A SURVEY ON USER PERCEPTION AND SATISFACTION WITH REFERENCE SERVICES IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN INDIA

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Abstract

Libraries are viewed as service organisations that help their patrons find the information they need. As such, they are designed with their patrons' requirements in mind, and as such, user satisfaction is highly valued in service centres. In the institutions that they support, academic libraries are vital. A variety of reading materials are available at the libraries, including books, newspapers, magazines, reports, special collections of official documents, and a large number of electronic resources. University libraries are essential to their patrons' academic and research endeavours, and reference services are a vital part of what makes it possible for people to access and use information effectively. In order to improve the overall quality of library services and make sure that they meet the changing needs of academic communities, it is imperative to comprehend user perceptions. The primary goal of the college library is to assist the parent organisation, or college, in fulfilling its goals and aims. This study's main goal was to acquire a comprehensive picture of users' perceptions of and satisfaction with the reference services they receive at their university libraries.

Keywords: *User perception, Satisfaction, Reference services, University Libraries, User Experience*

1. INTRODUCTION

Science is still developing and advancing, thus careful compilation of earlier discoveries is important. A significant portion of the effort spent by researchers and alternative learners uncovering facts, solving life's puzzles, and finding information hidden in books is devoted to achieving and suggesting alternate methods of information storage within libraries. The library is therefore seen as a feasible means of disseminating this crucial knowledge to diverse information seekers and other users.

Some students see it as a place of employment for lifelong learning, while others view it as a university that typically accepts all students equally, regardless of their age, gender, political affiliation, religious beliefs, or educational preferences. Serving all reasonable individuals is expected, including elderly and young people with disabilities, as well as those who may be handicapped for other reasons, hospital patients, and convicts. Government, aboriginal communities, and occasionally non-governmental organisations all provide funding for public libraries. In India, a library is frequently defined as an institution for lifelong learning and a storehouse of information open to all, irrespective of background or religious convictions. It is intended to benefit every member of the public, including the elderly, kids, people with impairments, hospital patients, homebound folks, and even inmates. In India, public libraries are usually financed by the government, local communities, and occasionally non-governmental organisations. These libraries provide their services with the understanding that everyone should have equal access to them, regardless of their age, ethnicity, gender, status, religion, language, or social standing.

1.1.Users Satisfaction

Many terms, including clients, customers, borrowers, members, patrons, etc., are used to describe users in the context of libraries and information centres. However, "user" is the phrase that is used in libraries the most. It is widely accepted in the profession and clearly indicates the context. It symbolises a person who gets his information from libraries. However, defining the word "library user" is still difficult because some people may visit the library frequently, while others may only do so occasionally over a long period of time. While some people might use the library's services frequently, others might only utilise one. While some people utilise the library in person, others

can access its services over the phone, through messenger, or through other means. One more group of people is permitted to visit the library, but not to use its resources or services. Instead, they are allowed to pay a staff member a personal visit. When we can call someone under any of these several circumstances, a library customer can occasionally be challenging.

Oxford English Dictionary states "A person who uses or operates something?" is what users mean. Although it is challenging to adequately describe the library's user, Michael Gorman made an effort. Users are "Information seekers who make use of libraries," in his words. "A person who uses one or more of a library's services at least once a year" is what Kenneth Whittaker defines as a user. Users are the most crucial component, without which an information system cannot fulfil its entire function. It is critical to the operation of the library to comprehend its patrons' identities, wants, and ways in which the library may meet and fulfil those requirements.

1.2. User Perception

User pleasure and the efficiency of library services are both significantly impacted by user perception, which plays a critical role in defining the entire library experience. The evaluation of user perception takes into account multiple important factors. First, users assess the perceived value of library services according to their suitability for their information needs, relevance, and usefulness. Second, user impressions are greatly influenced by how simple it is to access library materials, including technological infrastructure, user-friendly online platforms, and physical accessibility. User perceptions are significantly shaped by interactions with library staff, including their helpfulness, knowledge, and general demeanour. Users also create judgements about the library setting, taking into account elements like design, atmosphere, and facilities, which ultimately affects how satisfied they are and how likely they are to return.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Adegbilero-Iwari Idowu and Ikenwe Iguehi Joy (2014) In recent years, user satisfaction with public library services has grown to be a critical concern. Undoubtedly, the degree to which library services are utilised is influenced by patron happiness, and this is one of the key factors that determines whether patrons use or do not use the services.

