

Enhancing Library Engagement: A Student-Centric Study at MDSD College, Ambala City

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Abstract

The primary objective of this study is to examine the patterns of library usage, reading habits, motivational drivers, and the barriers that influence students' engagement with library services at MDSD College, Ambala City. The research aims to identify both enabling and inhibiting factors to enhance the effectiveness of library resources and promote a vibrant reading culture. A quantitative research design was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to a sample of 100 students enrolled in various undergraduate programs and the Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Applications (PGDCA) at MDSD College, Ambala City. The questionnaire captured data on frequency of library visits, preferred reading materials, sources of motivation, and perceived obstacles to library use. The collected responses were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to interpret trends and patterns. The findings indicate that a majority of students exhibit positive attitudes toward library usage, largely influenced by encouragement from the librarian and adherence to library norms. However, the study also identifies key barriers to regular library engagement, including limited digital access to resources, time management challenges due to academic and personal commitments. The study underscores the need for strategic interventions to improve library accessibility and student participation. Recommendations include expanding digital resource availability, implementing orientation programs to enhance library familiarity, and offering flexible hours to accommodate students' schedules. These measures can significantly contribute to building a more inclusive and motivated academic reading culture within the college.

Keywords: Academic libraries, information barriers, library services, library usage, MDSD college, reading culture, student engagement

INTRODUCTION

The libraries play a pivotal role in enhancing academic excellence and promoting sustained reading habits among students (Aina, 2004) [1]. They serve as knowledge hubs that support formal education, independent learning, and lifelong intellectual development. In today's rapidly evolving educational landscape – marked by the integration of digital technologies, diversified learning styles, and increased academic pressures – it becomes imperative to understand how students interact with library services and utilize reading resources (Corrall & Jolly, 2012) [2]. With changing student needs and preferences, academic libraries must adapt their services to remain relevant and effective.

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Understanding student behavior concerning library usage can provide valuable insights into the strengths and limitations of current library practices (Johnson, 2013) [3]. Moreover, it can help in identifying key motivational factors that encourage reading and library engagement, as well as barriers that hinder access or participation (Rao, 2019) [4]. This study analyzes the patterns of library use, the frequency and nature of reading habits, the role of

librarian in motivating students, and the common challenges faced by students in accessing and utilizing library services. The focus is on students enrolled in undergraduate programs and the PGDCA course at MDSD College. By gaining a deeper understanding of these dynamics, the study seeks to contribute to the development of more student-centric library services and foster a stronger reading culture within academic institutions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the library usage patterns among students.
2. To assess the influence of the librarian on reading motivation.
3. To identify the types of resources and services most frequently used.
4. To explore barriers that hinder library usage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative survey research method to systematically investigate students' library usage patterns, reading habits, motivational factors, and barriers to access (Singh & Bansal, 2011) [5]. A structured questionnaire was designed as the primary data collection tool, ensuring consistency and uniformity in responses. The questionnaire consisted questions, covering key areas such as frequency of library visits, types of reading materials used, reasons for using the library, sources of motivation, and perceived challenges in accessing library resources.

The survey was administered to a sample of 100 students enrolled in undergraduate and postgraduate diploma programs at MDSD College. The sample included students from diverse academic backgrounds, including Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.), Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.), and Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Applications (PGDCA), thereby ensuring broad representation across disciplines. To ensure data accuracy and reliability, the responses were carefully reviewed and coded before analysis. The collected data were then analyzed to identify trends and summarize the key findings. This analytical approach provided a clear picture of student behavior and perceptions regarding library usage, which informed the subsequent interpretation of results and formulation of recommendations.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The gender distribution as shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, a clear female majority among the respondents, with more than two-thirds of the participants being female. This may suggest a higher level of enrolment or active participation by female students in academic and library-related activities at MDSD College. The implications of this distribution are important for interpreting other findings in the study, such as motivation levels, reading habits, and barriers to library access, which may vary based on gender-specific needs and preferences. Institutions can use this data to consider targeted strategies for engaging both male and female students in library programs and services.

The Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) and Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.) programs exhibit consistent enrolment figures across all three years as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. This stability suggests sustained student interest and potentially effective retention strategies within these programs. The Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) program shows a notable decline in enrolment over the three-year period. The Postgraduate Diploma in Computer Applications (PGDCA), being a one-year program, understandably reflects enrolment only in the first year. It contributes a relatively small portion to the overall student population.

The data reveals that 76% of students feel motivated by the librarian as shown in Table 3 and Figure 3, underscoring the critical role a librarian plays in encouraging academic growth and fostering a positive reading culture within the institution. This level of motivation may stem from the librarian's proactive involvement, guidance in resource discovery, and personalized academic support. On the other hand, 24% of respondents reported not feeling motivated, which, though a minority, is a

substantial segment. This highlights the need for more inclusive and targeted engagement strategies. Efforts could include organizing orientation programs, conducting book talks, introducing personalized reading recommendations, and increasing student-librarian interactions through workshops or digital platforms.

