

# Libraries at the Margins: College Library Utilities in Tribal Rajasthan

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## ABSTRACT

*College libraries in tribal areas of India represent one of the most critically under-researched domains in library and information science. This review paper synthesises existing literature and ongoing doctoral research to examine the availability, accessibility, utilisation patterns, and academic impact of college library resources in the tribal districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi in Rajasthan — three districts with Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations ranging from 27.98% to 72.58%. Drawing upon the theoretical frameworks of Taylor's Information Use Environment (IUE) Theory (1991), Brophy's Access-Use-Outcome (AUO) Model (2005), and Norris's Digital Divide Framework (2001), this paper critically reviews empirical evidence on library resource utilisation among first-generation tribal learners, documents the multi-dimensional barriers — infrastructural, socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, and digital — that constrain effective library engagement, and evaluates the ground-level impact of national schemes including INFLIBNET N-LIST, RUSA, and UGC Guidelines. The paper identifies a significant five-dimensional research gap in the published literature and presents evidence-based recommendations at institutional, district, state, and national policy levels. It concludes that improving library resource utilities in tribal college settings is not merely an institutional quality concern but a matter of educational equity, with direct implications for first-generation learner outcomes and the broader goals of the National Education Policy 2020.*

**KEYWORDS:** College libraries, tribal education, Rajasthan, library resource utilisation, digital divide, INFLIBNET, NEP 2020, first-generation learners, Scheduled Tribes, library accessibility.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Libraries constitute the intellectual backbone of higher education. In developing nations such as India, where alternative channels of academic knowledge remain limited — particularly in geographically remote and economically marginalised regions — the college library assumes a role of disproportionate significance. For tribal communities in Rajasthan, the college library may represent the only structured access point to academic knowledge, making its quality, accessibility, and effective utilisation a matter of profound educational and social consequence.

Rajasthan's southern tribal districts — Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi — are home to some of India's highest concentrations of Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations: 28.65%, 72.58%, and 27.98% respectively (Census of India,

2011). The dominant tribal communities — Bhil, Meena, Garasia, and Bhilala — are characterised by first-generation learner status, indigenous language backgrounds (Bhili, Wagdi, Garasia), and socioeconomic vulnerability arising from agrarian household economies. For these students, the structural adequacy of the college library is not a peripheral concern but a central determinant of educational opportunity.

Yet, this critical domain remains one of the most poorly documented in Indian library science research. While urban university libraries have been extensively studied across a range of variables — resource availability, ICT integration, user satisfaction, and academic impact — the library landscape of tribal districts in Rajasthan is conspicuously absent from the published literature. This review paper addresses that gap by synthesising existing scholarship with the conceptual framework and preliminary findings of ongoing doctoral research at Madhav University, Pindwara, examining the utilities of college library resources in Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi districts.

The paper is organised around five thematic areas: theoretical foundations, library resources and academic performance, library services in tribal and rural contexts, digital resource integration and ICT access, and socioeconomic and cultural barriers to library use. It concludes by identifying the research gap and proposing evidence-based recommendations relevant to institutional administrators, state policymakers, and national bodies including the UGC, INFLIBNET, and the Ministry of Education.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

This review is anchored in three established and complementary theoretical frameworks from library and information science, each illuminating a distinct dimension of the research problem.

### **2.1 Taylor's Information Use Environment (IUE) Theory**

Robert S. Taylor's Information Use Environment theory (1991) represents a pivotal shift from user-centred to context-centred analysis in library and information science. Taylor argued that information use is embedded in and fundamentally shaped by the social, professional, institutional, and cultural environment in which the user operates. The IUE consists of four elements: classes of users defined by shared problems and information needs; the problems they routinely face; the settings in which they operate; and the problem resolutions they seek.

For tribal college students in Rajasthan, each IUE element takes a distinctive form. The user class is characterised by first-generation learner status, limited prior engagement with formal library systems, indigenous language backgrounds, and socioeconomic vulnerability. The problems they face include not merely subject-specific information needs but foundational literacy needs — understanding how a library is organised, what resources are available, and how to seek assistance. Taylor's framework reframes the central research question from "why do tribal students underuse libraries?" (implying student deficit) to "what is the information use environment in which tribal students are embedded?" (implying systemic analysis) — an ethically important and methodologically productive repositioning.

