

Public Libraries and Citizenship Information in India: A User-Based Study of the Delhi Public Library

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Public libraries play an important role in supporting democratic participation by facilitating citizens' access to government and community information. This study examines the role of the Delhi Public Library (DPL) system in providing citizenship information to its users in India. **Design/methodology/approach:** A descriptive cross-sectional survey was used to collect data from the users across the selected branch and sub-branch libraries of the DPL network between May 2022 and January 2023. A total of 343 responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Findings: The findings show that access to information is widely perceived as essential for effective citizenship. Users reported strong information needs related to educational opportunities, employment, citizens' rights, and access to government services. While users frequently relied on public libraries to seek citizenship information, overall satisfaction was moderate, suggesting scope for improvement in services, staff competence, and digital infrastructure.

Originality: The study explores the evolving role of public libraries in India as local hubs of citizenship information and potential facilitators of e-governance. By situating the findings within the context of a developing democracy, the paper provides empirical evidence on the role of public libraries in promoting informed citizens and inclusive access to government information.

1. Introduction

Access to information is essential to democratic participation and informed citizenship. Citizens who can access relevant and timely information are better positioned to exercise their rights, engage with public institutions, and participate in social and economic life (Stilwell, 2018; IFLA, 2015). Citizenship information is often discussed interchangeably with community or survival information, encompassing education, employment, healthcare, legal rights, social welfare, housing, transportation, and access to public services (Dervin, 1976; Martin, 1984). Marcella and Baxter (1999) conceptualize

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citizenship information as that which supports citizens' involvement in government and policy-making, as well as their everyday decision-making. For many citizens, particularly in developing democracies, access to such information remains uneven due to digital divides, limited information literacy, and institutional barriers (Karim & Islam, 2020).

Public libraries have traditionally served as institutions committed to free and equitable access to information. In recent years, their role has expanded beyond the repositories of print materials to include facilitating access to government information and e-governance services (Jaeger, Paul T. & Bertot, John Carlo, 2009). As accessible and trusted community spaces, public libraries are increasingly positioned to support citizens in navigating information, particularly in contexts where digital divides and challenges to information literacy persist (Jaeger & Fleischmann, 2007).

In India, the growth of digital governance initiatives has significantly increased the availability of government information and services through online platforms and mobile applications (Kachhal, 2018). While these initiatives aim to improve transparency and efficiency, access remains uneven across the population. Many citizens continue to face barriers related to limited digital skills, language constraints, lack of awareness, and institutional complexity (Ghosh, 2005). Public libraries have the potential to mitigate these challenges by functioning as local access points for citizenship information and by supporting citizens' engagement with government services (Balaji et al., 2018).

Despite growing international recognition of the civic role of public libraries, empirical evidence on how Indian public libraries support citizens' everyday citizenship information needs remains limited. Existing studies in the Indian context have largely focused on library infrastructure, policy frameworks, or general service provision (Ghosh, 2005), with comparatively less attention given to user-based assessments of information needs, information-seeking behaviour, and perceptions of library support in metropolitan settings. As a result, there is limited understanding of how public libraries operate in practice as citizenship information hubs within large urban democracies.

Against this backdrop, this study examines the role of the Delhi Public Library (DPL) system in providing citizenship information to its users. Using a user-based survey approach, the study investigates citizens' awareness of citizenship information, their information needs and information-seeking behaviour, their use of public library services, and their level of satisfaction with library support. By focusing on a major metropolitan public library system in India, the study provides empirical evidence for international discussions on the evolving civic role of public libraries and their potential as local citizenship information centres in developing democracies. Accordingly, this study investigates "the citizenship information needs of users of the Delhi Public Library system and examines the role of public libraries in supporting access to such information".

2. Literature Review

The following is a thematic literature review that examines various aspects of the role of public libraries in providing citizenship information:

2.1 Citizenship Information and Information Needs

Citizenship information has been discussed in the literature under related concepts such as community information, survival information, and everyday information needs. Early work by Dervin (1976) emphasized that citizens' information needs arise from everyday problem-solving situations and are shaped by social and contextual factors. Similarly, Martin (1984) identified information related to education, employment, health, housing, and legal rights as essential for citizens' effective participation in society. Building on these perspectives, Marcella and Baxter (1999) conceptualized citizenship information as information that enables citizens to understand public policy, access government services, and participate in democratic processes.

