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Kadeeja Banu C V

University of Calicut, kadeejabanucv@gmail.com

Abdul Azeez T A Dr.

University of Calicut, azeez64@gmail.com

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**COLLEGE LIBRARIES AS LEARNING SPACES FOR CIVIL SERVICE
ASPIRANTS: A STUDY AMONG AUTONOMOUS COLLEGES IN KERALA, INDIA**

***Kadeeja Banu C V and **Dr.Abdul Azeez T A**

***Research Scholar, CHMK Library and Research Centre, University of Calicut**

****University Librarian, CHMK library, University of Calicut**

Email id: *kadeejabanucv@gmail.com

****azeez64@gmail.com**

Abstract

College libraries are learning spaces for Civil service Aspirants as it is one of the prestigious and dream jobs of many college students. This study is conducted among autonomous colleges in Kerala to identify the resources, services, and facilities extended by these college libraries to Civil Service Aspirants. There are twenty-two autonomous colleges in Kerala, and an online questionnaire survey is conducted among the librarians of these colleges, and nineteen colleges responded to the questionnaire. The data is analyzed using Microsoft Excel. The majority of these colleges provide information resources specifically to Civil service Aspirants. The majority of the libraries are not providing special services to Civil service aspirants. Half of the colleges think that facilities available in their library are sufficient for Civil Service Aspirants. In contrast, half of them say that they are not sufficient for Civil service aspirants. The librarians specified the challenges faced by them in providing special services to Civil Service Aspirants. The study found that College Libraries can provide excellent materials, special services, and peaceful and comfortable ambience for Civil Service aspirants.

Keywords: Library, Civil Service, Civil service Aspirants, Colleges, Autonomous colleges, Kerala

1. INTRODUCTION

We know that the libraries stand for the satisfaction of the community's information requirements that they ought to serve. Information requirements differ as the community may differ, so that the different types of libraries exist to cater to the information needs of these various communities. Public libraries serve public users while academic libraries focus on academic communities. If the purpose of education is learning, then the library is an indispensable source of learning, and there is no replacement for it. (IGNOU, n.d.)

In an academic institution, the library is the central point where staff and students are strengthened and vested with knowledge. College libraries are centers of learning of a college to supplement the classroom teaching of the students. College libraries have an active role in helping students to achieve their careers. They can act as a link between the students and their career advancement. "Career development is a lifelong process that can be fostered through education programs at all levels, but specifically during the beginning of one's college years. Colleges need to offer career guidance aimed to help students make more informed and consequently better educational and career choices" (Sinz, 2003). Libraries have to extend their support in all spheres of knowledge, and providing career information in the library will help the users achieve their dreams. College libraries provide resources, services, and facilities to be in their career path." A quality career service can help the students to find out their interests and abilities and to attain their dream job in society. The library is the place where they can set their future goals and shape their career. "(Singh & Gulati, 2017).

In this competitive world, there are many options to choose an academic career after graduation. One of India's most chosen career jobs is Civil Service, as it provides social status

and job security. Students have to undergo one of India's challenging and difficult exams to get into this prestigious service. The Civil Service Examination is a nationwide competitive exam in India conducted by the Union Public Service Commission for recruitment to various civil services of the Government of India. Libraries have a prominent role in getting out this exam for its aspirants. They can provide valuable sources and services for the civil service aspirants and develop them into a responsible civil servant. In this study, a survey is being carried out among Autonomous colleges in Kerala to examine the extent of provision of services in college libraries in promoting Civil Service aspirants.

Autonomous Colleges in Kerala:

“Autonomous colleges are colleges affiliated to/recognized by any Government body or university but follow their own regulations/curriculum/syllabus/examination pattern/grade system for their academic courses instead of following the university's syllabus. The quality of faculty and facilities (labs, classrooms, etc.) play an important role in the quality of education. Autonomous colleges have flexibility in terms of curriculum design, delivery, and assessment/ evaluation. It is Institution specific how to use autonomy for the betterment of student development”.(Manisha,2017)

In Kerala, there are twenty-two autonomous colleges affiliated under four universities, Three under APJ Abdul Kalam Technological University, ten under Mahatma Gandhi University, seven under the University of Calicut, and two under the University of Kerala. (List is provided in the appendix)

