Library Use Patterns and Information-Seeking Behaviour of College and University Students: A Comparative Empirical Study from Shivamogga District, Karnataka

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour of college and university students in Shivamogga District, Karnataka. Employing a descriptive and comparative survey design, data were collected from 400 respondents (300 college students and 100 university students) using a structured questionnaire with Likert-scale items. The analysis focused on frequency of visits, time spent, purpose of use, and format preferences (print versus digital). Results revealed significant differences between the two groups: university students reported more frequent visits, longer durations, and diversified purposes including research and digital access, while college students emphasized examination preparation and print reliance. Statistical tests confirmed these differences, leading to the rejection of both null hypotheses. The findings contribute to Library and Information Science (LIS) user studies by providing district-level empirical evidence from Karnataka, highlighting the influence of institutional infrastructure and academic level on user behaviour. The study underscores the need for differentiated library services, user-centric planning, and digital literacy initiatives, while identifying scope for future research at state and national levels.

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KEYWORDS: Academic Libraries • Comparative Study • Digital Literacy • Information-Seeking Behaviour • Karnataka • Library Use Patterns • User-Centric Services**.**

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries occupy a central role in higher education, serving not only as repositories of knowledge but also as dynamic learning environments that support teaching, research, and innovation. Their evolving functions reflect the broader transformation of higher education, where access to information and the cultivation of digital literacy have become critical to student success.

In recent years, libraries have shifted from a predominantly print-centric model to hybrid systems that integrate digital resources, online databases, and technology-enabled services. This transition has reshaped how students and faculty engage with information, demanding new strategies for resource management and user support. Understanding these behavioural shifts is particularly important when comparing colleges and universities, as institutional contexts often shape distinct patterns of library usage, expectations, and outcomes.

The present study situates this inquiry within the Shivamogga District, a region where higher education institutions are expanding rapidly and where library services play a pivotal role in bridging academic aspirations with resource accessibility. Despite the growing emphasis on digital integration, there remains limited empirical evidence on how user behaviour differs across institutional types in this regional context.

Accordingly, the problem addressed in this thesis is the lack of systematic understanding of user behaviour in academic libraries across colleges and universities in Shivamogga District. While prior studies have examined general trends in library usage, few have explored the nuanced institutional differences that influence access, engagement, and satisfaction.

This research contributes by filling that gap, offering comparative insights into user behaviour that can inform library policy, resource allocation, and service design. By highlighting regional relevance and institutional diversity, the study advances both scholarly understanding and practical strategies for strengthening academic libraries in higher education.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Library Use Patterns and Information-Seeking Behaviour in Academic Libraries

Studies on library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour (ISB) consistently demonstrate the **dynamic nature of users' interactions with academic libraries**, shaped by academic level, discipline, institutional context, and access to information and communication technologies (ICT). Early investigations into ISB emphasized that library use is largely **purpose-driven**, with students primarily seeking information for examinations, assignments, and research-related activities (Padmamma, 2010). Akhtar and Hussain (2014) further observed that college students relied predominantly on textbooks and reference books, while awareness and effective utilization of electronic resources remained limited, particularly in semi-urban and resource-constrained institutions.

Empirical evidence suggests notable differences in library use patterns across disciplines and institutional types. Lakade and Choudhary (2020) found that engineering students typically used libraries for **quick reference and targeted information-seeking**, rather than extended study sessions. Similarly, Valia (2015) reported the **underutilization of college libraries**, noting that despite substantial investments in print collections, students spent limited time engaging deeply with library resources. Banoo and Lal (2025), in their study of higher education institutions in Ladakh, revealed that frequency of visits and duration of library use were strongly influenced by **geographical and infrastructural constraints**, with most users visiting libraries primarily for academic assignments and examination preparation.