Subsequent studies have shown that access to citizenship information is unevenly distributed and influenced by factors such as education, income, digital literacy, and institutional accessibility (Stilwell, 2018; Karim & Islam, 2020). In developing countries, barriers to access are often heightened by language diversity, limited digital infrastructure, and a lack of awareness of available information sources. These challenges underscore the importance of intermediaries, including public libraries, in supporting citizens' access to reliable and understandable information.

2.2 Role of Public Libraries in Citizenship and Community Information

Public libraries have long been recognized as institutions that support democratic values by providing free and equitable access to information (Tyckoson, 2000). Research from different national contexts highlights the role of public libraries in promoting informed citizenship, social inclusion, and lifelong learning. Jaeger and Fleischmann (2007) argue that public libraries serve as civic spaces where citizens can engage with government information and public discourse, while Jaeger and Bertot (2009) emphasize their role in facilitating access to e-government services.

International studies indicate that public libraries increasingly function as community information hubs, particularly for marginalized populations who may lack access to digital technologies or formal channels of government communication (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Libraries are also seen as important sites for developing information literacy skills that enable citizens to evaluate information. However, several studies note that the effectiveness of public libraries in this role depends on factors such as staff capacity, infrastructure, policy support, and integration with broader governance frameworks.

2.3 Public Libraries, E-Governance, and Digital Access

The expansion of e-governance has transformed how citizens interact with government institutions. While digital platforms have improved the availability of government information, they have also introduced new forms of divide among individuals with limited digital skills or access to technology (Kine & Davidstone, 2021). Public libraries have been identified as potential access points for e-governance services, offering internet access, assistance with online forms, and guidance in navigating government portals (IFLA, 2015).

Studies from both developed and developing contexts suggest that public libraries can play a mediating role between citizens and digital government services, particularly in addressing digital divides and enhancing trust in information sources (Gustafsson et al., 2020). Nevertheless, research also highlights challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, lack of trained staff, and unclear

policy mandates, which can limit libraries' effectiveness in supporting e-governance initiatives.

2.4 Studies on Public Libraries and Citizenship Information in India

In the Indian context, research on public libraries has primarily focused on policy development, library infrastructure, and service delivery (Ghosh, 2005). Barath and Sudhier (2023) discuss the potential of public libraries to bridge the digital divide and support access to government information, emphasizing the need for stronger integration between libraries and e-governance initiatives. Balaji et al. (2018) highlight policy-level challenges affecting the performance of public libraries in India, including funding constraints, uneven development across states, and limited technological infrastructure.

More recent empirical research has begun to examine the role of public libraries in supporting citizenship-related information needs. Munshi et al. (2024) conducted a user-based study of rural public libraries across several districts of West Bengal and found that libraries played an important role in providing access to government schemes, welfare information, and basic digital services. Their study revealed that rural users frequently relied on public libraries and library staff as intermediaries for understanding government programmes, completing online applications, and accessing e-governance portals. However, the authors also reported challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, limited digital resources, and insufficient staff training, which constrained the effectiveness of libraries in meeting citizenship information needs.

2.5 Research Gap

While the study by Munshi et al. (2024) provides insights into the role of public libraries in rural contexts, empirical evidence from large metropolitan public library systems remains limited. Existing user studies in India tend to focus either on rural settings or on general information use, with comparatively less attention to citizenship-specific information needs in urban environments. As a result, there is limited understanding of how public libraries function as citizenship information hubs in densely populated metropolitan areas characterized by diverse user groups and complex information demands. In particular, little is known about citizens' awareness of citizenship information, their information-seeking behaviour, and their perceptions of public library support in large urban settings. This gap highlights the need for systematic empirical research examining how public libraries operate as citizenship information providers within metropolitan environments in developing democracies.

3. Research Questions

The study seeks to address the following research questions:

RQ1: What are the citizenship information needs of users of the Delhi Public Library, and how do these needs vary across demographic groups?

RQ2: What are the preferred sources and methods used by citizens to seek citizenship information?