### **2.2 Brophy's Access–Use–Outcome (AUO) Model**

Peter Brophy's Access–Use–Outcome model (2005) addresses a fundamental limitation of earlier library evaluation: the conflation of physical resource availability with effective utilisation, and of utilisation with educational outcomes. Brophy established that the translation of library resources into student learning outcomes requires the

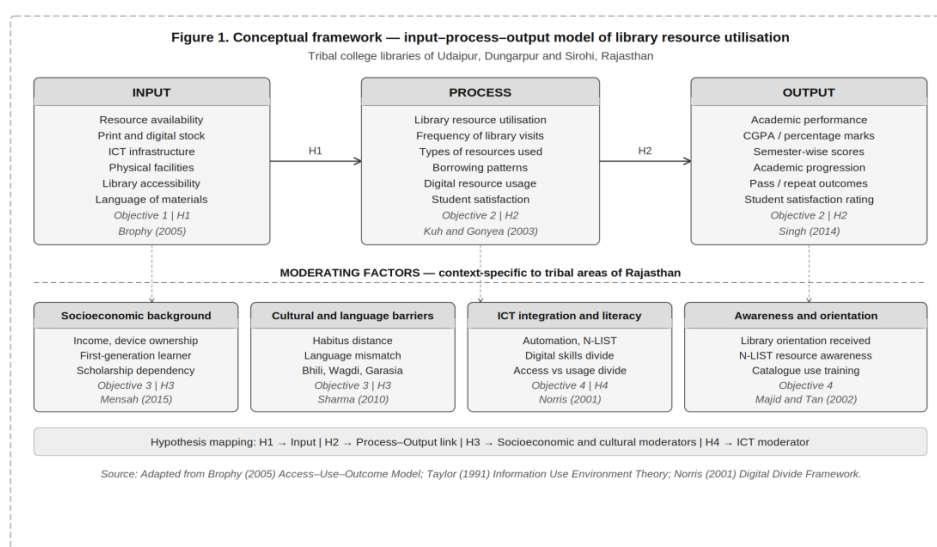
simultaneous presence of three distinct forms of access: physical access (resources are present, reachable, and available during appropriate hours); intellectual access (students possess sufficient information literacy to engage meaningfully with available resources); and motivational access (students have sufficient reason, encouragement, and confidence to initiate library use).

A simple resource inventory — number of books, square footage of reading rooms, number of computers — is an inadequate measure of library utility. A tribal college library may have a nominally adequate collection but fail to generate educational outcomes because students lack the information literacy to use it effectively, because the collection is predominantly in languages they struggle to read, or because library operating hours conflict with agricultural labour obligations. All three access dimensions must be examined simultaneously.

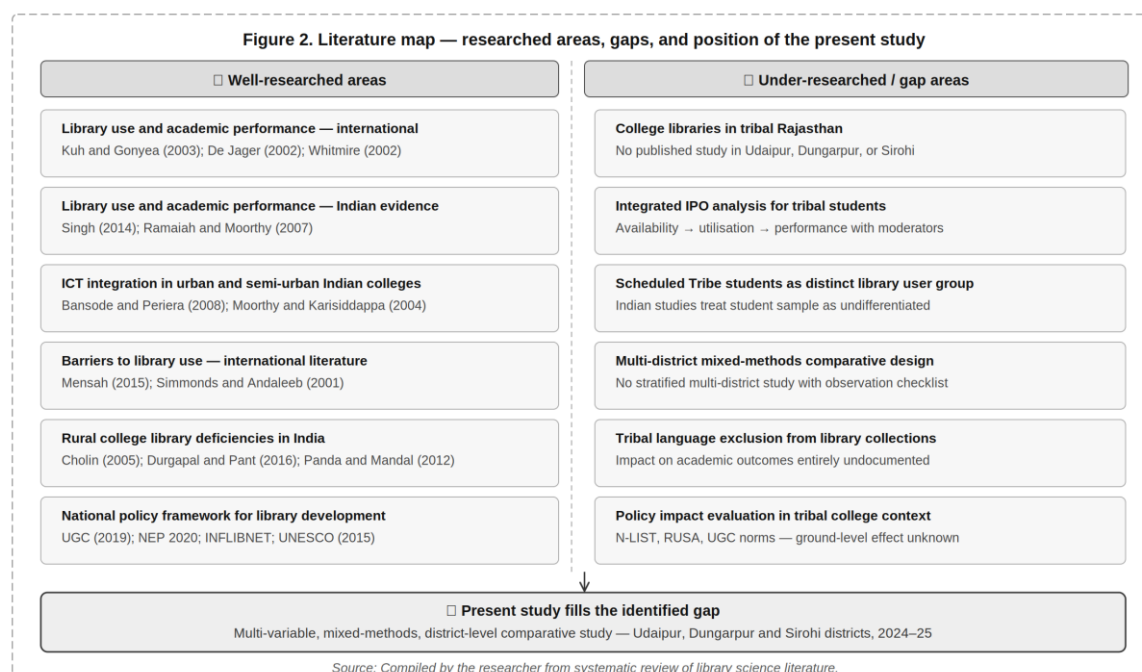
### 2.3 Norris's Digital Divide Framework