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Sakkaravarthi & Thanuskodi (2019) studied the Impact of Academic Libraries on the Career Development of MBA Students with Special Reference to Tiruchirappalli District,

Tamil Nadu, India. The study revealed the importance of career information for educational improvement and development of the MBA students, the apt library resources and services for the MBA student's career development, the level of satisfaction of the MBA students concerning the library and its activities towards career development and it also highlighted the need for user career development program for the management students. Dilli (2019) analyzed the services extended to the students preparing for competitive examinations among the government and private college libraries in Chennai. Prakashe & Lengure (2016) conducted a study entitled "Arts Colleges Library and Competitive Exams: A Suggestive Way with Reference to Nagpur City," mainly focused on the information needs of the aspirants of competitive exams in the Arts colleges of Nagpur City and how far the Libraries of these colleges are successful in sustaining the necessities of such users. The survey was conducted on some selected Libraries. Rakshikar (2012) evaluated career guidance services in college libraries in Mumbai. This paper mainly focused on the status of the services provided by college libraries in Mumbai concerning career guidance.

It is clear from the previous studies that there is little research that focuses specifically on the role of college libraries for Civil Service Examination. Therefore, a need was felt to analyse how the college libraries are stand-in as learning spaces for Civil service Aspirants. This study focuses on the status of autonomous college libraries in Kerala in providing services to Civil service Aspirants.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is:

- To investigate across autonomous colleges in Kerala about the extent of provision of library services to civil service aspirants.

Specific objectives are:

1. To explore the collections in libraries meant for civil service examination.
2. To identify the services rendered by the college libraries specifically meant for civil service aspirants.
3. To identify the facilities provided to civil service aspirants by the college libraries.
4. To evaluate the challenges faced by librarians in providing library service to civil service aspirants.
5. To know the opinion of librarians on the role of libraries in civil service examination.

4. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study assesses the role played by the autonomous college libraries in promoting the civil service aspirants. The study also explores the sources, services, and facilities provided by these colleges to Civil Service Aspirants in facing the UPSC examination that enable them to crack a position in the civil service examination. The study considered the libraries of autonomous colleges in Kerala only.

5. METHODOLOGY

The study selected the autonomous colleges in Kerala. There are 22 autonomous colleges in Kerala. The online questionnaire survey method is used for the data collection. The survey is conducted among the librarians of these colleges. The survey is made open on 19th February and closed on 19th March 2021. Thus the population of the study consists of librarians of these 22 autonomous colleges in Kerala. The data is analyzed by percentage method using Microsoft Excel.

6. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

6.1 Response Rate

Table 1

Response Rate

Out of 22 colleges, 19 colleges responded to the questionnaire, i.e., the response rate is 86.4 percent.

6.2 Automation of Libraries

The proliferation of ICT is seen in all areas, and the library is no exception. The application of ICT helped the libraries to mechanize the in-house operations of libraries. Library automation is the mechanization of library activities. It helps to increase the service efficiency of users. Bansode & Periera (2008) carried a survey on the status of library automation in college libraries of Goa State. The study found that all the colleges are automated. Here also all the autonomous colleges in the study are automated libraries.

6.3 Software used for library automation

Selecting the appropriate library automation software is important in managing the works of the library and imparting efficient service to its patrons. The investigators asked the respondents to indicate the software used for library automation. The responses are shown in table 2.

Table 2

Library Automation

| Library automation Software | | Number of libraries | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--|
| LIBSOFT | | 1 | |
| KOHA | | 14 | |
| Number of Questionnaires | Number of response received | Response Rate(Percent) | |
| AUTOLIB Distributed | | 2 | |
| BOOK MAGIC | | 1 | |
| 22 | 19 | 86.4 | |
| | | | |

| | |
|------|---|
| SOUL | 1 |
|------|---|

Table 2 shows that among 19 libraries, 14 are using KOHA for library automation. This may be because Koha is open-source software. Also, "Koha is a useful package for the creation of a database and for information retrieval." (SenthilKumaran & Sreeja, 2017)

6.4 Career guidance cell

According to Collins Dictionary, "Career Guidance refers to the advice and information about careers that helps individuals, esp. young people, decide on a career and also teaches them how to pursue their chosen career." (*Careers Guidance Definition and Meaning / Collins English Dictionary*, n.d.)

