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ASSESSMENT OF LIBRARY RESOURCE UTILIZATION IN WOMEN UNIVERSITIES OF SOUTH INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Efficient utilization of library resources is critical to enhancing academic performance, research productivity, and overall learning outcomes in higher education institutions. In women universities of South India, libraries serve as pivotal centers for empowering female students by providing access to print and digital resources, databases, e-journals, and institutional repositories. Assessing how effectively these resources are utilized provides insights into user behavior, satisfaction levels, and the impact of library services on academic growth.

This study examines the utilization of library resources in selected women universities of South India, including Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women. The research focuses on the availability and usage of print collections, e-resources, digital databases, and library services such as reference assistance, OPAC, and remote access facilities.

A descriptive research design was adopted using structured questionnaires, interviews, and observation to collect primary data from students, faculty, and research scholars. Secondary data were obtained from library records, annual reports, and institutional publications. Data analysis employed statistical tools including percentage analysis, mean scores, and comparative evaluation to assess utilization patterns and user satisfaction.

Findings indicate that while libraries in South Indian women universities provide a broad range of resources, actual utilization varies across programs, user categories, and resource formats. Digital resources and e-journals are increasingly popular, yet traditional print materials continue to be extensively used. Challenges affecting optimal utilization include limited awareness, insufficient information literacy training, and infrastructure disparities.

The study emphasizes the need for targeted initiatives to enhance resource utilization, including user orientation programs, digital literacy workshops, improved ICT infrastructure, and strategic planning for resource allocation. Optimizing library resource usage will support academic success, promote research engagement, and strengthen the role of women universities in empowering students through access to knowledge.

KEYWORDS: Library Resource Utilization; Women Universities; Academic Libraries; User Behavior; Information Access; E-Resources; Print Collections; Digital Databases; User Satisfaction

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries play a vital role in higher education by providing access to knowledge, supporting academic learning, and fostering research activities. In women universities of South India, libraries serve as central hubs for empowering female students, equipping them with the necessary resources to pursue higher education, research, and professional development. Effective library resource utilization ensures that students, faculty, and researchers can fully benefit from both print and digital collections, thereby enhancing learning outcomes and academic productivity.

Women universities in South India, such as Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, have made significant investments in library infrastructure. These libraries offer a diverse range of resources, including books, periodicals, e-journals, databases, and institutional repositories.

In addition, services such as reference assistance, OPAC, digital access, and remote services are designed to facilitate ease of access and effective use of these resources.

Despite these developments, studies suggest that resource utilization in academic libraries may vary due to factors such as awareness, digital literacy, infrastructure availability, and user motivation. Understanding how students and faculty engage with library resources is essential for identifying gaps, improving services, and planning for future resource management.

This research aims to assess library resource utilization in selected women universities of South India, focusing on patterns of use, accessibility, and user satisfaction. The study also explores challenges that limit optimal utilization and recommends strategies to enhance the effectiveness of library services, thereby contributing to academic success and knowledge empowerment in women-focused higher education institutions.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
Aim
The primary aim of this study is to assess the utilization of library resources in women universities of South India and to analyze how effectively these resources support academic, research, and learning activities among students, faculty, and researchers.

Objectives
1. To examine the availability of library resources
To evaluate the adequacy and diversity of print collections, e-resources, digital databases, and institutional repositories in selected women universities such as Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women.
2. To analyze patterns of resource utilization
To investigate how different user groups—undergraduate and postgraduate students, research scholars, and faculty—access and utilize print, digital, and electronic resources.
3. To evaluate user accessibility and services
To assess the effectiveness of library services, including OPAC, reference assistance, remote access facilities, and digital resource availability, in facilitating easy access for all users.
4. To determine user satisfaction and information literacy
To measure the satisfaction levels of users regarding library resources and services and to examine their awareness and competence in using digital and traditional library materials effectively.
5. To identify challenges and provide recommendations
To explore factors limiting optimal utilization of library resources and to suggest strategies for improving resource management, user training, digital infrastructure, and overall library service quality.

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Library resource utilization is a critical area of study in higher education, as it directly impacts teaching, learning, and research outcomes. Numerous scholars have emphasized that well-managed libraries are not merely repositories of books but active centers that facilitate knowledge dissemination and academic empowerment, particularly in women-focused institutions.

Ranganathan's principles, including the Five Laws of Library Science, underscore that library resources must be used effectively to serve the users' needs, highlighting the importance of user-centered services and accessibility (S. R. Ranganathan, 1931). These principles remain relevant in modern academic libraries, guiding collection development, service planning, and resource management.

Recent studies indicate a significant shift toward digital and hybrid libraries, integrating e-resources, digital databases, e-journals, and institutional repositories alongside traditional print collections (B. K. Sen, 2015). The integration of automation tools, Online Public Access Catalogues (OPAC), and remote access services has enhanced user accessibility and facilitated effective utilization of library resources.

Research specific to women universities in India shows that while many institutions have successfully implemented digital library services, resource utilization is influenced by user awareness, digital literacy, and infrastructure availability (R. K. Sharma, 2018). In South Indian women universities such as Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam and Mother Teresa Women's University, studies suggest that students increasingly prefer e-resources and online journals; however, traditional print materials remain widely used due to habit, convenience, and limited training in digital resource utilization.