Pippa Norris's Digital Divide framework (2001) offers a theoretically rigorous structure for understanding the multi-layered nature of digital exclusion. Norris identified three analytically distinct forms: the global divide (disparities between industrialised and developing nations); the social divide (inequalities within societies structured by socioeconomic class, educational attainment, geographic location, and ethnicity); and the democratic divide (gaps between those who use digital technologies for civic purposes and those who do not).

For this study, the social divide and its three internal dimensions are most directly relevant: the access divide (whether digital technology is physically available); the skills divide (whether users possess the digital competency to use available technology for academic purposes); and the usage divide (how frequently and deeply available digital resources are actually used). Providing INFLIBNET N-LIST connectivity addresses only the access divide but will not improve academic outcomes if students lack the skills to use e-databases or have no guidance to do so.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual framework — input–process–output model of library resource utilisation in tribal college libraries of Rajasthan



**Figure 2. Literature map — researched areas, gaps, and position of the present study**

### 3. LIBRARY RESOURCES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE REVIEW

The relationship between library resource availability and student academic achievement is one of the most extensively studied questions in library and information science. Across diverse institutional contexts, educational systems, and methodological approaches, the weight of evidence consistently points to a positive, statistically significant association between meaningful library engagement and academic outcomes.

#### 3.1 International Evidence

The most influential study in this domain is the multi-institutional analysis by Kuh and Gonyea (2003), conducted using data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) across more than 300,000 undergraduate students in over 300 US institutions. Their multivariate regression analysis demonstrated that active library use was among the most consistent predictors of student engagement, deep-level learning approaches, and overall academic performance. Critically, Kuh and Gonyea found that the library-outcome relationship was stronger for students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds and first-generation learners than for advantaged groups — establishing that the library operates as an equalising institution for those who lack educational capital in the home environment. This finding has fundamental importance for tribal college library research: improving library resource availability and utilisation is not merely an institutional quality concern but an equity intervention.

De Jager (2002) provided particularly robust methodological evidence by tracking library borrowing records against actual examination results at the University of Cape Town. Students in the top quartile of library borrowing performed approximately 12 percentage points higher in final examinations than those in the bottom quartile. Whitmire (2002) extended the outcome variable beyond grades, demonstrating a significant positive relationship between library use frequency and the development of higher-order critical thinking skills central to the objectives of higher education.

### **3.2 Indian Empirical Evidence**

In the Indian context, Singh (2014) conducted a comprehensive survey of 515 faculty members and students at Kurukshetra University in Haryana. His regression analysis identified library visit frequency and use of reference materials as significant positive predictors of academic performance ( $\beta = 0.38$ ,  $p < 0.01$  for visit frequency). Students who visited the library more than three times per week had a mean CGPA 0.43 points higher than those visiting less than once per week. Ramaiah and Moorthy (2007) compared library services across 30 Indian universities and found that libraries in tribal-belt states consistently underperformed on all measured indicators, with 40% fewer volumes per enrolled student and 62% lower digital resource utilisation than counterparts in urbanised states.

Anunobi and Okoye (2008), writing from the Nigerian context but with strong applicability to the tribal Indian setting, demonstrated that language mismatch between library materials and students' primary language is a critical determinant of utilisation. Students consistently under-used library resources available only in English when academic work was conducted primarily in local languages. The finding that language mismatch can effectively neutralise the academic value of a library collection is directly relevant to tribal college libraries in Rajasthan, where collections are almost uniformly in Hindi and English while students' primary languages of comprehension include Bhili, Wagdi, and Garasia.