The data indicates a nearly balanced distribution of student engagement with religious or cultural books as shown in Table 4 Figure 4. A slight majority (52%) of students reported that they read such books, suggesting a sustained interest in religious and cultural literature among the youth.

However, the 48% who do not engage in this practice highlights a significant portion that may either lack interest, time, or access to such resources. This data reflects the diverse reading preferences among students and points to an opportunity for libraries and institutions to promote religious and cultural literature through curated displays, events, and reading campaigns (Bhuvaneshwari, 2020) [6]. The near-even split may also be influenced by factors such as academic workload, personal beliefs, or digital distractions (Singh & Sharma, 2021) [7].

Table 1. Gender distribution of respondents.

Gender	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Male	32	32%
Female	68	68%
Total	100	100%

Table 2. Program-wise enrolment

Program	1 st Year	2 nd Year	3 rd Year
Bachelor of Arts (B.A)	15	15	15
Bachelor of Commerce (B.Com.)	11	11	11
Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.)	10	5	4
PGDCA	03	-	-
Total: 100	39	31	30

Table 3. Motivation by librarian.

Response	Number of Students
Yes	76
No	24

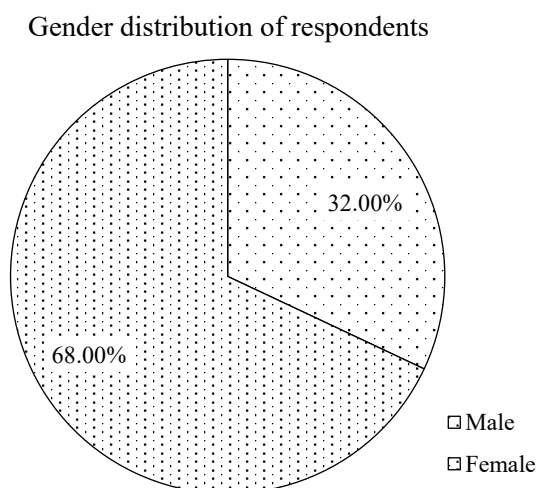


Figure 1. Gender distribution of respondents (pie chart).

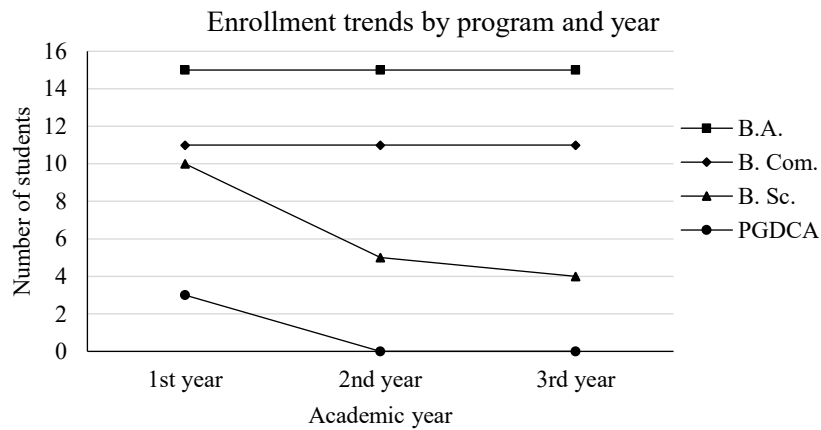


Figure 2. Enrolment trends across programs and years.

Student response on motivation by librarian

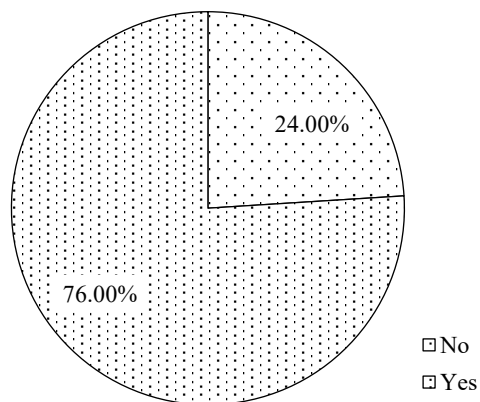


Figure 3. Student responses on motivation by librarian.

Table 4. Reading religious/cultural books.