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Rajentran N. Dr. and Kasimani C. (2018) The backbone of social progress and a vital source of information for the less literate and economically disadvantaged populations in India are the public libraries. They are also a major source of resources for the peoples' access to evolving political, economic, and technical advancements in India. This study conveys Chennai's public library users' satisfaction levels with regard to progress. The services and attitudes of the workers at public libraries were deemed satisfactory by their patrons. The unique link between the library's building, hours, furnishings, newly added collections, and availability of electronic library services, such as improved Internet access when needed. Out of the 300 distributed samples, the purpose sample from the Chennai District Public Libraries and 200 respondents were chosen. The data was gathered using semi-structured interviews. Using MS Excel work sheets, a qualitative analysis was conducted on the data.

Public libraries are vital because they increase literacy, spark the imagination, and broaden people's horizons, according to Thanuskodi, S. (2012). They also assist education at all levels, facilitate access to a shared cultural legacy, and enlighten and empower citizens. Additionally, there is a correlation that is favourable between the degree of literacy and public libraries, and this leads to an improvement in economic output. This study assesses the quality of library services and makes recommendations for enhancing Tamilnadu, India's district central libraries.

Seneviratne (2006) measured user satisfaction using a case study at the PGIM Branch Library in Peradeniya. She discovered that most users had a moderate level of satisfaction with the print collection and came to the conclusion that in order to satisfy users and implement changes in behaviour, regular interval assessments of user behaviour are necessary.

Marendic (2009), conducted an analysis of students' and users' satisfaction with the libraries at the Faculty of Food Technology, the Faculty of Law, and the City and University Library in Osijek. The study's findings indicated that more work needs to be done to enhance the overall quality of library holdings and services, and that collaboration and partnerships between university libraries are needed to improve library organisation and management and provide a foundation for more productive work with student users.

In their study of the information needs and expectations of a selected group of agricultural institutes in Northern India during the digital era, Lolatra & Gupta (2010) emphasised the needs and expectations of users and provided details about the information resources used, the services and facilities that users preferred, and their satisfaction with the services provided. They also felt that as technology advances, users' information needs are gradually shifting. Both print and internet resources and services are preferred by users. Krishna Kumar

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on all public sector general university libraries (also known as main or central libraries) in India (N = 20) that have a sizable collection, sufficient staff, a separate reference area, and a reference librarian. A hundred questionnaires were given out to patrons of each university library that was chosen for the research. It was intentional to select library users from all public sector universities for the sample. A library user had to be a full-time student or a member of the faculty or staff in order to be eligible for inclusion. They also needed to have used reference services in libraries before. Users who visited the individual library in person were given the surveys.

3.1. Research Design

A cross-sectional survey study design based on questionnaires was used. Because the information was gathered from the participants at a single moment in time, the survey was cross-sectional. Time limits were taken into consideration when doing this. Four hundred completed surveys, out of the nine hundred that were given, were returned to the researchers in a form that could be used. As a result, in our instance, the response rate was 51.1%, which was respectably high for a survey research methodology.

3.2. Questionnaire

A questionnaire of 25 items or statements was created by combining all the reference service domains to measure various constructs. A five-point Likert scale was employed. Each item was rated on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

3.3. Reliability and Validity

Cronbach's alpha (α) was used to the scale in order to evaluate its validity and reliability. With a Cronbach alpha of 0.897—higher than the average of 0.80—the questionnaire's overall reliability appears to be good. Along with demographic questions about status, sex, how often they visit libraries and reference sections, the name of the organisation, and other details, the first section also included an open-ended question to elicit more opinions.