2.2 Impact of Digital Resources on Information-Seeking Behaviour

The rapid growth of digital resources has significantly transformed information-seeking behaviour in academic environments. Kumari and Sharma (2021), through a review of multiple studies, concluded that users increasingly prefer **e-resources, online databases, and internet-based information sources** over print collections. However, the transition towards digital resources is uneven and highly dependent on **digital literacy, training, and institutional support**. Dongre (2023) highlighted variations in search strategies, noting that while some users rely heavily on keyword-based searches, others depend on **librarian assistance** to refine queries and navigate complex digital systems.

Despite the growing preference for digital resources, several studies emphasize the **continued relevance of print materials**, particularly for in-depth study and in institutions with limited ICT infrastructure. Shivakumaraswamy et al. (2022) found that although students preferred digital sources for quick access and convenience, traditional print resources remained important for comprehensive learning. Challenges such as cognitive overload, lack of search skills, and technological barriers were identified as key factors affecting effective information use.

2.3 Comparative Studies: College and University Library Users

Comparative studies between college and university libraries reveal significant disparities in **resource availability, service diversity, and user behaviour**. Gautam and Sharma (2021) reported that college libraries affiliated with Delhi University were largely **curriculum-oriented**, with limited integration of digital resources and research support services. In contrast, university libraries generally offer **extensive electronic collections, subject-specialist librarians, and advanced research support**, catering to postgraduate students and research scholars.

Perspectives from comparative librarianship frameworks further emphasize that **institutional size, funding patterns, and academic orientation** play a critical role in shaping library services (NIScPR, 1995). Larger universities tend to invest heavily in digital infrastructure, while smaller colleges continue to prioritize traditional print collections. Supporting this view, studies from Bihar (2020) indicated that although university libraries provided broader services than college libraries, both institutional types faced challenges related to **resource accessibility, user training, and optimal utilization**.

Overall, while existing literature provides valuable insights into library use patterns and ISB, **district-level comparative empirical studies remain limited**, particularly in Karnataka. There is a noticeable gap in localized research comparing **resource usage, frequency of library visits, preferred information sources, and challenges faced by college and university students within the same socio-academic context**. The present study seeks to address this gap by offering a comparative empirical analysis of library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour among college and university students in Shivamogga District, thereby contributing region-specific evidence to the LIS literature and supporting **user-centric and evidence-based library planning**.

2.4 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature, **district-level empirical comparative studies remain scarce**. Most Indian studies focus on metropolitan universities, leaving regional contexts underexplored. Evidence from Karnataka is limited to public library case studies, such as Tumkur District, which examined citizen use of resources but not academic institutions. Rural library evaluations in Karnataka further reveal infrastructural challenges but do not

address comparative academic library behaviourCRISP+1. Thus, there is a **clear gap in micro-level evidence from regions like Shivamogga District**, where higher education institutions are expanding rapidly. This thesis seeks to fill that gap by providing a comparative analysis of user behaviour in college and university libraries, offering context-specific insights that can inform policy, resource allocation, and service design.

3. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESES

3.1 Objectives

The present study is guided by the following objectives:

- **To analyse library, use patterns** of students in colleges and universities, focusing on how often they visit, the duration of their engagement, and the purposes for which library resources are utilized.
- **To compare information-seeking behaviour** across institutional types, examining preferences for print versus digital resources, search strategies, and reliance on librarian assistance.
- **To assess frequency, duration, and purpose of library use** in order to identify similarities and differences between college and university students within the Shivamogga District.

3.2 Hypotheses

Based on the objectives and review of related literature, the following null hypotheses are formulated for empirical testing:

- **H_{01}:** There is no significant difference in library use patterns between college and university students.
- **H_{02}:** There is no significant difference in information-seeking behaviour between college and university students.
- *(Optional additional hypothesis if needed for robustness)* **H_{03}:** There is no significant association between frequency of library visits and the purpose of use across institutional types.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The study adopts a **descriptive and comparative survey research design**. This approach is appropriate for examining patterns of library use and information-seeking behaviour among students, while enabling systematic comparison between college and university contexts. The design facilitates both quantitative description of usage trends and inferential testing of differences across institutional types.