Career guidance helps the students of the colleges to choose the apt career for them and can act accordingly. All the colleges have a career guidance cell as part of their library, which indicates the due importance given by the colleges in the career development of the students.

6.5 Activities carried out by the library as part of the career guidance

Career guidance can be provided by the college libraries to students by different means. The investigators asked the librarians about the activities carried out by their library as part of career guidance.

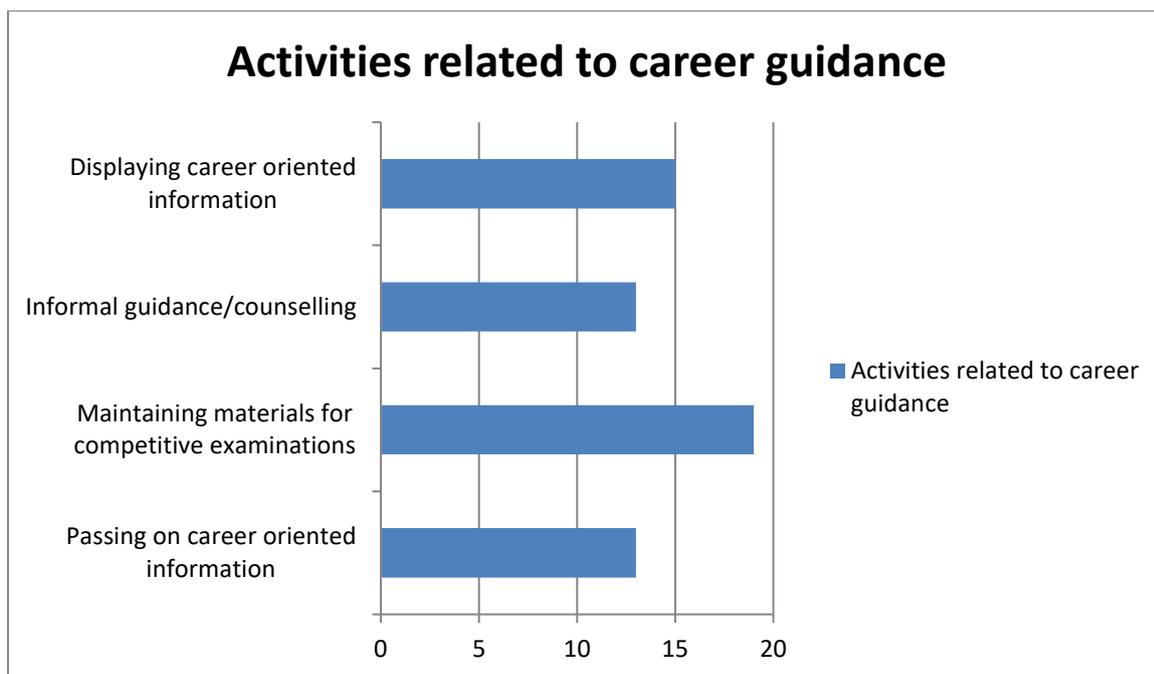


Figure 1

Career guidance

Figure 1 reveals that all the colleges are maintaining materials for competitive examinations, and the majority of them are displaying career-oriented information, passing on career-oriented information, and giving informal guidance and counseling.

6.6 Sources for career guidance

There are several sources of information for career development available in the market. The library can hold these different types of information sources for guiding their students to make their right choice of career. The availability of different sources of information is depicted in the below bar chart.

