare, analyse, and understand different sources of information. They become familiar with books, journals, reports, and digital materials. This habit helps them improve their academic knowledge and perform better in studies.

Regular library use also improves students' reading and writing skills. When students read books and research articles, they learn new words, sentence structures, academic expressions, and subject terminology. This helps them write better assignments, reports, and examination answers. It also improves their ability to explain ideas clearly. Therefore, the library contributes to both content knowledge and academic writing ability.

Library use also develops independent learning. University education requires students to study by themselves and not depend only on teachers. The library helps students search for information, select useful material, and understand topics independently. This habit is very important for higher education because students are expected to become self-directed learners.

Library use also improves academic confidence. When students know where to find information and how to use it, they feel more prepared for seminars, discussions, presentations, examinations, and research work. They can participate better in academic activities because they have wider knowledge. In this way, library use supports knowledge, confidence, and personality development.

12. Suggestions for Improving Library Use Habits

University libraries should organise regular orientation programmes for students, especially at the beginning of the academic session. These programmes should explain library rules, book borrowing procedures, OPAC use, shelf arrangement, digital resources, journal sections, and reference services. Students should not only be told about these services theoretically but should also be given practical demonstrations. Practical training helps students understand the library system more clearly.

Libraries should also improve awareness of digital resources. Many students do not use e-books, online journals, and databases because they do not know how to access them. Short workshops should be organised on database searching, use of keywords, citation methods, plagiarism awareness, and academic writing support. These workshops can help



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students use digital library services more effectively.

The library environment should be comfortable and student-friendly. Proper seating, lighting, ventilation, cleanliness, internet access, drinking water, and quiet reading space can encourage students to visit the library regularly. If the library is overcrowded, noisy, or uncomfortable, students may avoid using it. Therefore, infrastructure improvement is necessary for developing good library habits.

Librarians should maintain a helpful and polite attitude toward students. Many students hesitate to ask questions because they feel shy or afraid. If librarians guide them patiently, students will feel more comfortable. A student-friendly library environment can reduce library anxiety and increase regular use of library services.

Teachers can also encourage students to use the library. They can give assignments that require the use of books, journals, and reference sources. They can also ask students to prepare presentations based on library material. When teachers connect classroom learning with library use, students understand the importance of the library and begin to use it more seriously.

13. Conclusion

The library is an essential part of university education because it supports reading, research, assignment preparation, examination preparation, and independent learning. It provides students with access to books, journals, newspapers, reference materials, digital databases, and peaceful study space. The present descriptive study on library use habits among university students shows that students use the library for different purposes such as borrowing books, preparing assignments, reading newspapers, using digital resources, and studying in a quiet environment.

However, library use habits may remain weak if students are not aware of available services or if they face problems such as lack of guidance, poor digital skills, limited books, shortage of seating space, language difficulty, and library anxiety. Many students use the library only during examination periods, which shows that regular library use needs to be encouraged. For this, universities should make libraries more accessible, modern, and student-friendly.

Regular orientation programmes, digital literacy training, librarian support, teacher encouragement, and better library facilities can improve library use habits among students. A strong library habit helps students become better readers, better learners, and more confident academic performers. Therefore, university libraries should be developed not only as book centres but also as active learning centres that support the overall academic development of students.

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