## **4. LIBRARY SERVICES IN TRIBAL AND RURAL HIGHER EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Research on library services in tribal and rural higher education settings represents one of the most understudied areas in Indian library science. The studies that do exist consistently reveal a landscape of chronic under-resourcing, infrastructural inadequacy, staffing deficiency, and service marginalisation that places tribal college libraries decades behind their urban counterparts.

### **4.1 Documented Deficiencies in Rural College Libraries**

Cholin (2005) conducted one of the earliest systematic studies of library services in rural areas of India, examining infrastructure across 60 college and university libraries in rural Karnataka. Physical infrastructure was severely inadequate in 74% of surveyed rural libraries, with average seating capacity of just 28 in libraries serving 800–1,200 students. Collection development was chronically under-funded, with 79% of libraries having received no new journal subscription in the preceding three years. Professional staffing was deficient in 61% of libraries, managed by staff with no formal library science qualification. ICT infrastructure was virtually absent, with fewer than 8% of rural college libraries having any computer available for student use.

Durgapal and Pant (2016) surveyed 38 college libraries in the Kumaon region of Uttarakhand — a geographically remote region with demographic similarities to Rajasthan's southern tribal belt. Their findings showed an even more acute picture: 73% of libraries had no internet connectivity; 68% had no computers available for student use; 84% had not received a new journal subscription in five years; and the average library had 9.3 seats per 100 enrolled students against the UGC minimum of 20 per 100. A critical finding was the distance-resource correlation: libraries in colleges more than 15 km from a major urban centre had on average 47% fewer books per enrolled student than those within 5 km of a town.

The most directly relevant comparative study is Panda and Mandal (2012), who examined library services in tribal and non-tribal districts of Odisha across 40 college libraries. Tribal district colleges had on average 42% fewer books per enrolled student than non-tribal counterparts (mean 8.2 vs. 14.1 volumes per student); 78% of tribal district college libraries had no internet access compared to 31% of non-tribal district libraries; and student satisfaction was significantly lower in tribal districts (mean 2.1 vs. 3.7 on a 5-point scale).

#### **4.2 Rajasthan Tribal Context**

Rajasthan is home to approximately 9.2 million Scheduled Tribe individuals representing 13.48% of the state's population (Census 2011). Dungarpur, with 72.58% ST population, has the highest tribal concentration of any district in Rajasthan; Udaipur at 28.65% and Sirohi at 27.98% follow. The dominant tribal communities — Bhil (including Bhilala sub-group), Meena, and Garasia — each have distinct cultural traditions, indigenous languages, and historical relationships with the formal education system.

Female ST literacy rates in all three districts remain below 50% — meaning the mothers of current tribal college students are, in the majority of cases, non-literate. This demographic reality shapes the first-generation learner experience: students navigate higher education with no familial model of college, no knowledge of library systems, and no support structure for academic work at home. Within Rajasthan specifically, no published comparative study of tribal versus non-tribal college library resources exists in the scholarly literature — a gap that the ongoing doctoral research at Madhav University is designed to fill.

### **5. DIGITAL RESOURCES AND ICT INTEGRATION**

The integration of ICT into library services has transformed academic library practice globally. In India, government-backed digital initiatives — particularly INFLIBNET's N-LIST scheme — have extended the potential reach of digital library resources to affiliated college libraries across the country. However, the evidence consistently shows that these benefits are sharply stratified by geography, institutional type, and socioeconomic context.

#### **5.1 INFLIBNET and the N-LIST Programme**

Moorthy and Karisiddappa (2004) conducted the earliest comprehensive evaluation of UGC-INFONET connectivity across 160 participating university libraries, demonstrating that digital connectivity significantly improved research engagement. However, they also documented a critical structural limitation: connectivity and usage benefits were concentrated in universities and well-resourced autonomous colleges. Affiliated colleges in rural areas remained largely unconnected.

Bhatt (2010) surveyed 45 college libraries in Gujarat registered with INFLIBNET N-LIST and found that only 23% had achieved meaningful student utilisation of e-resources. The remaining 77% were nominally connected but functionally not so — due to bandwidth constraints below 2 Mbps in 61% of colleges, absence of dedicated student computers in 58%, and student unawareness of available resources reported by 82% of librarians. The distinction between potential access (registration) and actual access (meaningful utilisation) is precisely the distinction that Norris's Digital Divide Framework makes analytically tractable.