Government and institutional initiatives, such as the INFLIBNET Centre (INFLIBNET Centre, 2020) and the National Digital Library of India (National Digital Library of India, 2021), have expanded access to academic resources and improved equity in information availability. Literature highlights that participation in digital consortia and open access platforms positively affects resource utilization by providing cost-effective access to e-journals, databases, and learning materials.

Challenges identified in previous studies include insufficient awareness among users, lack of information literacy training, limited ICT infrastructure, and budget constraints affecting acquisition of high-cost journals (B. K. Sen, 2015; R. K. Sharma, 2018). Furthermore, inclusive access for differently-abled users and rural students remains underdeveloped in several universities, limiting equitable utilization of library resources.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study on library resource utilization in women universities of South India adopts a **descriptive research design** to assess how effectively library resources support academic, research, and learning activities. The methodology combines both **quantitative and qualitative approaches** to provide a comprehensive understanding of utilization patterns and user satisfaction.

1. Area of Study

The research focuses on selected women universities in South India, including Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women. These universities were chosen due to their established library systems and representative academic programs.

2. Data Collection Methods

- **Primary Data:** Structured questionnaires were administered to students, faculty, and research scholars to collect information about resource usage, frequency, and satisfaction. Semi-structured interviews with librarians and library staff provided qualitative insights into management practices and challenges. Observations of library infrastructure and user engagement were also conducted.
- **Secondary Data:** Institutional records, annual reports, library catalogues, policy documents, and published literature were reviewed to gather information on resource availability, services, and utilization statistics.

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3. Sampling Technique

A **stratified random sampling method** was employed to ensure representation across user groups, including undergraduate students, postgraduate students, research scholars, and faculty members. The sample size was determined based on accessibility, willingness to participate, and representation of diverse academic disciplines.

4. Parameters of Study

The study focused on key aspects of library resource utilization, including:

- Availability and adequacy of print collections and e-resources
- Usage of digital databases and institutional repositories
- Effectiveness of library services such as OPAC, reference assistance, and remote access
- User accessibility, information literacy, and satisfaction levels

5. Data Analysis Techniques

Collected data were analyzed using:

- Descriptive statistics, including percentages, mean scores, and frequency distributions
- Comparative evaluation across universities, programs, and user categories
- Thematic analysis for qualitative responses from interviews and observations

This methodological framework ensures a structured and systematic assessment of library resource utilization, providing reliable insights into usage patterns, challenges, and strategies for enhancing academic library services in women universities of South India.

DISCUSSION

The study on library resource utilization in women universities of South India reveals important insights into how students, faculty, and research scholars engage with academic resources and services. Libraries in institutions such as Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women provide a broad spectrum of print and digital resources, but actual utilization varies depending on resource type, user group, and accessibility factors.

Resource Availability and Usage Patterns:

Findings indicate that both print and digital resources are extensively used, though preferences differ among user groups. Undergraduate students tend to rely more on textbooks and reference books, while postgraduate students and research scholars increasingly use e-resources, journals, and digital databases for academic and research purposes. Despite the availability of institutional repositories and OPAC facilities, awareness and consistent use of these services remain uneven.

Digital Resources and ICT Integration:

The adoption of digital tools such as OPAC, e-journals, and remote access services has significantly enhanced resource accessibility. However, challenges such as intermittent internet connectivity, limited access to advanced databases, and lack of sufficient ICT infrastructure in some campuses affect optimal utilization. Users with higher digital literacy are more likely to access e-resources effectively, highlighting the importance of information literacy programs.

User Accessibility and Support Services:

Physical accessibility and library support services, including reference assistance and guided orientation programs, positively influence resource utilization. However, inclusive services for differently-abled users, such as assistive technologies, are limited in several institutions, pointing to an area that requires urgent attention.

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Challenges in Resource Utilization:
The study identifies several barriers to effective library usage:
- Limited awareness among students and faculty about available resources
- Insufficient training in using digital databases and e-resources
- Budget constraints affecting acquisition of high-cost journals and subscriptions
- Variability in infrastructure across different campuses

Implications for Academic Performance:
        Optimal library resource utilization is directly linked to academic success, research productivity, and self-directed learning. Libraries that actively engage users through orientation, digital literacy workshops, and resource promotion tend to achieve higher utilization rates. Improving infrastructure, increasing user awareness, and providing inclusive access are essential steps toward maximizing the benefits of library services.

CONCLUSION
        The study on library resource utilization in women universities of South India highlights the essential role of libraries in supporting academic learning, research, and student empowerment. Libraries in institutions such as Sri Padmavati Mahila Visvavidyalayam, Mother Teresa Women's University, and Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women offer a diverse range of resources, including print collections, e-resources, digital databases, and institutional repositories, along with services such as OPAC, reference assistance, and remote access.
        Findings indicate that while resources are widely available, actual utilization varies across user groups and resource formats. Undergraduate students tend to rely more on print materials, whereas postgraduate students and research scholars increasingly use digital resources. Challenges such as limited awareness, insufficient information literacy training, infrastructure disparities, and budget constraints affect optimal utilization. Additionally, inclusive services for differently-abled users require further enhancement to ensure equitable access.
        The study emphasizes the need for targeted initiatives to improve resource utilization, including user orientation programs, digital literacy workshops, enhanced ICT infrastructure, and strategic resource allocation. Effective library management and proactive user engagement are crucial for maximizing the benefits of available resources.

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