3.4. Data Collection

The authors received the completed questionnaires via mail, email (a scanned copy), and in-person meetings. To draw conclusions, the data underwent both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

4.1. Personal Profile of the Respondents

Table 1: Count of Respondents' Gender

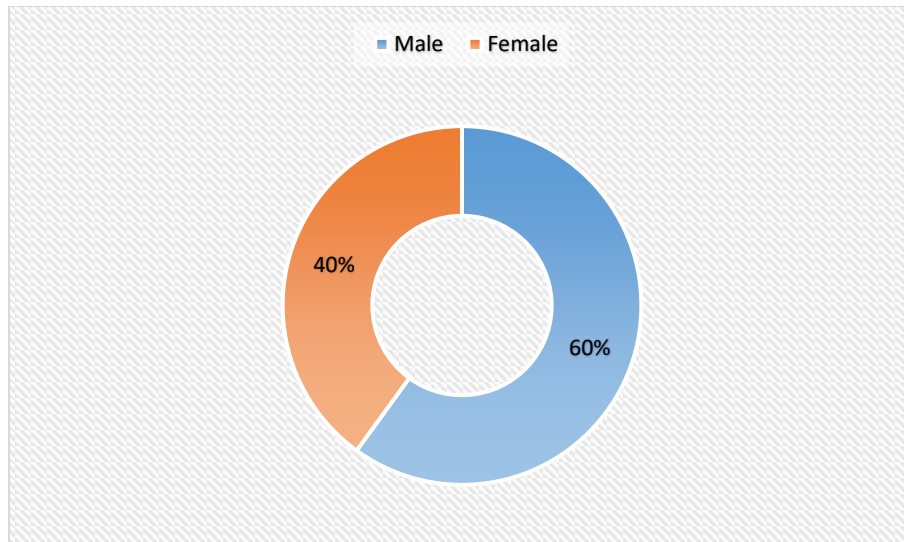| Gender	Count	Percent
Male	240	60
Female	160	40
Total	400	100

Figure 1: Percentage of Respondents' Gender

The count of respondents' gender in a survey with a total sample size of 400 people is shown in Table 1. According to the statistics, 160 respondents, or 60% of the sample, identified as female, and 240 respondents, or 40% of the sample, as male.

Table 2: Count of the Responses Acquired from each University

Rank	Names of Responded University Libraries	Frequency	Percent
1	Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Library: New Delhi	100	25
2	University of Delhi Library: Delhi	80	20
3	Banaras Hindu University Library (BHU): Varanasi	60	15
4	University of Hyderabad (UoH) Central Library: Hyderabad	48	12
5	Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) Library: Aligarh	40	10
6	Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) Central Library: New Delhi	40	10
7	Punjab University (PU) Central Library: Chandigarh	36	9
8	Osmania University (OU) Central Library: Hyderabad	32	8
9	University of Madras (UoM) Central Library: Chennai	24	6
10	Indian Institute of Science (IISc) Library: Bengaluru	24	6
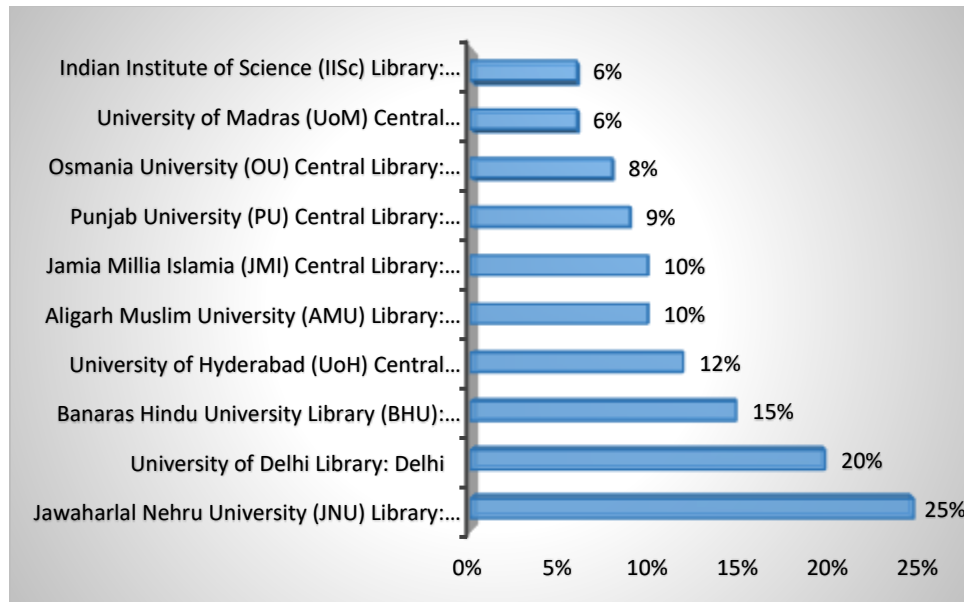
Figure 2: Percentage of the Responses Acquired from each University