Response	Number of Students
Yes	52
No	48

Reading of religious/cultural books by students

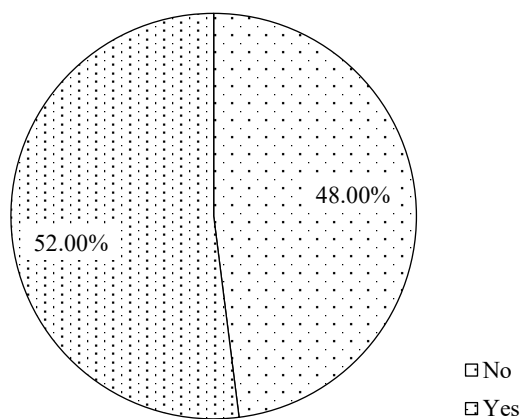


Figure 4. Reading religious/cultural books.

In Table 5, The data clearly shows that a large majority of students (76%) willingly follow library guidelines, while only 24% do not as you can also shown in Figure 5. This suggests that most students appreciate and respect the rules set by the library, which is a strong indicator of a positive academic environment and responsible library usage. Such a high compliance rate is due to effective orientation, clear communication of rules, or a strong library culture within the institution. However, the 24% who do not follow the guidelines, they require further attention.

In Table 6, The data clearly illustrates that a majority of students maintain a strong connection with the library:

- *Daily (38%)*: This group forms the largest segment, highlighting a regular habit of engaging with academic resources. This could be due to convenient access, a conducive study environment, or a strong academic culture.
- *Weekly (34%)*: These students, though not daily users, still rely significantly on library services, perhaps balancing their visits with coursework, jobs, or personal commitments.
- *Monthly (21%)*: This group may include students who visit during peak academic pressure periods like exams or assignment deadlines.
- *Never (7%)*: A small but concerning portion of students reported never using the library. This may be due to factors like unawareness, digital reliance, or perceptions of inadequacy in library resources as shown in Figure 6.

The combined 72% of students who visit the library daily or weekly is a strong indicator of the library's continued relevance. However, efforts such as orientation programs, digital promotions, and student-focused events could help engage the remaining 28% and increase overall library utilization.

Table 5. Willingly follow library guidelines.

Response	Number of Students
Yes	76
No	24

Table 6. Library visit frequency of students at MDSD college.

Frequency	Percentage (%)
Daily	38%
Weekly	34%
Monthly	21%
Never	7%

Willingness to follow library guidelines

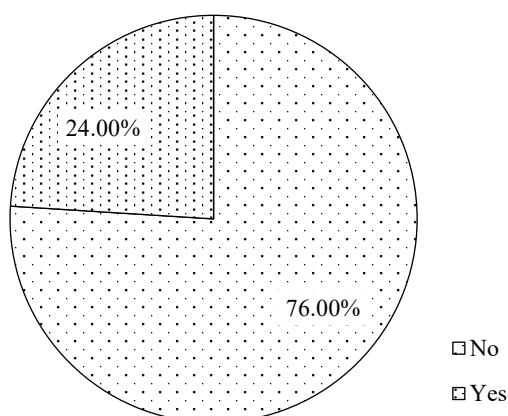


Figure 5. Willingly follow library guidelines.

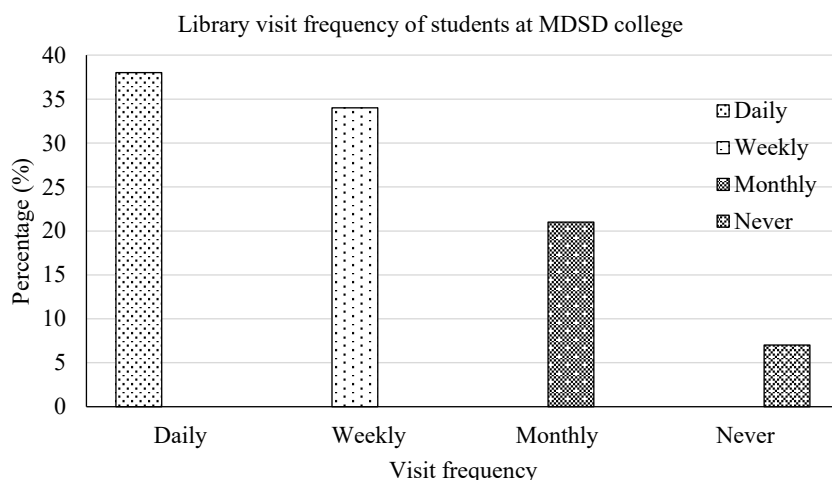


Figure 6. Library visit frequency of students at MDSD college.

In table 7, The data reveals that most students (68%) spend 0–2 hours per week in the library, indicating that while students may visit the library, their engagement duration is relatively brief. This may reflect time constraints, short-term use for specific tasks, or limited seating/resources. A smaller group (26%) spends 3–5 hours weekly, suggesting a moderate level of academic engagement with the library. These users likely utilize the library for more focused study or research sessions. Only 6% students report spending 6–8 hours per week in the library. This group likely represents highly motivated students, possibly involved in extensive research or exam preparations as shown in Figure 7.