## **5.2 Library Automation**

Bansode and Periera (2008) surveyed 20 college libraries in Goa and found that the 11 libraries that had implemented library automation showed significantly higher resource utilisation: 34% higher book borrowing, 28% higher daily user footfall, and significantly higher student satisfaction. Automated libraries enable students to discover available resources independently through OPAC, without dependence on staff intermediation — a particularly significant advantage in under-staffed tribal libraries.

## **5.3 Digital Literacy in Tribal Contexts**

Kumar and Kaur (2006) examined digital literacy among college library users in Punjab and found that 61% of students had never used an electronic database and 74% were unfamiliar with Boolean search operators. If digital literacy gaps of this magnitude exist in advantaged states, the situation in tribal Rajasthan — with weaker secondary school ICT infrastructure and less experienced library staff — is likely to be significantly more acute. Ramaiah (2004) found that first-generation college students consistently scored lower on information literacy assessments than peers with educated parents, making the library's provision of digital literacy training especially consequential for tribal students.

# **6. SOCIOECONOMIC AND CULTURAL BARRIERS TO LIBRARY USE**

Barriers to library use for tribal students are multi-dimensional and mutually reinforcing. They extend far beyond physical infrastructure and resource availability, encompassing socioeconomic vulnerability, cultural distance from formal academic institutions, linguistic exclusion, and structural first-generation learner disadvantage.

## **6.1 Socioeconomic Barriers**

Mensah (2015) conducted one of the most methodologically comprehensive studies of barriers to library use among first-generation students in Ghana — a context with significant structural parallels to tribal college students in Rajasthan. He identified four primary socioeconomic barriers: textbook unaffordability (reported by 71% of first-generation students, making the library their primary access point to course materials); device poverty (78% had no personal device capable of accessing digital resources); competing labour obligations (64% engaged in paid or unpaid labour during term time); and secondary school under-preparation with lower information literacy skills at university entry.

The National Sample Survey Office's 75th Round (2017–18) provides directly relevant data: the median annual household expenditure on education per ST student in higher education was Rs. 8,720 compared to Rs. 15,340 for general category students. Critically, 61% of ST households with a member in higher education had no working computer at home and 54% had no smartphone — confirming the device poverty pattern across India.

## **6.2 Cultural and Institutional Barriers**

Sharma (2010) introduced the concept of institutional habitus distance in the Indian context — a formulation of Bourdieu's concept of habitus applied to educational institutions. The institutional habitus of a college library reflects and reproduces the cultural norms, practices, and implicit knowledge of the dominant social group: middle-class, urban, literate, Hindi/English-proficient students from families with a history of formal education. For tribal

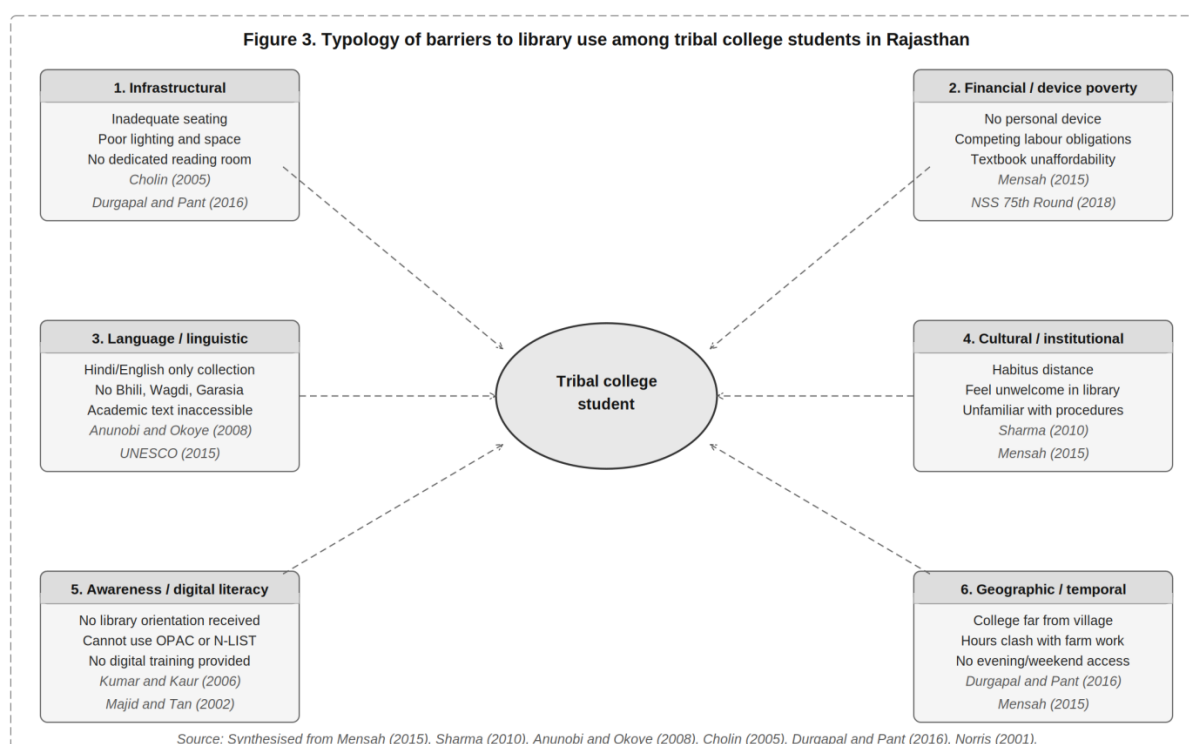
students whose habitus is shaped by indigenous cultural traditions and limited prior exposure to formal institutional settings, the college library can be experienced as a foreign, unwelcoming, and intimidating space.