RQ3: What is the level of awareness and use of citizenship information services provided by the Delhi Public Library?

RQ4: How do users perceive the role of the public library in providing citizenship information, and what is their level of satisfaction with these services?

4. Methodology and Sample

The study employed a descriptive quantitative research design using a cross-sectional survey method to examine users of the Delhi Public Library (DPL) Network. As of January 31, 2022, the DPL had 126,945 registered adult members. From this population, a sample size of 500 respondents was selected.

Libraries under the DPL Network were chosen using random sampling, including the Central Library (with New Police Line Library), three branch libraries—Shahdara, Ashok Vihar (with sub-branches at Bawana, Qadi Pur, Katewara, and Narela), and Patel Nagar (with sub-branches at Central Jail and Janakpuri)—and the Vinobapuri Sub-branch Library under the South Zonal Library. Convenience sampling was used to distribute questionnaires among library users.

Data were collected through a structured questionnaire developed in accordance with the research questions. Prior to the main survey, a pilot study was conducted in December 2020 at the Sarojini Nagar (South) Zonal Library, which was randomly selected and subsequently excluded from the final study to avoid sample contamination. Feedback from the pilot study was used to refine and validate the questionnaire.

The internal consistency of the instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable reliability.

The survey was administered between May 2022 and January 2023, with 400 questionnaires distributed physically and 100 questionnaires administered online using the AllCounted platform. Of the 500 questionnaires distributed, 343 valid responses were received, resulting in a response rate of 68.6%.

Data analysis was carried out using Microsoft Excel.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and weighted frequencies, in accordance with the research questions of the study. The results are presented through tables and figures for clarity and interpretation.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Category	n=343	%
	Male	208	61

Gender	Female	134	39
	Not disclosed	1	0
Age (years)	15–19	35	10
	20–29	286	83
	30 and above	22	6
Educational Qualification	Up to Senior Secondary	38	11
	Graduate	179	52
	Postgraduate	104	30
	Doctoral	9	3
	Professional	12	3
	Not responded	1	0
Occupational Status	Student	209	61
	Employed / Self-employed	65	19
	Unemployed	66	19
	Not responded	3	1
Languages Known*	Hindi	325	95
	English	284	83
	Other languages	40	12
Differently Abled	Yes	10	3
	No	322	94
	Not responded	11	3

Note: Multiple responses permitted.

Table 1 exhibits the demographic profile of the respondents ($n = 343$). The sample consists of 61% males and 39% females. A majority of respondents (83%) were aged 20–29 years, indicating a predominantly young adult user group. In terms of educational attainment, over half of the respondents (52%) held undergraduate degrees, while 30% possessed postgraduate qualifications. Students constituted the largest occupational group (61%), followed by respondents who were employed or self-employed (19%), and those who were unemployed (19%). Regarding language proficiency, most respondents reported knowledge of Hindi (95%) and English (83%). Only 3% of respondents identified as differently abled, while the majority reported no disability.

Table 2. Level of Awareness about Citizenship Information ($n=343$)

Awareness Level (Weight)	No. of Respondents (%)	Weighted Frequency
Extremely Aware (5)	49 (14.3)	245
Moderately Aware (4)	136 (39.7)	544

Somewhat Aware (3)	71 (20.7)	213
Slightly Aware (2)	34 (9.9)	68
Not at all Aware (1)	14 (4.1)	14
Not Responded (0)	39 (11.4)	0
Total	343 (100)	1084
Weighted mean awareness score = 3.2		

The weighted mean score (3.2) reflects a moderate level of awareness of citizenship information among respondents.