In Table 8, The data reveals that the Issue and Return service is the most frequently and most preferred library function, with 72% of students (48% frequently + 24% most frequently) using it regularly. This underscores its importance in academic routines and reflects the effectiveness of the library's circulation services. Web-OPAC/OPAC Services and Current Awareness Services (CAS) also show healthy usage (Pomerantz & Marchionini, 2007) [8]. A total of 58% of students (39% frequently + 19% most frequently) regularly use OPAC, indicating familiarity with digital cataloguing and ease in locating resources. CAS is used frequently or most frequently by 52% of students, which is promising but still leaves room for growth. Book Reservation services show moderate engagement, with 50% of students using it frequently or most frequently. This may suggest occasional needs or limited awareness about the feature. Reference Services, however, appear underutilized. Only 36% of students use them frequently or most frequently, while 24% reported never using them – the highest “never” rate among all services. This implies a lack of awareness or training on how to effectively leverage reference help. The Internet/Wi-Fi facility shows mixed use. Although 39% of students reported “sometimes” using it, only 30% use it regularly (18% frequently + 12% most frequently). This could indicate variability in internet speed, accessibility, or students relying on personal data plans. The Reading Room Facility usage is relatively balanced, but only 9% report using it most frequently, suggesting potential dissatisfaction with factors like ambiance, comfort, or seating space as shown in Figure 8.

In Table 9, The data clearly shows that textbooks are the most frequently used library resource, with 59% of students (29% frequently + 30% most frequently) reporting regular use. This underscores their central importance in supporting academic coursework. E-resources—including e-books, e-journals, and online databases – also have a strong user base, with 39% of students (28% frequently + 11% most frequently) using them regularly. This indicates a positive trend toward digital literacy and the effective utilization of accessible digital content. Novels and general reading materials (fiction/non-fiction) show 36% regular usage (21% frequently + 15% most frequently), suggesting a healthy reading culture among students that extends beyond academic requirements. On the other hand, reference books (encyclopaedias, dictionaries) exhibit the highest rate of non-use, with 56% of students (27% never +

29% rarely) indicating they seldom or never use them. This may be due to a lack of awareness, perceived difficulty, or their limited relevance in the students' current academic needs. Competitive books and journals/magazines/newspapers also fall into the moderate-to-low usage categories. For competitive books, only 32% of students use them frequently or most frequently, while for journals/magazines, that number is just 26% as shown in Figure 9. Overall, the findings emphasize that core resources like textbooks and e-resources are being effectively utilized, whereas traditional materials such as reference books may require better promotion or integration into coursework to increase their usage.

Table 7. Weekly time spent in library by students.

No of Hours	No of students
0–2 hours	68
3–5 hours	26
6–8 hour	06

Table 8. How frequently do you use the following library services in the library?

Library Services	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Most Frequently
Issue and Return	4	10	14	48	24
Book Reservation	20	14	16	31	19
Current Awareness Services	16	14	18	32	20
Reference Service	24	11	29	23	13
Web-OPAC/OPAC Service	9	19	24	39	19
Internet Facility/Wi-Fi Facility	13	18	39	18	12
Reading Room Facility	14	23	29	25	9

Table 9. How frequently do you use library resources?

Information Resources	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Most Frequently
Textbooks	05	13	23	29	30
Reference Books (Encyclopedias/ Dictionaries)	27	29	27	11	06
Competitive books	23	16	29	18	14
Journals/ Magazines/ Newspaper	14	23	37	19	07
E-books, e-journals and online databases	12	17	32	28	11
Novels/Fiction/Non-Fiction/others	19	16	29	21	15

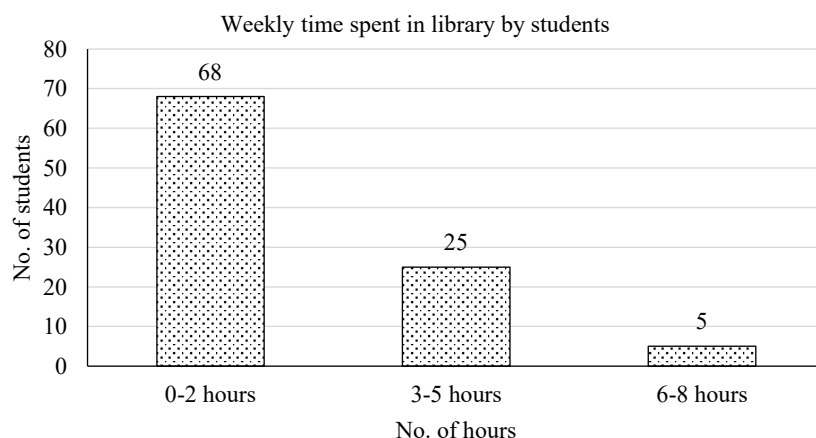


Figure 7. Weekly time spent in library by students.