Table 2 provides an overview of participant preferences and library participation by displaying a count of responses from multiple university libraries. With 100 responses, or 25% of the sample as a whole, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) Library in New Delhi received the greatest frequency, according to this table. The University of Delhi Library in Delhi, with 80 responders (20%), is just behind. With 60 responders (15%), Banaras Hindu University Library (BHU) in Varanasi ranked third in the chart that shows a declining trend in replies.

Table 3: Count of Respondents' Status

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Student	352	88
Faculty	20	5
Staff	16	4
Missing	12	3
Total	400	100
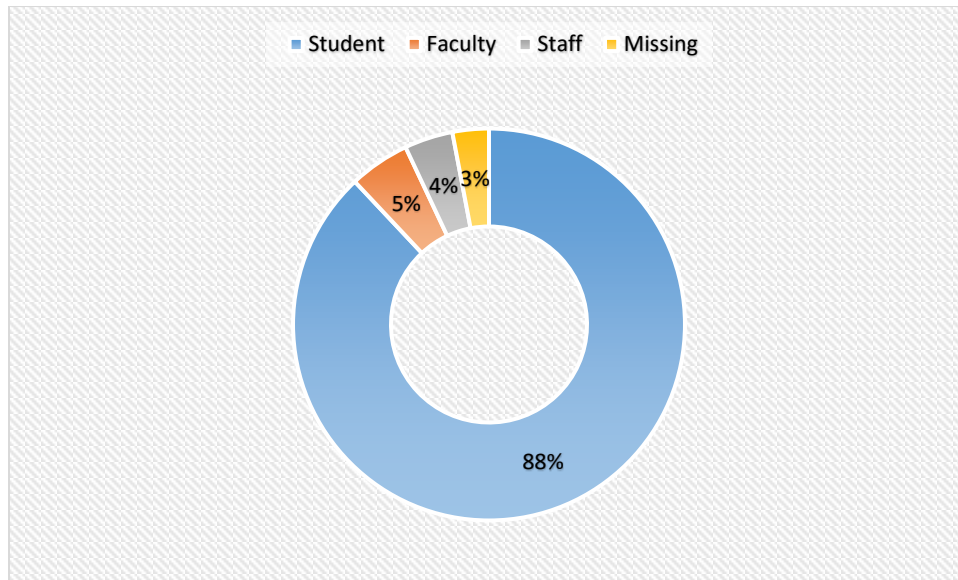
Figure 3: Percentage of Respondents' Status

A thorough Count of respondents' status in the sample is shown in Table 3, which also shows the distribution of people in various categories. Of the 400 responders, the majority are students, making up 88% (352 people). Faculty members make up 5% of the responders (20 in total), while staff members make up 4% (16 total). In addition, the table takes into account missing or unclear data, for which there are 12 persons or 3% of the total.

Table 4: Count of Respondents' Level of Studies

Level of Study	Frequency	Percent
MA/MSc	232	58
Missing	108	27
M.Phil	32	8
PhD	20	5
BA-honors/BSc	16	4
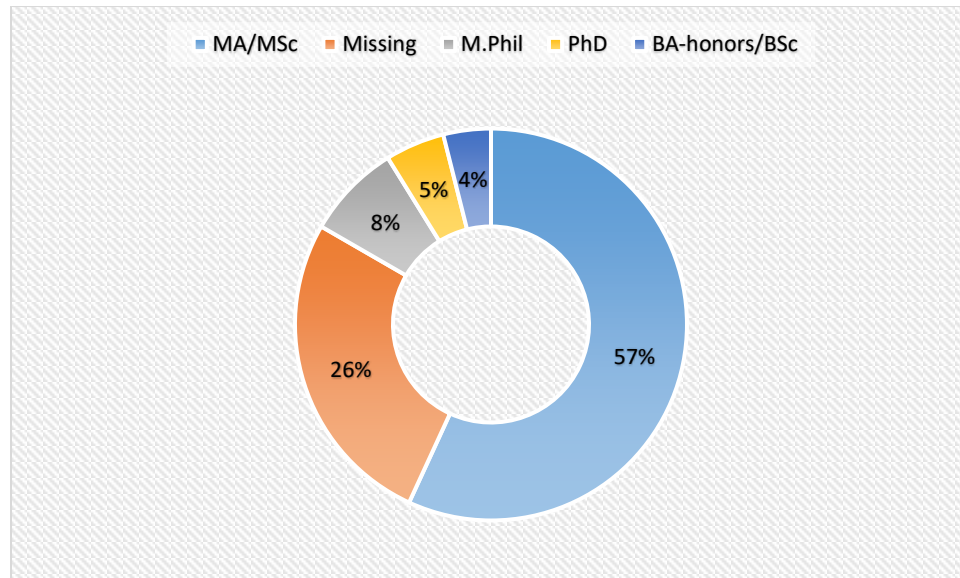
Figure 4: Percentage of Respondents' Level of Studies