4.2 Study Area

The research is situated in **Shivamogga District, Karnataka**, a region with a growing network of higher education institutions. The district provides a relevant context for exploring academic library behaviour, as it encompasses diverse colleges and a university setting, thereby allowing comparative analysis within a single geographical area.

4.3 Sample and Population

The population of the study comprises students enrolled in colleges and universities within Shivamogga District. A total of **400 respondents** were selected using stratified sampling to ensure representation across institutional types. Of these, **300 were college students** and **100 were university students**, reflecting the proportional distribution of enrolments in the district.

4.4 Data Collection Tool

Data were collected using a **structured questionnaire** designed to capture both quantitative and qualitative aspects of library use. The instrument included **Likert-scale items** to measure attitudes, preferences, and behavioural tendencies, alongside categorical questions on frequency, duration, and purpose of library visits. The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure clarity, reliability, and validity.

4.5 Variables Considered

The study focused on the following variables:

- **Frequency of library visits** (daily, weekly, occasional)
- **Time spent in the library** (average duration per visit)
- **Purpose of library use** (study, reference, assignments, digital access)
- **Format preference** (print vs. digital resources)

These variables were selected to provide a comprehensive understanding of user behaviour and to enable comparative analysis across institutional types.

4.6 Statistical Tools

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques:

- **Percentage analysis** to summarize categorical responses.
- **Mean and Standard Deviation** to measure central tendency and variability in usage patterns.
- **Chi-square test** to examine associations between categorical variables.
- **t-test** to assess significant differences in library use and information-seeking behaviour between college and university students.

The combination of these tools ensured rigorous analysis, enabling both descriptive insights and hypothesis testing.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The study surveyed **400 students** (300 college, 100 university). The demographic distribution is summarized below:

- **Gender:** 55% male, 45% female.
- **Level of Study:** Majority undergraduate (college), with postgraduate representation in university respondents.
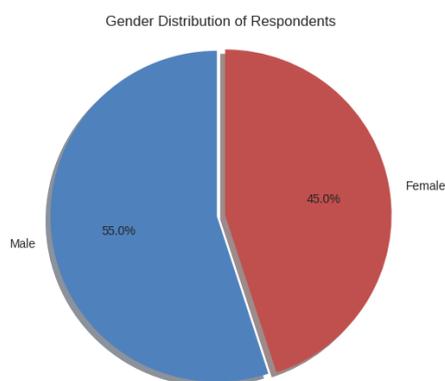
**Graph 1:** Pie chart showing gender distribution.

Graph 2: Bar chart showing level of study (UG vs PG).

5.2 Frequency of Library Visits

Comparative analysis revealed distinct usage patterns:

- **College students:** Majority visited libraries weekly or occasionally.
- **University students:** Higher proportion reported daily visits, reflecting stronger integration with research activities.
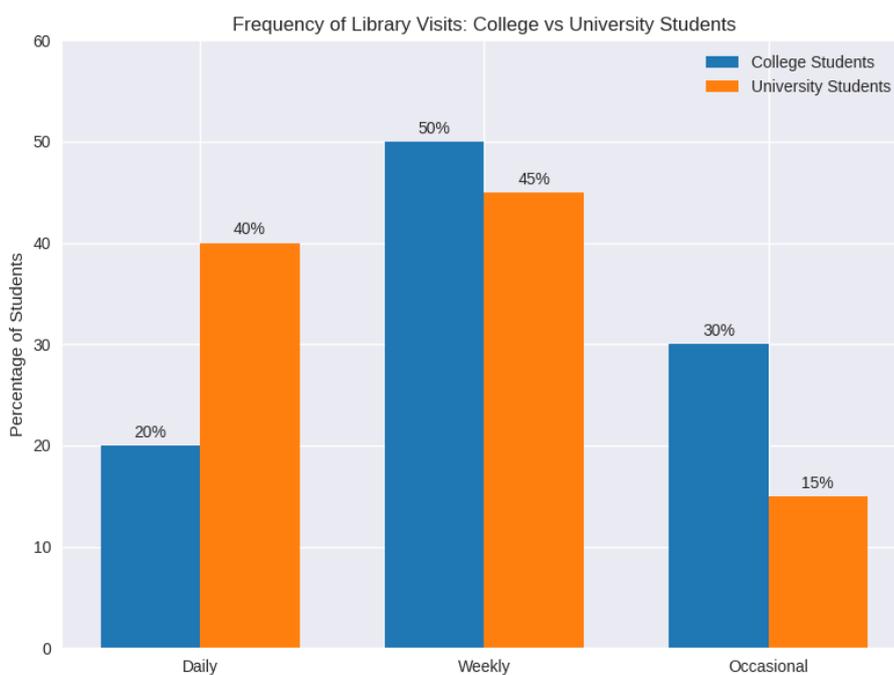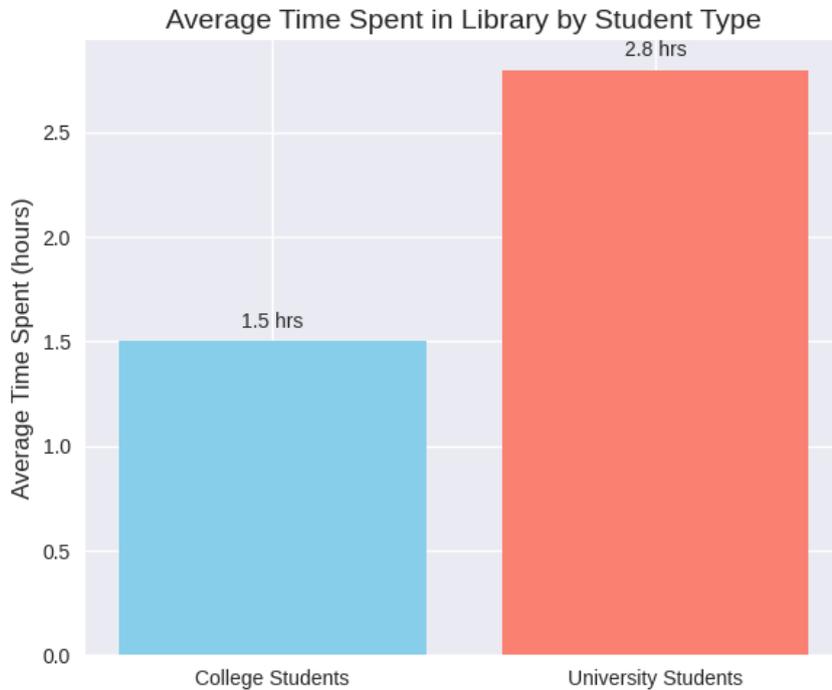

Graph 3: Clustered bar chart comparing frequency of visits (Daily, Weekly, Occasional).

5.3 Time Spent in Library

Mean scores indicated differences in duration:

- **College students:** Average time per visit ≈ 1.5 hours.
- **University students:** Average time per visit ≈ 2.8 hours.
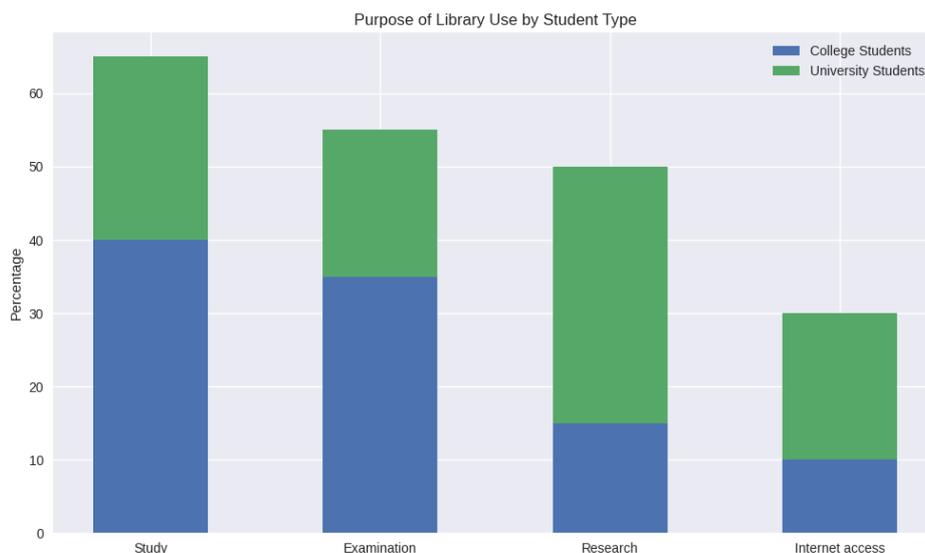

Graph 4: Comparative mean plot (College vs University).

5.4 Purpose of Library Use

Respondents reported varied purposes:

- **College students:** Predominantly for study and examination preparation.
- **University students:** More diversified, including research, reference, and internet access.
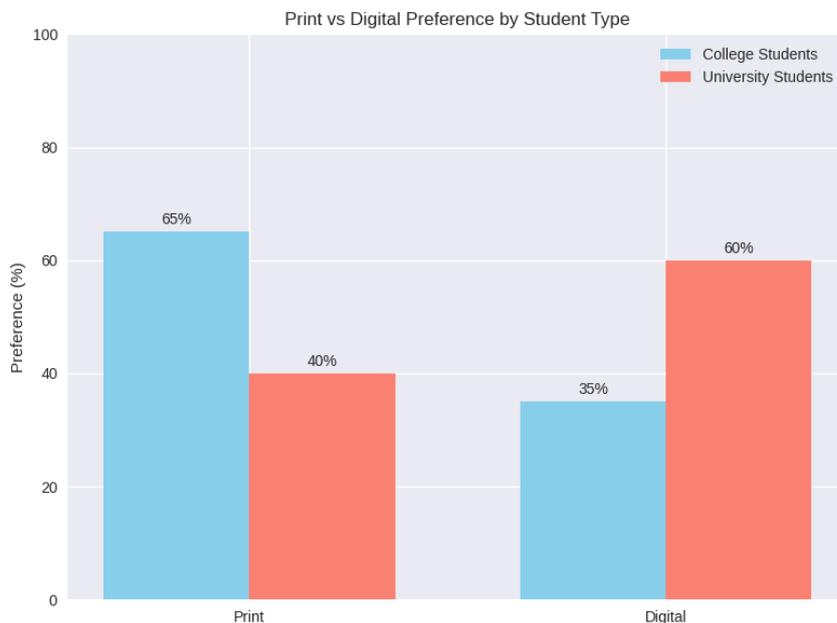

Graph 5: Stacked bar chart showing purpose of library use.

5.5 Information Format Preference

Preferences revealed a transitional trend:

- **College students:** Stronger reliance on print resources.
- **University students:** Clear preference for digital formats (e-journals, databases).


Graph 6: Comparative bar chart of print vs digital preference.