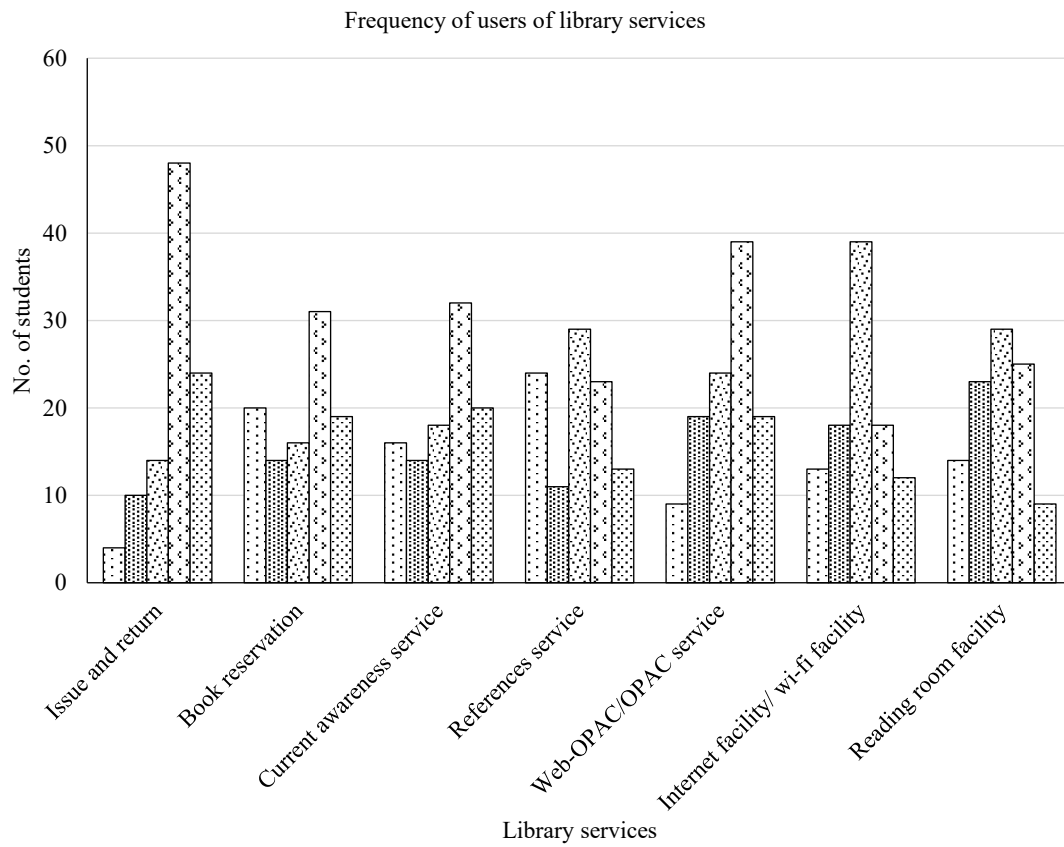


Figure 8. Use of library services in the library.