Table 3. Areas of Citizenship Information Needs

Area of Citizenship Information	n=343 (%)
Educational opportunities	227 (66.2)
Employment and job opportunities	203 (59.2)
Citizens' rights	148 (43.1)
Technology and communication	133 (38.8)
Health care (COVID-19)	122 (35.6)
Business opportunities	121 (35.3)
Environmental information	117 (34.1)
Crime and security	114 (33.2)
Law	112 (32.7)
Equal rights and discrimination	110 (32.1)
Transport and travel	102 (29.7)
Financial matters	96 (28.0)
Taxation and social security benefits	91 (26.5)
Family and personal matters	67 (19.5)
Consumer and credit issues	64 (18.7)
Recreation and culture	60 (17.5)
Housing	41 (12.0)
Immigration and nationality	40 (11.7)
Neighbourhood concerns	34 (9.9)
Housekeeping	33 (9.6)

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

To address RQ1, Table 1 provides the demographic context of the respondents, while Table 3 presents their reported citizenship information needs. The predominance of young adults and students in the sample explains the strong emphasis on educational opportunities (66.2%) and employment and job opportunities (59.2%), as shown in Table 3. Similarly, the relatively high level of educational attainment among respondents corresponds with notable information needs related to citizens' rights (43.1%), technology and communication (38.8%), law (32.7%), and issues of equality and discrimination (32.1%), reflecting awareness of civic and legal dimensions of citizenship.

The presence of substantial information needs concerning health care (35.6%), environmental

issues (34.1%), crime and security (33.2%), and transport (29.7%) further reflects respondents' engagement with everyday public services and governance mechanisms. Overall, the demographic profile outlined in Table 1 helps contextualize the patterns observed in Table 3, indicating that citizenship information needs are shaped by respondents' age, educational status, and socio-economic position.

Table 4. Preferred Methods for Seeking Citizenship Information

Methods for Seeking Citizenship Information	Total	% (n=343)
Reading a newspaper	244	71.1
Reading a book	241	70.3
Through social media	200	58.3
Using government websites	185	53.9
Looking through the library collections	171	49.9
Through mobile apps	160	46.6
Talking on mobile	155	45.2
Talking face-to-face with someone	152	44.3
Watching television	139	40.5
Using government publications	131	38.2
Listening to the Radio	121	35.3
Through emails	115	33.5
Reading a leaflet/pamphlet	89	25.9
Writing a letter	59	17.2
Total	2162	

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

To address RQ2, respondents were asked to indicate their preferred methods for seeking citizenship information. As shown in Table 4, the findings reveal a strong reliance on print, digital, and interpersonal communication channels. Traditional print media remain highly significant, with reading newspapers (71.1%) and reading books (70.3%) emerging as the most commonly used methods. Digital platforms also play a prominent role, particularly social media (58.3%), government websites (53.9%), and mobile applications (46.6%), indicating growing dependence on online sources for accessing citizenship-related information.

Library sources continue to be relevant, as nearly half of the respondents reported consulting library collections (49.9%) and using government publications (38.2%). Interpersonal communication methods—such as talking on the mobile phone (45.2%) and face-to-face interactions (44.3%)—also remain important, reflecting the role of informal networks in information seeking. Broadcast media, including television (40.5%) and radio (35.3%), were used by a substantial proportion of respondents, whereas more traditional modes such as letters and pamphlets were comparatively less preferred.

Overall, the results indicate that citizens employ a hybrid approach to seeking citizenship information, combining traditional print sources, digital platforms, library resources, and interpersonal communication. This diversity of methods underscores the continued relevance of public libraries

alongside emerging digital and social media channels in facilitating access to citizenship information.

Table 5. Citizenship Information Services of DPL

Citizenship Information Services	Total (%) n=343
Books (Lending services)	216 (63.0)
e-library service (Internet)	211 (61.5)
Ask-a-Librarian service	148 (43.1)
Serials (magazines, newspapers)	107 (31.2)
Government Publications	91 (26.5)
Reference Books	89 (25.9)
E-Books	86 (25.1)
Mobile Library Service	72 (21.0)
Extension Services (social education services)	49 (14.3)
Telephone Inquiry	45 (13.1)
Total	1114

Note: Multiple responses were permitted.

To address RQ3, respondents were asked about their awareness and use of citizenship information services offered by the Delhi Public Library (DPL). As indicated in Table 2, respondents demonstrated an overall moderate level of awareness of citizenship information services. This level of awareness is reflected in the usage patterns presented in Table 5.

The findings show that core library services, particularly book lending (63.0%) and e-library services (61.5%), were the most widely used, highlighting continued reliance on both print and digital collections. A notable proportion of respondents also reported using the Ask-a-Librarian service (43.1%), underscoring the role of professional assistance in facilitating access to citizenship-related information.