Cholin (2005) observed that tribal students in Karnataka often visited the library but engaged only with the physical space — sitting in reading rooms for extended periods without borrowing books or using resources — because they lacked the knowledge and confidence to navigate the library system independently. This presence without engagement pattern generates no academic benefit, underscoring why visit frequency alone is an insufficient measure of library resource utilisation.

### **6.3 Language and Linguistic Exclusion**

Language is among the most structurally significant barriers to library use for tribal students in Rajasthan. The three dominant tribal communities in the study area have distinct indigenous languages: Bhil and Bhilala communities speak Bhili and Wagdi; the Meena community speaks a Mewari Rajasthani-influenced dialect; and the Garasia community speaks Garasia. While most tribal students achieve functional literacy in Hindi through the school system, their deeper comprehension for academic texts is significantly stronger in indigenous languages and far weaker in English.

Anunobi and Okoye (2008) demonstrated that students whose primary comprehension language matched the predominant language of the library collection showed 2.9 times higher borrowing rates than students for whom the library's language was a second or third language. A collection that exists only in languages students struggle to read independently cannot serve as an effective academic resource — a structural reality that applies with particular force to tribal college libraries in Rajasthan.



**Figure 3. Typology of barriers to library use among tribal college students in Rajasthan**

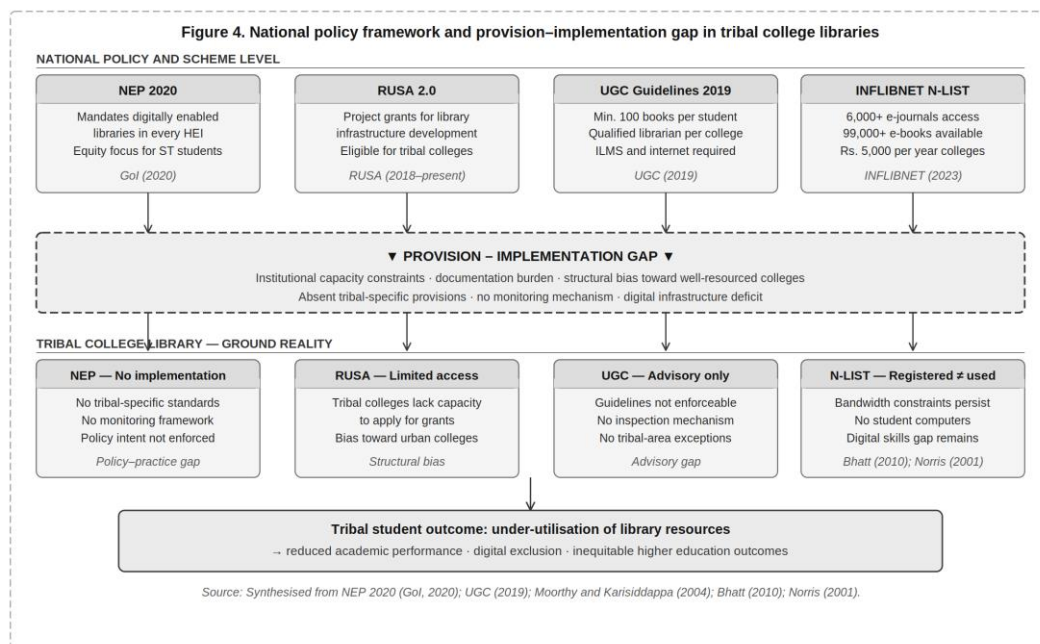
## 7. NATIONAL POLICY FRAMEWORK: PROVISIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION GAPS