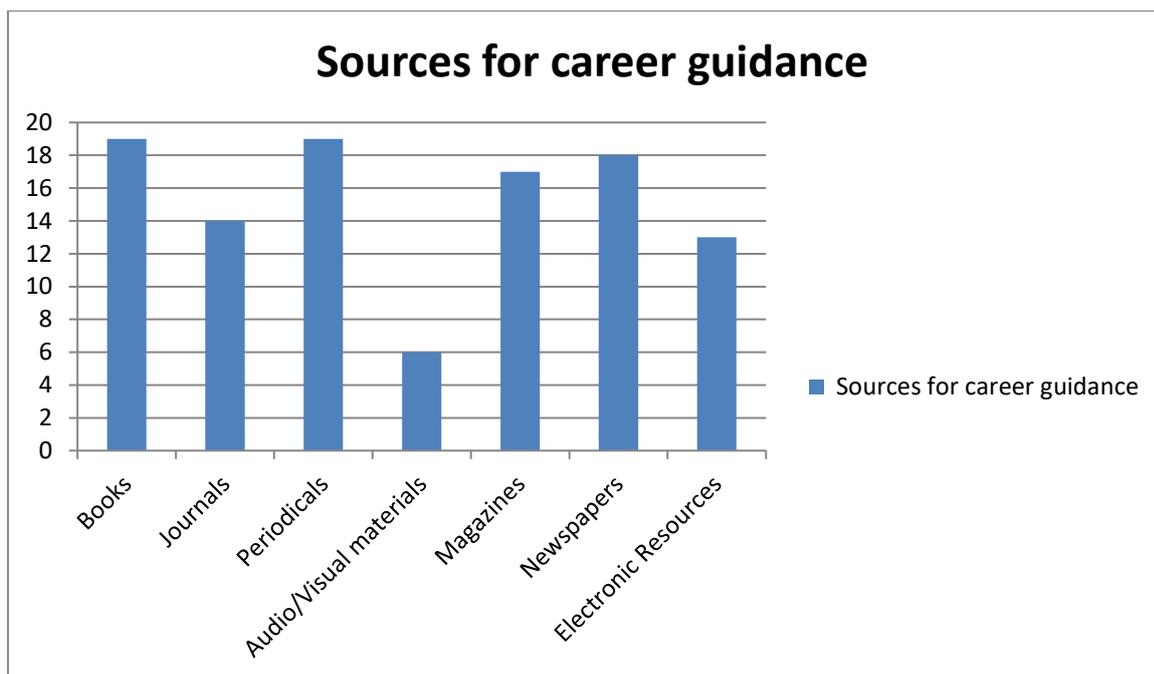


Figure 2

Sources for career guidance

All the college libraries provide books and periodicals that help in career guidance. The majority of them are accessing magazines and newspapers for career development. Journals and electronic resources are also being provided by most of the libraries. Comparatively, the provision of audio/visual materials is low.

6.7 Materials for Civil Service Examination

Civil service is one of the aspiring jobs of college students. The College library should provide specific materials for the preparation of the Civil Service Examination. Among 19 colleges, 18 of them provide specific materials for Civil service aspirants, while one college is not providing specific materials for Civil Service Examination.

6.8 Information sources for Civil Service Aspirants

For the preparation of the Civil Service Examination, many valuable sources are available. Many recommend the use of NCERT books for the preparation of the UPSC Examination.

Likewise, many textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc., are available. Dilli (2019) found that all the students in the colleges rely only on books and journals other than other resources to prepare for their competitive examinations. Also, they use specific magazines for Civil Service Examination. Here the investigators asked the librarians to indicate the information resources available in their library for the UPSC examination. The responses are depicted in figure 3.