The count of the respondents' study levels, which classify them into various educational levels, is shown in Table 4. Of the sample, 58% of respondents had an MA or MSc degree, suggesting that people with postgraduate education make up the majority of the population. It's interesting to note, though, that a sizeable portion of respondents—27%—are classified as "Missing," indicating that they did not submit information about their level of study. Of the individuals mentioned, 8% have earned an M.Phil., 5% have PhDs, and 4% have earned a BA with honours or a BSc.

4.2. Count of Library and Reference Section Visits

Table 5: Count of Library Visits

Library Visits	Frequency	Percent
Daily	180	45
Twice a Week	148	37
Monthly	32	8
Fortnightly	20	5
Missing	16	4
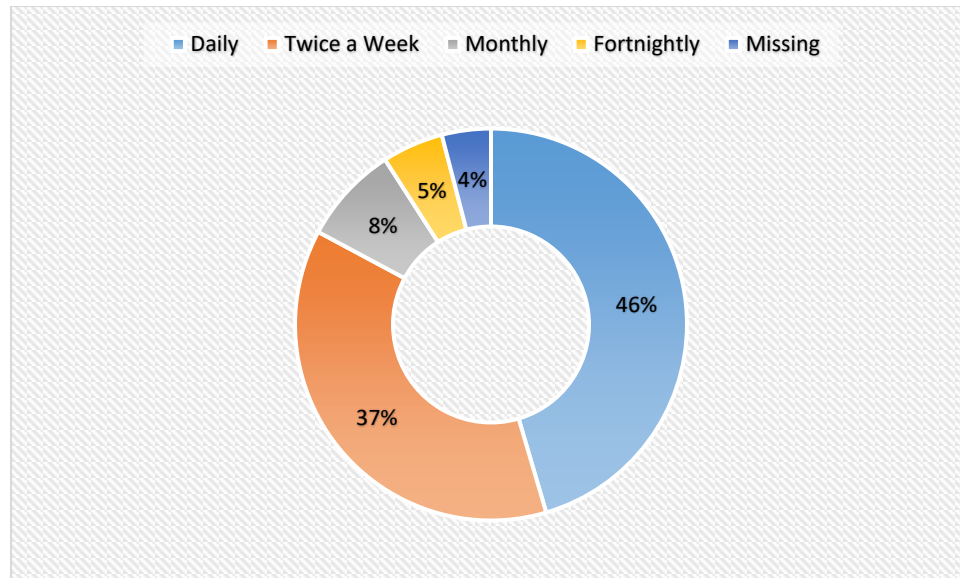
Figure 5: Percentage of Library Visits

Based on the Count of their visits, respondents were categorized and the count of library visits is shown in Table 5. Of the respondents, 45% said they visited the library every day, and 37% said they attended twice a week. Just 8% of respondents said they visited once a month, and 5% said they visited once every two weeks. Remarkably, 4% of replies were categorised as missing, indicating that some respondents may not have mentioned how frequently they visited libraries.