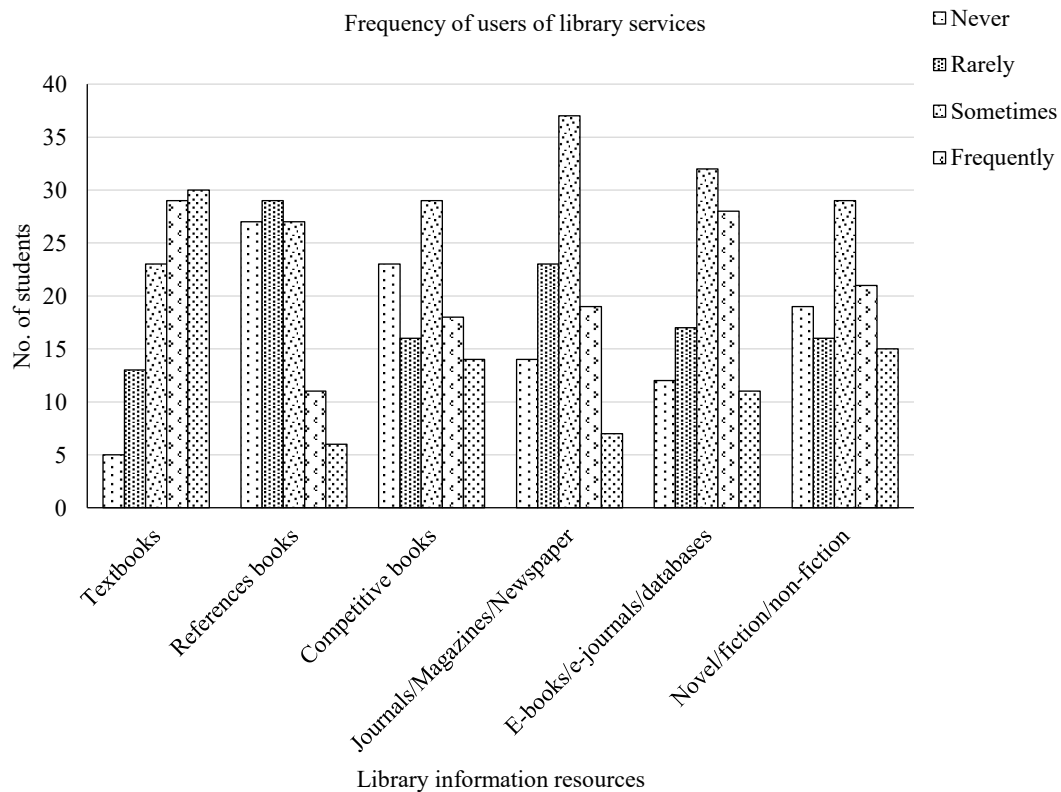


Figure 9. Frequency of use of library information resources.

In Table 10, The strongest consensus is seen for “Preparing Notes/Assignments”, with 83% of students (53% Agree + 30% Strongly Agree) supporting this purpose. This underscores the library’s critical role in facilitating academic work. Borrowing Books also shows significant utility, with 58% of students agreeing (42% Agree + 16% Strongly Agree), indicating that circulation services remain a key function of the library. Using OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) received 76% agreement (57% Agree + 19% Strongly Agree), highlighting high adoption and utility of digital search tools among students. Consulting Reference & Competitive Books is supported by 71% of students (54% Agree + 17% Strongly Agree), though it also has a moderate 13% disagreement (4% Strongly Disagree + 9% Disagree), possibly due to limited awareness or relevance to specific courses.

Reading the Newspaper shows a more balanced response, with 58% in agreement (39% Agree + 19% Strongly Agree) and 34% Neutral, suggesting that while valued, it may not be a priority for all students. Reading Books for Test and Examination has a healthy 65% agreement (51% Agree + 14% Strongly Agree), with 29% Neutral, indicating its importance during exam times. Browsing the Internet reflects 61% agreement (37% Agree + 24% Strongly Agree) but also notable disagreement (23%, i.e., 10% Strongly Disagree + 13% Disagree), which may point to issues with internet speed, access, or purpose mismatch. Using/Downloading E-Resources was supported by 68% of students (42% Agree + 26% Strongly Agree), suggesting growing comfort with digital content, though 15% disagreed, possibly reflecting gaps in awareness or access. Updating Knowledge had 67% agreement (44% Agree + 23% Strongly Agree) and 26% Neutral, indicating that while it's a recognized purpose, it may not be the immediate intent of every user as shown in Figure 10.

In Table 11, The most significant barrier identified by students is “No Prior Library Experience in School,” (Sahu PK, Mohanty B., 2019) [9] with 67% agreement. This highlights the importance of early exposure to library usage to build familiarity and confidence in accessing academic resources (Khan & Asghar, 2017) [10]. Additionally, 44% of respondents acknowledged a “Lack of Familiarity with Information Sources and Library Services,” and 41% agreed with “Lack of Knowledge of Computer Literacy Skills.”

These findings point to a pressing need for user education programs and digital literacy workshops (Dilek, 2016) [11]. A substantial portion of students (39%) also cited “No Extra Time for Library due to Regular Classes” as a hindrance, underscoring challenges related to academic workload and time management as shown in Figure 11. Conversely, librarian-related barriers were not considered significant by the majority (Smith M & Williams J, 2008) [12]. The study reflects positively on the helpfulness and supportiveness of the library staff.

Table 10. How much do you agree with the following purposes of use of the library?

Purpose	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Borrowing the books	02	05	17	42	16
Preparing notes/ assignments	0	07	10	53	30
Reading the newspaper	02	06	34	39	19
For reading books for test and examination	01	05	29	51	14
Consulting reference & Competitive books	4	9	16	54	17
For using OPAC	0	05	19	57	19
Browsing the internet	10	13	16	37	24
For using/downloading e-resources	06	09	17	42	26
For updating knowledge	02	05	26	44	23

Table 11. How much do you agree that the following reasons affect your Library use (1. Agree, 2. Disagree)

Barriers in Library Use	Agree	Disagree
No Prior Library Experience in School	67	33
Lack of knowledge in using the Library Services	39	61
Lack of Familiarities with Information Sources and Library Services	44	56
Librarian is not supportive	05	95
Lack of Guidance from the Librarian about Appropriate Sources	14	86
No extra time for library, due to regular classes	39	61
Lack of Knowledge of computer literacy skills	41	59
Strict Guidelines of Library or Poor Reading Environment in the Library	13	87