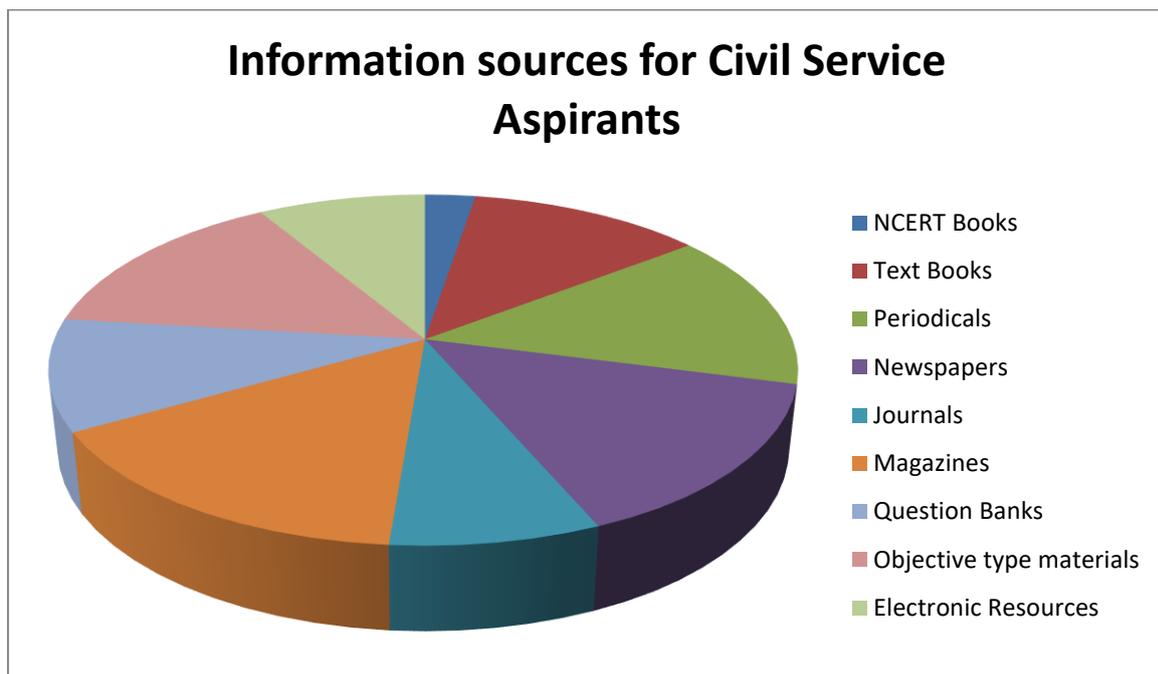


Figure 3

Information sources for Civil Service Aspirants

From figure 3, it is understood that the majority of the libraries possess the information sources such as Textbooks, Periodicals, Newspapers, Magazines, Question banks, and objective materials for the UPSC preparation. Comparatively, libraries lack NCERT Books, Journals, and electronic resources for Civil Service aspirants.

6.9 Availability of Print Resources for Civil Service Examination

The investigators tried to rate the availability of print resources for the Civil Service Examination by this question through Likert's scale. The choices given were Highly adequate, Adequate, Average, Below average, and Poor.

Table 3

Availability of print resources for Civil Service Aspirants

| Rate the availability | Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|
| Highly adequate | 2 | 10.5 |
| Adequate | 6 | 31.6 |
| Average | 9 | 47.4 |
| Below average | 2 | 10.5 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 |

A good number (47.4 percent) of the library have print resources on average, and (31.6 percent) have adequate print resources to prepare for the Civil Service Examination.

6.10 Availability of Electronic Resources for Civil Service Examination

The investigators tried to rate the availability of electronic resources for the Civil Service Examination by this question through Likert's scale. The choices given were Highly adequate, Adequate, Average, Below average, and Poor.

Table 4

Availability of electronic resources for Civil Service Aspirants

| Rate the availability | Response | Percentage |
|-----------------------|----------|------------|
| Highly adequate | 5 | 26.3 |
| Adequate | 4 | 21.1 |
| Average | 4 | 21.1 |
| Below average | 6 | 31.6 |
| Poor | 0 | 0 |

Table 4 indicates that a good number of the libraries have electronic resources below average.

6.11 Reading space for Civil Service Aspirants.

Civil Service aspirants are serious readers among library users. They prefer calm and quiet areas for their study. But at the same time, they can enhance their knowledge by engaging social discussions, so the library should maintain a separate reading space for their study.