Three national policy frameworks are directly relevant to the institutional landscape under examination. Their provisions establish the normative standards against which ground reality can be assessed; their documented limitations reveal the provision-implementation gap that primary empirical research in this study is designed to document.

The National Education Policy 2020 (Government of India, 2020) explicitly mandates that every higher education institution maintain a well-stocked, digitally enabled library serving as the centre of academic life, with particular attention to ensuring library access for students from disadvantaged communities. However, NEP 2020 lacks implementation standards, funding mechanisms, or monitoring frameworks specific to tribal-area college libraries, creating a policy-practice gap of significant magnitude.

The Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA 2.0) provides project-based grants to state governments for strengthening higher education infrastructure, including library development. However, tribal area colleges face documentation and compliance capacity constraints that limit their success in availing RUSA grants. Approval processes favour institutions with established infrastructure — a structural bias routing grants toward more advantaged colleges and perpetuating inequality.

The UGC's Guidelines for Library Development in Colleges (2019) prescribe minimum standards including 100 books per enrolled student, subscription to at least 10 journals per department, a dedicated qualified librarian, and internet connectivity with an integrated library management system. The INFLIBNET N-LIST programme, accessible at subsidised rates of Rs. 5,000 per year for degree colleges, provides access to over 6,000 e-journals and 99,000 e-books. The gap between these prescriptions and the ground reality in tribal college libraries is the central empirical concern of the doctoral research this paper accompanies.



**Figure 4.** National policy framework and provision-implementation gap in tribal college libraries

## **8. RESEARCH GAP AND STUDY DESIGN**

The systematic literature review reveals a five-dimensional research gap in the published scholarship that the doctoral research at Madhav University is designed to address.

**Geographic specificity:** No published empirical study has examined college library resource availability or utilisation in the tribal districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi in Rajasthan. Studies have been conducted in Karnataka (Cholin, 2005), Uttarakhand (Durgapal and Pant, 2016), Odisha (Panda and Mandal, 2012), and Goa (Bansode and Periera, 2008), but Rajasthan's tribal districts — despite hosting some of the highest Scheduled Tribe population concentrations in India — are entirely absent from the published library science literature.

**Integrated multi-variable analysis:** Existing Indian college library studies have typically examined one or two variables in isolation. No study in the Indian tribal context has examined the full Input–Process–Output chain — library resource availability and accessibility, library resource utilisation, and academic performance — together with the moderating effects of socioeconomic background, cultural distance, language barriers, and ICT integration, in a single integrated analytical framework.

**Tribal student population focus:** Studies of college library utilisation in India have rarely focused specifically on Scheduled Tribe students as a distinct user group with distinctive information needs, socioeconomic constraints, cultural characteristics, and linguistic backgrounds. Most Indian college library surveys treat the student sample as undifferentiated by community category.

**Mixed-methods and district-level comparative design:** No study has employed a stratified, multi-district, mixed-methods design integrating quantitative survey data from both librarians and students with systematic physical observation of library infrastructure to generate comparative district-level data on tribal college library resources.

**Policy evaluation:** No published study has evaluated the ground-level impact of major national schemes — INFLIBNET N-LIST, RUSA library grants, and UGC College Development Guidelines — on college library services specifically in tribal areas of Rajasthan. The doctoral study employs a mixed-methods research design targeting a minimum of 50 library staff and 400 students across government, aided, and private colleges in all three districts. Statistical analysis includes descriptive statistics, Chi-square tests, Pearson's Correlation, ANOVA/t-tests, and multiple regression, all conducted using SPSS.

## **9. EVIDENCE-BASED RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the review of literature and the conceptual framework of the doctoral research, the following recommendations are proposed at three levels.