Moderate usage was observed for serials, government publications (26.5%), reference books (25.9%), and e-books (25.1%), whereas mobile library services, extension services, and telephone inquiry services were used by comparatively fewer respondents. Overall, the results suggest that while awareness of DPL's citizenship information services is moderate, usage is largely concentrated around traditional and easily accessible services, indicating potential for improving the visibility and uptake of specialized and outreach-oriented services.

Table 6. Use of E-governance Portals for Seeking Citizenship Information

E-governance Portals	Frequently (%)	Occasionally (%)	Never (%)	Area of Citizenship Information
MyGov.in	40.5	29.2	30.3	Public affairs, political and miscellaneous
Delhi.gov.in	37.0	18.4	44.6	Public affairs, political and miscellaneous
Co-WIN	32.4	24.5	43.1	Health

Aarogya Setu	32.06	22.4	45.4	Health
IRCTC	30.3	21.0	48.7	Transportation & Travel
Aadhar Card (UIDAI)	30.0	21.0	49.0	Public assistance and social security

Note: Multiple responses were permitted. Detailed portal-level data are provided as online supplementary material.

To further address RQ2, respondents were asked to indicate the e-governance portals they most frequently use to access citizenship-related information. As shown in Table 6, the findings suggest a selective pattern of engagement with official digital platforms, primarily driven by service-oriented needs.

Portals related to civic participation and government communication, such as MyGov (40.5%), were among the most frequently used, highlighting citizens' interest in accessing official announcements and participatory initiatives. Substantial use was also reported for portals associated with COVID-19 pandemic-related platforms (e.g., Co-Win (32.4%) and Aarogya Setu (32.06%)), transport and travel-related portals such as IRCTC (30.3%), and identity and authentication services such as Aadhaar (30%), reflecting everyday citizenship requirements.

State-level government portals such as Delhi.gov.in (37%) were also used by a considerable proportion of respondents, suggesting reliance on localized digital platforms for accessing welfare-related information. This pattern features the growing importance of e-governance systems as key sources of citizenship information, complementing traditional and library-mediated channels.

Table 7. Satisfaction Level of Users of Delhi Public Library towards Citizenship Information

Satisfaction Level (Weight)	No. of Respondents (%)	Weighted Frequency
Very Satisfied (5)	87 (25.4)	435
Somewhat Satisfied (4)	102 (29.7)	408
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied (3)	83 (24.2)	249
Somewhat Dissatisfied (2)	26 (7.6)	52
Very Dissatisfied (1)	18 (5.2)	18
Not responded (0)	27 (7.9)	0
Total	343	1162

Weighted Mean (W) = 1162/343 = 3.4

To address RQ4, respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with the citizenship information provided by the Delhi Public Library. As presented in Table 7, the weighted mean satisfaction score was 3.4, reflecting a moderate level of satisfaction. Although more than half of the respondents expressed satisfaction with the services, a noticeable proportion reported neutral or dissatisfied responses. Overall, the findings suggest that DPL plays a crucial role in supporting citizens' information needs.

Table 8. Level of Use of Services Provided by Delhi Public Library towards Citizenship Information

Level of Use (Weight)	No. of Respondents (%)	Weighted Frequency
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Frequently (2)	130 (37.9)	260
Occasionally (1)	140 (40.8)	140
Never (0)	52 (15.2)	0
Not responded (0)	21 (6.1)	0
Total	343	400

Weighted Mean (W) = 400/343 = 1.2

Regarding RQ3, respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they use the citizenship information services provided by the Delhi Public Library. As presented in Table 8, the weighted mean level of use was 1.2, indicating a low to occasional level of service utilization.

Although a considerable proportion of respondents reported using the services frequently (37.9%) or occasionally (40.8%), the overall mean score is pulled downward by some respondents who never used the services (15.2%) and those who did not respond (6.1%). This suggests that while awareness and satisfaction levels are moderate, actual use of citizenship information services remains limited. Overall, it indicates a gap between awareness of services and their regular utilization, highlighting the need for improved outreach and user engagement to promote greater use of DPL's citizenship information services.