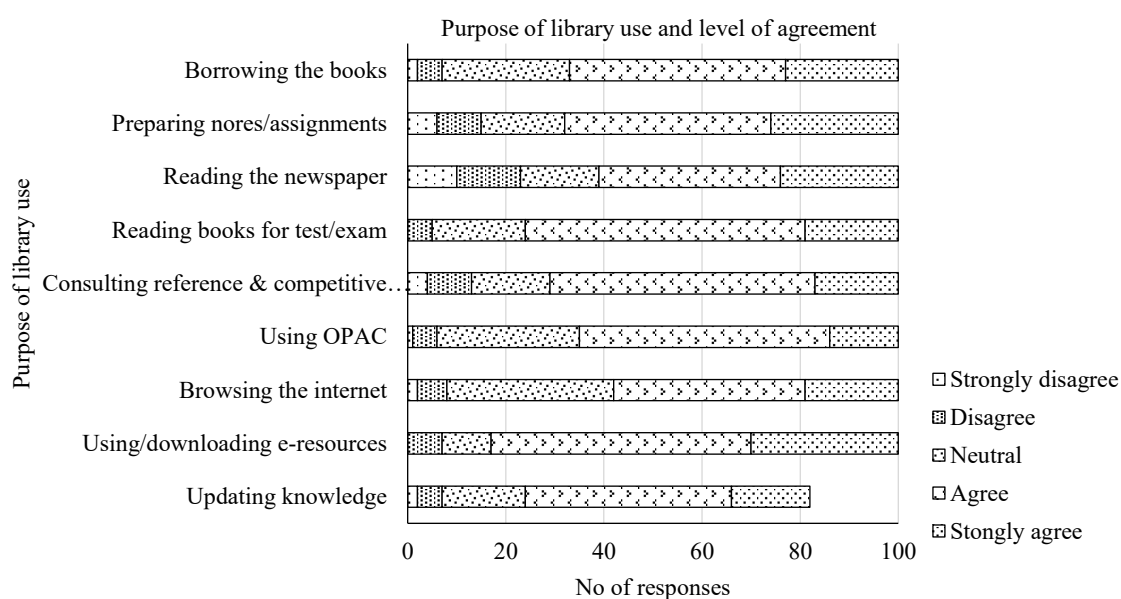


Figure 10. Purposes of library use.

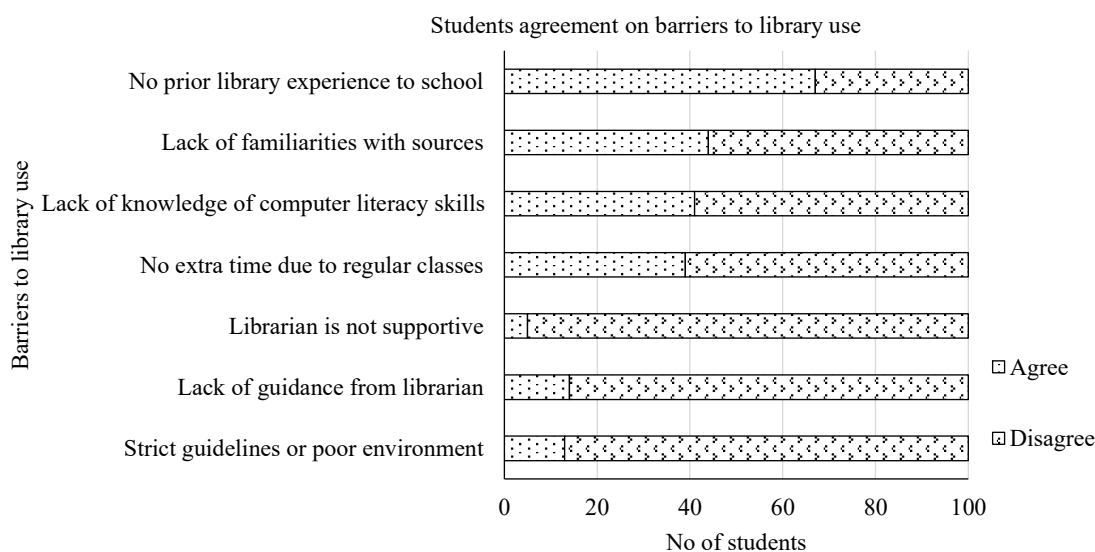


Figure 11. Barriers in library use.