### **9.1 Institutional Level**

College administrations should implement mandatory library orientation programmes specifically designed for first-generation and tribal learners at the commencement of each academic year — Majid and Tan (2002) demonstrated that such programmes increase utilisation 2.7 times more effectively than improvements in physical access alone. Libraries should actively develop collections in tribal and regional languages (Bhili, Wagdi, Garasia, and colloquial Rajasthani) alongside Hindi and English, addressing the linguistic exclusion that Anunobi and Okoye (2008) identified as one of the most powerful predictors of under-utilisation among first-generation students. Digital

literacy training sessions should be integrated into the academic calendar, providing tribal students with the skills divide competencies necessary to use N-LIST e-resources. Libraries should extend operating hours to accommodate students with part-time labour obligations and should create welcoming physical environments that actively signal inclusivity to students whose cultural habitus can generate institutional distance.

## **9.2 District and State Level**

The Rajasthan state government should develop a dedicated tribal college library strengthening scheme under the Tribal Sub-Plan framework, specifying minimum resource standards calibrated to the needs of tribal student populations. District-level inter-library loan networks should be established among colleges in Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi to maximise resource sharing and reduce the per-institution cost of maintaining adequate collections. The Rajasthan Higher Education Department should establish a library monitoring mechanism specifically disaggregating data by district type and tribal population concentration. RUSA grant approval criteria should be reformed to include specific provisions for tribal area institutions, removing the structural bias toward better-resourced colleges that currently channels grants away from the institutions most in need.

## **9.3 National Policy Level**

The UGC should issue specific library guidelines for colleges in educationally disadvantaged and tribal areas, with differentiated minimum standards that are realistic given resource constraints while setting a clear improvement trajectory. INFLIBNET should extend targeted outreach to tribal college libraries, moving beyond connectivity provision to a comprehensive support model that addresses all three levels of Norris's digital divide simultaneously: access (N-LIST registration and connectivity infrastructure), skills (dedicated digital literacy training for librarians and students), and usage (monitoring of actual student engagement with e-resources). The NEP 2020 implementation monitoring framework should include specific indicators for library development in tribal higher education institutions, ensuring the Policy's commitments to equitable access are translated into measurable accountability mechanisms.

## **CONCLUSION**

This review paper has synthesised the theoretical frameworks, empirical evidence, and contextual literature relevant to college library resource utilities in the tribal districts of Udaipur, Dungarpur, and Sirohi in Rajasthan. The evidence from comparable contexts — Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Ghana, Nigeria, the United States, and South Africa — consistently demonstrates that library resource availability and utilisation are significant positive predictors of academic outcomes, and that this relationship is strongest and most consequential for first-generation learners and socioeconomically disadvantaged students: precisely the population that constitutes the majority of tribal college students in the study area.

The review also reveals the multiple and mutually reinforcing barriers that prevent tribal students from making effective use of available library resources: chronic under-resourcing of physical and digital infrastructure; language exclusion arising from collections overwhelmingly in Hindi and English while students' primary comprehension languages include Bhili, Wagdi, and Garasia; socioeconomic constraints including device poverty, textbook unaffordability, and competing labour obligations; cultural distance from institutional environments designed for advantaged student populations; and digital literacy gaps that render nominally available e-resources functionally inaccessible.

The national policy framework — NEP 2020, RUSA, INFLIBNET N-LIST, and UGC Guidelines — provides an ambitious normative prescription for college library development. However, each policy suffers from a provision-implementation gap that is disproportionately wide in tribal area college libraries, due to institutional capacity constraints, structural biases in grant allocation, and the absence of tribal-specific provisions and monitoring mechanisms. Documenting this gap empirically, and generating evidence-based recommendations to narrow it, is the central contribution of the doctoral research at Madhav University that this review accompanies.

The fundamental conclusion of this review is unambiguous: improving the utility of college library resources in tribal areas of Rajasthan is not a peripheral institutional quality concern. It is a matter of educational equity, with direct implications for the academic success and social mobility of some of India's most disadvantaged communities. The college library, when adequately resourced and made genuinely accessible to tribal first-generation learners, operates as what Kuh and Gonyea (2003) demonstrated it to be: an equalising institution. The challenge for scholarship, policy, and institutional practice in tribal Rajasthan is to make that equality of opportunity a reality.

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