Table 9. Suggestions to Improve Access to Citizenship Information

Suggestions	Respondents	Category
Updated collection (Books, Reference Books, Magazines & Newspapers)	30	Collection
Availability of government magazines	1	
Add more e-books	2	
Books on competitive exams	1	
Provide door-to-door information	1	Information Literacy
Mobile App	3	
Display of information on daily needs/Use of posters & banners	2	
Provide literacy for citizenship information	5	
Programmes on Inspirational topics	2	
Email and SMS service	1	
New Arrival list	1	
Awareness of library resources	2	
May I help you service/Reference Desk (Online/Offline) 24*7	1	
Proper seating capacity	19	Infrastructure
More power points	2	
Clean water facility	17	
Proper ambience and cleanliness	11	
AC facility	18	

Food outlets	3	
Add more computers	4	
Open more branch libraries	3	
Cleaning library toilets	6	
Proper ventilation in the library	8	
Proper lighting	1	
Marketing through newspapers/pamphlets	2	Marketing
Best Reader Award	1	
Reduce membership fee	1	
Welcoming Note	1	
Unrestricted access	1	Service
Provide updated information	5	
Reservation of seats for research scholars	1	
Staff should be cooperative and updated	7	Staff
Increasing staff	4	
Training of Staff	5	
Internet speed/Wi-Fi	48	Technology
Use of the latest technology	3	
Install systems to Access OPAC	2	
Open on Sunday	1	Timings
Timing should be increased	13	

To address RQ4, respondents' satisfaction levels were examined alongside their suggestions for improving access to citizenship information. As shown in Table 7, the weighted mean satisfaction score of 3.4 indicates a moderate level of satisfaction with the citizenship information services provided by the Delhi Public Library. The nature of the suggestions reported in Table 9 provides important context for this moderate satisfaction level.

A prominent theme emerging from respondents' suggestions relates to technological improvements, particularly the need for better internet connectivity and Wi-Fi services, which received the highest number of responses. This was followed by suggestions concerning infrastructure enhancements, including improved seating capacity, cleanliness, ventilation, lighting, and food and water facilities, highlighting the importance of a conducive physical environment for accessing citizenship information.

Respondents also emphasized improvements in information literacy and service delivery, such as enhanced user guidance, awareness of library resources, reference and help-desk services, and literacy programmes focused on citizenship information. Suggestions related to staff capacity, including training, cooperation, and increased staffing levels, further indicate the role of human resources in shaping user perceptions. Additionally, respondents highlighted the need for updated and expanded collections, particularly government publications, e-books, and materials related to competitive examinations.

Overall, the alignment between the moderate satisfaction level observed in Table 7 and the diverse

improvement suggestions in Table 9 suggests that while users value the existing citizenship information services, they expect better technological support, improved infrastructure, and enhanced service responsiveness. Addressing these areas may contribute to higher satisfaction levels and strengthen the role of public libraries in supporting informed citizenship.

6. Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitations that should be taken into account when interpreting the findings. First, the investigation focused on the information needs and information-seeking behaviour of citizens who use the Delhi Public Library (DPL) network.

Second, the sample was mainly composed of respondents aged 20–29 years. As a result, the findings largely reflect the perspectives of younger users.

Third, the citizenship information needs were identified based on the taxonomy of everyday information needs of the average citizen by Brenda Dervin (Dervin, B., 1976).

Finally, non-response bias may have affected the results, as a proportion of distributed questionnaires were either incomplete or not returned, potentially influencing the representativeness of the data.

7. Discussions

The present study investigates citizens' information needs and seeking behaviour, as well as the role of the Delhi Public Library in facilitating citizenship information. The study provides insights into how urban citizens engage with citizenship information and how public libraries respond to this role.

7.1 Citizenship information needs in urban youth:

The study highlights the prominence of employment and educational information needs, reflecting a specific demographic composition of young adults aged 20-29, who are predominantly students and job seekers. Similar studies were conducted earlier, emphasizing career and educational information needs (Case, 2007, 285-316). Further, there is a notable need for citizens' rights, law and equality, which aligns with the study by Szabo and Vieira (2017). The results underpin that socio-demographic variables shape the citizenship information needs among populations.