Table 6: Count of Reference Section Visits

Reference Section Visits	Frequency	Percent
Twice a Week	136	34
Daily	96	24
Rarely	76	19
Fortnightly	36	9
Missing	36	9
Monthly	32	8
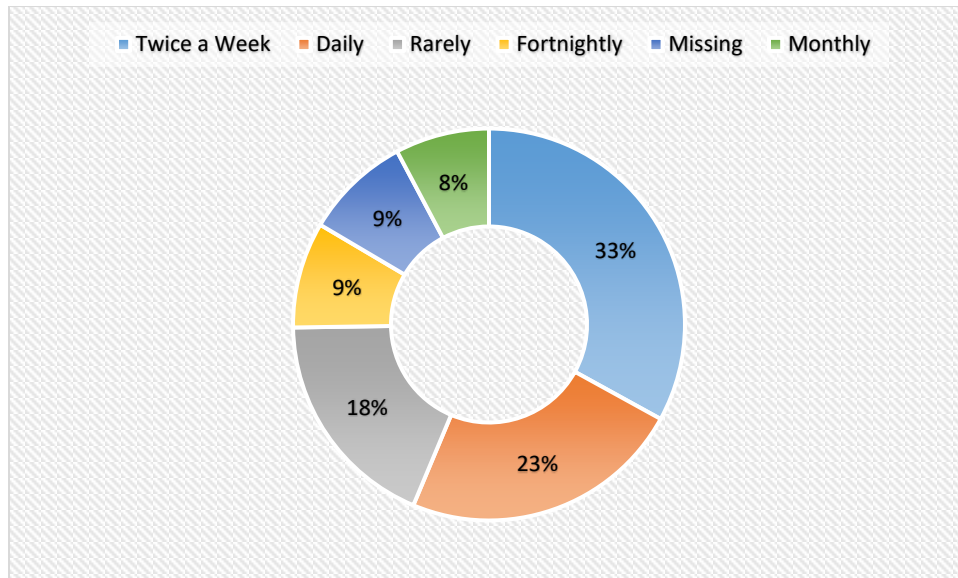
Figure 6: Percentage of Reference Section Visits

The count of library customers' trips to the reference department is shown in Table 6. The reference section receives the largest frequency of visits from respondents—2 visits per week, or 34% of all visits. Twenty-four percent of users visit the reference area daily, which is a high proportion of users that consistently and regularly use the resources. Nine percent visit the reference section every two weeks or report missing data, compared to 19 percent who visit it infrequently. 8% of respondents reported making visits on a monthly basis.

4.3.Comparison of University Libraries' Reference Services' User Satisfaction

Table 8: Difference on the basis of universities

Overall Satisfaction	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	7051.803	19	783.113	3.597	0
Within Groups	107012.1	380	215.403		
Total	114223.9	398			

On a five-point rating system, user opinions regarding the quality of reference services provided by various libraries were compared. The findings of an investigation looking at variations in overall satisfaction depending on the universities are shown in Table 8. The two primary sources of heterogeneity in the analysis are "Within Groups" and "Between Groups." With 19 degrees of freedom, the "Between Groups" sum of squares is 7051.803, yielding a mean square of 783.113. There is a statistically significant variation in the overall satisfaction levels amongst the different universities, as indicated by the related F-statistic of 3.597 and the associated p-value of 0. Conversely, the mean square for the "Within Groups" subset is 215.403, with a sum of squares of 107012.1 and 380 degrees of freedom. There are 398 degrees of freedom and a total sum of squares of 114223.9. The ANOVA findings indicate that there is a significant difference between the averages of the various universities (at the 0.05 alpha levels). The findings indicate that respondents' satisfaction levels with various university services vary (refer to table 8).

5. CONCLUSION

The information landscape is changing quickly. An essential part of the advancement of human knowledge is the public library. A vital component of society that fosters the development of life skills and intellect is public libraries. The majority of users primarily went to public libraries to read newspapers. Because necessary literature were available in public libraries and because conventional reading habits were encouraged, users were able to improve their information. This study looked into how satisfied users were overall with the reference services provided by public sector university libraries in the largest Indian province. This is the first attempt to look into how satisfied Indian users are with reference services. The goal of the study, according to the researchers, is to stimulate more Indian research on the subject in the future. The Reference services are frequently chastised for their lack of client involvement and attention. The findings of this study indicate that relevant authorities ought to focus on raising the current level of customer satisfaction. With this reality in mind, the survey served as a first step in determining the state of these activities in India's largest province.

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Author's Declaration

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