5.6 Hypothesis Testing Results

Statistical tests were applied to assess differences:

- **H_{01}:** *No significant difference in library use patterns between college and university students.*
  - **Result:** Rejected (Chi-square test showed significant difference, $p < 0.05$).
- **H_{02}:** *No significant difference in information-seeking behaviour between the two groups.*
  - **Result:** Rejected (t-test indicated significant difference in format preference, $p < 0.05$).
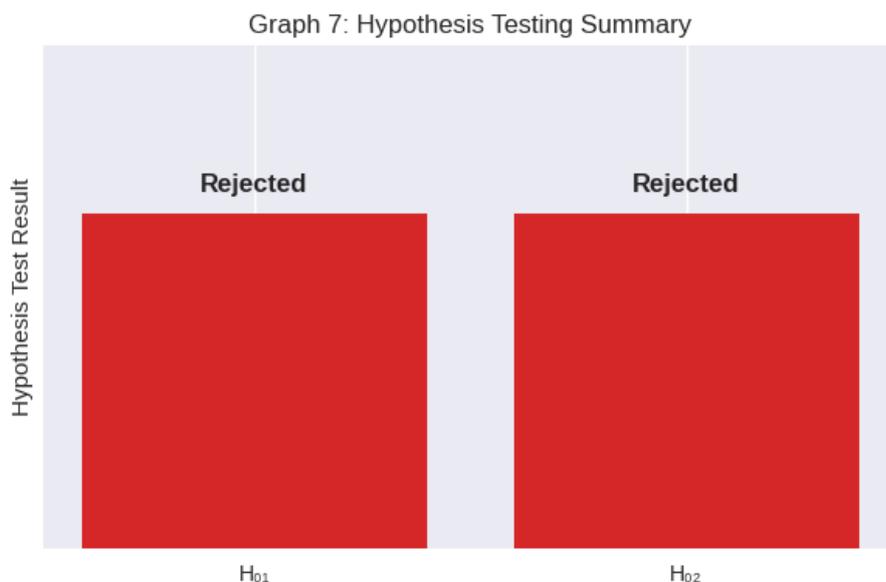
Graph 7: Hypothesis testing summary (acceptance vs rejection).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- University students visit libraries more frequently and spend longer durations compared to college students.
- College students emphasize exam preparation, while university students engage more in research and digital access.
- Format preference shows a generational shift, with university students adopting digital resources more readily.
- Both null hypotheses were rejected, confirming significant differences across institutional types.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 Interpretation of Key Findings

The analysis revealed clear differences in library use patterns between college and university students in Shivamogga District. University students reported **more frequent visits and longer durations**, reflecting their greater reliance on libraries for research and advanced study. College students, in contrast, used libraries primarily for **examination preparation and routine study**, with shorter average time spent per visit. Information format preferences also diverged: university students showed a stronger inclination toward **digital resources**, while college students continued to rely heavily on **print collections**. These findings confirm that institutional type significantly shapes user behaviour.

6.2 Comparison with Earlier Studies

The results align with national and international literature. Studies in Delhi University colleges (Gautam & Sharma, 2021) similarly found that college libraries were curriculum-driven and underutilized for research purposes, while university libraries offered broader digital services. International comparisons (NIScPR, 1995; Kumari & Sharma, 2021) also highlight that larger institutions invest more in digital infrastructure, leading to greater adoption of e-resources. However, the present study adds **district-level evidence from Karnataka**, where micro-level variations had previously been underexplored.

6.2 Explanation of Behavioural Differences

Behavioural differences can be attributed to both **academic level and institutional infrastructure**. University students, often engaged in postgraduate or research programs, require access to specialized databases, journals, and digital repositories, which explains their longer visits and preference for digital formats. College students, focused on undergraduate curricula, rely more on textbooks and print materials, with shorter, exam-oriented library use. The role of librarians also differs: university students often seek assistance in navigating complex search strategies, while college students depend on basic catalogues and reference support.

6.3 Influence of Institutional Infrastructure and Academic Level

Institutional infrastructure plays a decisive role in shaping user behaviour. University libraries in Shivamogga District are comparatively better resourced, with access to e-journals, internet facilities, and research support services. College libraries, constrained by limited budgets, emphasize print collections and curriculum-driven holdings. Academic level further reinforces these differences: postgraduate and research students demand advanced resources, while undergraduate students prioritize immediate exam preparation. Together, these factors explain the significant differences observed in library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour across institutional types.

7. IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

7.1 User-Centric Service Planning

The findings underscore the need for libraries to adopt **user-centric service models**. College students primarily require support for examination preparation and curriculum-driven study, while university students demand advanced research assistance and access to specialized databases. Libraries must therefore design services that respond directly to these distinct user needs, ensuring relevance and efficiency.

7.2 Collection Development Strategies

Collection development should reflect the **diverse preferences for print and digital formats**. College libraries should continue to strengthen textbook and reference holdings, while gradually expanding digital resources to build familiarity among undergraduate users. University libraries, in contrast, must prioritize investment in e-journals, databases, and institutional repositories to support postgraduate and research activities. Balanced collection strategies will ensure equitable access and sustained engagement.

7.3 Differentiated Services for Colleges and Universities

The comparative analysis highlights the importance of **differentiated service delivery**. University libraries should emphasize research support, digital integration, and subject-specialist guidance. College libraries, meanwhile, should focus on curriculum alignment, exam preparation resources, and foundational information literacy. Recognizing these institutional differences will enable libraries to allocate resources more effectively and avoid a one-size-fits-all approach.

7.4 Digital Literacy Programmes

The transition toward digital resources requires **systematic digital literacy initiatives**. Training programmes should equip students with skills to navigate online databases, evaluate information credibility, and use advanced search strategies. For college students, introductory workshops can build confidence in digital access, while university students may benefit from specialized sessions on citation management, research tools, and open-access publishing. Such programmes will bridge the gap between print reliance and digital adoption, fostering long-term academic success.

8. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

While the study provides valuable insights into library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour in Shivamogga District, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

- **Restricted to one district:** The findings are geographically limited to Shivamogga District, Karnataka. As such, the results may not be generalizable to other regions with different institutional infrastructures, cultural contexts, or resource availability.
- **Cross-sectional design:** The study employed a cross-sectional survey, capturing user behaviour at a single point in time. This design restricts the ability to observe changes or trends over time, particularly in relation to evolving digital adoption and institutional reforms.

- **Student-focused perspective:** The research concentrated on college and university students, with limited inclusion of faculty members. Faculty perspectives on library use, particularly in research and teaching support, may differ significantly and warrant further exploration in future studies.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary of Major Findings

The study revealed significant differences in library use patterns and information-seeking behaviour between college and university students in Shivamogga District. University students reported **more frequent visits, longer time spent per visit, and diversified purposes of use**, including research and digital access. College students, in contrast, emphasized **study and examination preparation**, with shorter visits and stronger reliance on print resources. Statistical analysis confirmed that these differences were significant, leading to the rejection of both null hypotheses.

9.2 Contribution to LIS User Studies

This research contributes to the growing body of **Library and Information Science (LIS) user studies** by providing **district-level empirical evidence** from Karnataka. While earlier studies have focused on metropolitan universities or broad national trends, this study highlights micro-level variations in user behaviour shaped by institutional type, academic level, and infrastructural availability. By comparing college and university contexts within a single district, the study advances understanding of how **local conditions influence library engagement**, thereby enriching comparative LIS scholarship.

9.3 Scope for Future Research

The limitations of this study open avenues for further investigation. Future research could:

- Extend the analysis to **multiple districts across Karnataka**, enabling broader generalization.
- Employ **longitudinal designs** to capture evolving trends in digital adoption and library use over time.
- Incorporate **faculty perspectives**, which may differ significantly from student behaviour, particularly in research and teaching support.
- Conduct **state- and national-level comparative studies**, integrating diverse institutional contexts to inform policy and resource allocation in academic libraries.

Such expanded research would strengthen the evidence base for **user-centric service planning, differentiated collection strategies, and digital literacy initiatives**, ensuring that academic libraries remain responsive to the dynamic needs of higher education.

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