7.2 Hybrid Information-Seeking Behaviour:

The study reveals a hybrid pattern of information-seeking behaviour, where traditional sources, such as newspapers and books, coexist with digital platforms, including social media, government websites, and mobile apps. This is inconsistent with the previous study of Athukorala (2021). The use of e-government portals for service-related issues is related to the observations made by Jaeger and Fleischmann (2007). The findings confirm the role of public libraries as intermediaries.

7.3 Public libraries are underutilized:

According to the study, the respondents were moderately aware of the citizenship information; however, the library's actual usage ranged from low to occasional. The users mainly utilized book lending and internet access along with other services of the public library, making them mere repositories instead of civic institutions. Public libraries should participate in outreach and user engagement activities to establish themselves as trusted civic institutions (Kranich, 2005).

7.4 Expectations and Gaps:

The study indicates that public libraries are underutilized within the citizenship information ecosystem. The respondents emphasize the technological infrastructure development of public libraries, as advocated by Estrullo-Suaga et al. (2021). The demand for Wi-Fi access, staff capacity building and updated collection development advocates that libraries need both human and informational resources in shaping their effectiveness. Jaeger and Bertot (2009) highlighted the potential role of public libraries in e-governance and community information. By extending Dervin's sense-making theory to urban public libraries in bridging the information gaps through citizenship information, this study can offer a conceptualization that public libraries can act as a common services centre. The lack of uniformity in public libraries legislation in India has resulted in disparities in the provision of information services. To address the issue, a single legislation should be implemented as "One Nation, One Library Legislation".

8. Recommendations

The following recommendations are made to move from the traditional role to the access point for citizenship information:

8.1 Strengthening digital infrastructure:

Public libraries should have reliable internet connectivity, adequate broadband, and computer terminals to support citizenship information and e-governance.

8.2 Enhancing user awareness:

Public libraries should position themselves as local community centres, increase their outreach activities, and promote citizenship information services such as accessing government portals and filing online forms.

8.3 Staff capacity building:

Continuous professional development programs for staff should be introduced to build digital competencies among them. They can enhance their skills online using the SWAYAM platform

(Swayam Central, n.d.) to overcome geographical and time barriers.

8.4 Updating collections:

Collections pertaining to reference books and competitive exams should be updated timely manner, and the old ones should be weeded out to keep the collection active.

8.5 Policy and funding support:

There should be a mandatory provision for citizenship information services, along with allocated budgets, in public libraries through library legislation.

9. Conclusions

An informed citizen is essential for the effective functioning of a democratic society, as access to relevant and timely information enables individuals to exercise their rights and participate meaningfully in civic life. Citizenship information encompasses a wide range of domains, including education, employment, legal rights, health, welfare, housing, and public services (Dervin, 1976). Public libraries, as inclusive and trusted institutions, play a crucial role in facilitating access to such information and supporting active citizenship.

This study examined the citizenship information needs, information-seeking behaviour, and perceptions of public library services among users of the Delhi Public Library (DPL) network. The findings indicate that the majority of DPL users are young and educated, with prominent information needs related to education, employment, citizens' rights, and healthcare. While users rely on multiple information sources, including digital platforms, public libraries continue to serve as important access points for citizenship information. However, the study also revealed that users' satisfaction with existing services is moderate, and the level of use of specialized citizenship information services remains limited.

The findings highlight the potential of public libraries to function as effective intermediaries between citizens and government services, particularly in the context of developing e-governance initiatives. Enhancing user awareness, improving digital infrastructure, and strengthening staff capacity are critical to enabling public libraries to better support citizens in accessing government information and services. As local information centres, public libraries are well-positioned to assist users with tasks such as accessing online forms, employment information, welfare services, and other public resources.

While previous studies in India have primarily focused on community information services, the present study extends the discourse by offering a broader perspective on citizenship information provision in public libraries. By focusing on an urban public library system, the study contributes empirical evidence to a relatively underexplored area.

The study is subject to certain limitations, as it is confined to users of the DPL network and reflects the perspectives of younger respondents. Future research may enhance the generalisability

of the findings by examining non-users of public libraries and conducting comparative studies across different states. Overall, the study highlights the evolving role of public libraries and their capacity to support informed citizenship in an increasingly digital governance environment.

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