FINDINGS

- Female students constitute a significant majority (68%) of the respondents, suggesting higher participation or enrolment of females in academic and library activities at MDS College.
- B.A. and B.Com. programs show stable enrolment across all three years.
- B.Sc. program shows declining enrolment from first to third year.
- PGDCA, being a one-year program, represents only a small portion of respondents (3%).
- 76% of students feel motivated by the librarian, highlighting the positive influence of library staff in promoting reading habits and academic engagement.
- 52% of students read religious or cultural books, while 48% do not indicating balanced interest and scope for further promotion of such literature.
- 76% of students willingly follow library guidelines, showing a positive attitude towards institutional rules and responsible library use.
- 72% of students visit the library daily or weekly, indicating regular engagement.
- 21% visit monthly, and 7% never use the library, highlighting a need to target infrequent users through awareness and outreach.
- A large majority (68%) spend only 0–2 hours weekly in the library, indicating short visits or limited engagement.
- Only 6% spend 6–8 hours, reflecting a small group of highly engaged users.
- Most used services include Issue and Return (72%), Web-OPAC (58%), and Current Awareness Services (52%).
- Other services used are Book Reservation (50%), Internet/Wi-Fi (30%), and Reading Room (34%).
- Most frequently used resources are Textbooks (59%), E-resources (39%), and General Reading Material (36%).
- The main purposes of library use are preparing notes/assignments (83%), using OPAC (76%), consulting reference/competitive books (71%), and updating knowledge (67%).
- Additional purposes include borrowing books (58%), reading for tests/exams (65%), using/downloading e-resources (68%), and reading newspapers (58%).
- Internet browsing received 61% usage but also had the highest disagreement (23%), indicating varying satisfaction with digital services.
- Barriers in library use include no prior library experience in school (67%), lack of familiarity with sources/services (44%), lack of computer literacy (41%), and no extra time due to classes (39%).

DISCUSSION

The data suggests that students generally have a positive attitude toward library services at MDS College, strongly influenced by the librarian's role and the availability of textbooks and e-resources. Despite frequent visits, limited time spent in the library may reflect academic pressures or the need for more inviting study environments. The acceptance of digital tools like Web-OPAC is encouraging but indicates a gap in digital literacy, which hampers full utilization of digital resources (Sharma N., 2018) [13]. While students recognize the academic importance of reference and competitive materials, inconsistent engagement signals a need for more interactive training on resource use. The barriers to library use, particularly lack of prior experience with libraries, underline the importance of early library education, particularly for students entering college without a strong background in library usage (Chisita CT, 2013) [14]. Such students would benefit from introductory programs and hands-on training in navigating library resources. Moreover, the high number of students using the library for academic purposes (such as note preparation and assignment work) underscores the importance of libraries in supporting students' core academic activities (Kumar P, 2020) [15]. However, there remains an opportunity to promote additional uses of the library, such as for leisure reading, research for competitive exams, and knowledge expansion. The library's significant role in supporting core academic tasks is clear, yet there is potential to expand its role in leisure reading and competitive exam preparation.

SUGGESTIONS

- Introductory Library Orientation should be made mandatory for students to familiarize them with library services, especially for those with limited prior exposure to library systems and digital literacy.
- Regular workshops on digital literacy and the use of e-resources such as e-books, journals, and online databases should be organized to bridge the gap between physical and digital resource use.
- Underutilized services like reference materials and competitive exam resources should be initiated to promote through displays, faculty collaboration, and workshops.
- The library's infrastructure should be reviewed to improve accessibility and to create a more comfortable environment.
- Faculty should be encouraged to integrate library usage into their teaching, assignments, and research projects to enhance student engagement with library resources.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study reflect a generally positive perception of library services among students at MDSD College, particularly in terms of their motivation to engage with academic resources and participation in library-related activities. The librarian plays a pivotal role in motivating students. The high rate of library visits and the popularity of services like book issue/return, Web-OPAC, and access to e-resources indicate that students recognize the library as a vital academic support center. However, the relatively short time spent in the library and limited use of some available services suggest that student engagement, while consistent, may not be fully optimized. The analysis also brings to light several barriers that inhibit full utilization of the library's offerings. These include a lack of prior exposure to library environments, limited digital literacy, time constraints due to academic schedules. Addressing these challenges requires a collective effort from the institution, rather than relying solely on the librarian. To foster a more vibrant and inclusive reading culture, the college as a whole including administration, faculty, and academic departments should support the expansion of digital resources, enhancement of library infrastructure (including library facilities), and implementation of targeted awareness initiatives for students. Additionally, increasing the number of library staff is essential to ensure the provision of efficient and sufficient services. It is equally important to free the librarian from excessive non-library-related responsibilities so that she can concentrate fully on managing and improving the library. Collaborative efforts between the library, faculty, and students can lead to more integrated and effective library services. In conclusion, the MDSD College library must evolve to meet the dynamic needs of students in the digital age (Kumar P., 2020). By focusing on accessibility, education, and user-centered improvements, the library can significantly contribute to the academic success and personal development of students, thereby promoting a thriving reading culture within the institution.

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