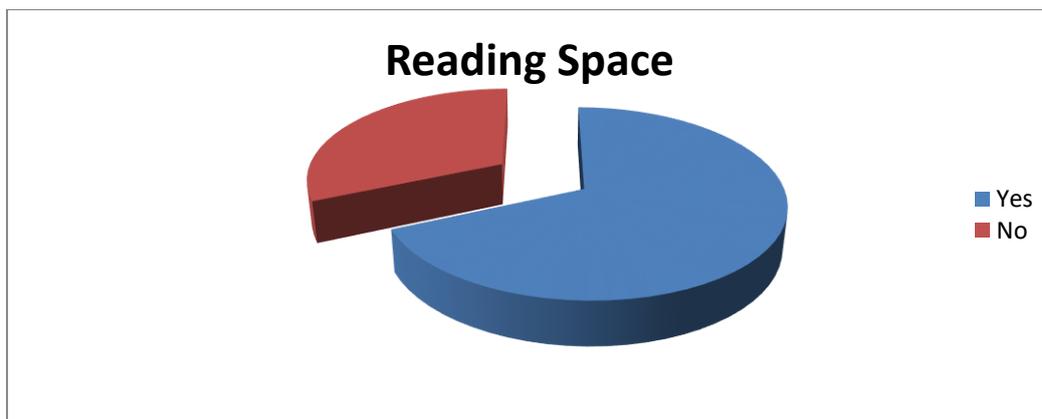


Figure 4

Reading space for Civil Service Aspirants.

Figure 4 reveals that the majority of the libraries (68 percent) provide reading spaces for Civil service aspirants. However, a good number of libraries (32 percent) are not maintaining a separate reading space for Civil Service Aspirants.

6.12 Services and facilities rendered by the libraries

Libraries provide various services to optimize the utilization of library's information resources and to satisfy the ultimate aim of the library, i.e., user satisfaction and provision of the needed information to users in the form they needed. For this purpose, libraries provide services such as lending, reference, xerox, current awareness service, etc. The investigators analyze the services rendered by these autonomous college libraries.

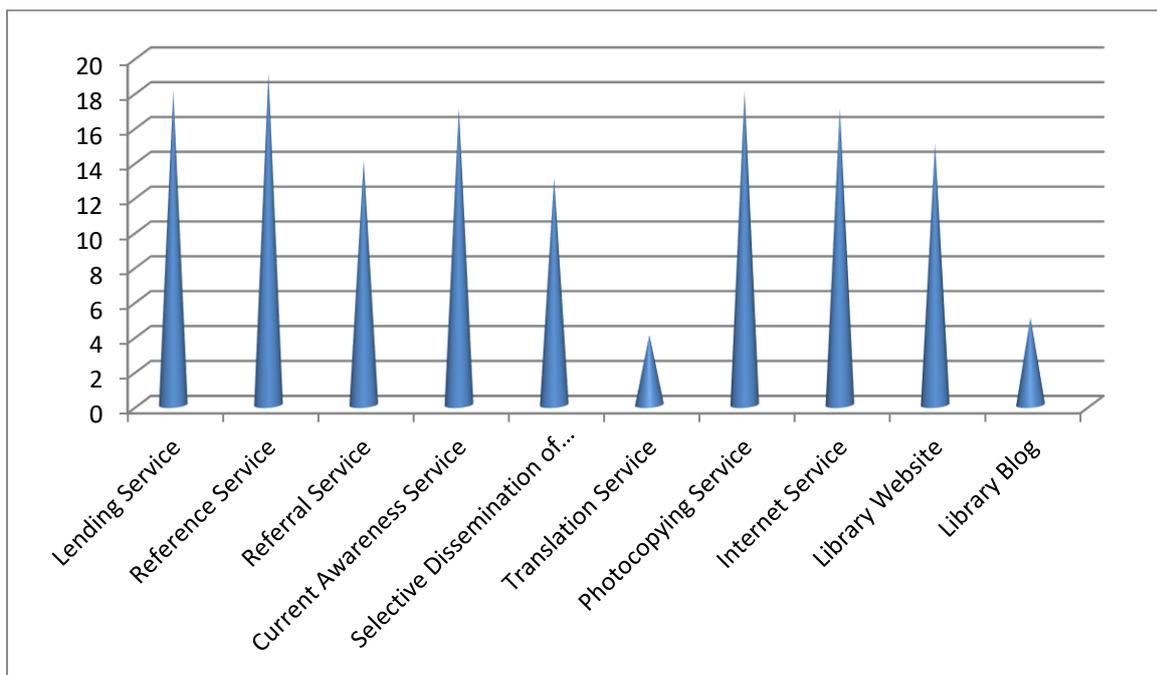


Figure 5

Services rendered by the libraries

From figure 5, it is clear that most of the libraries provide usual services of the library such as lending, reference, current awareness, Photocopying, Library website referral, and Selective

Dissemination of Information. Translation service and library blog are the least provided services.

For the effective utilization of the library, the library should provide well-equipped facilities like air-conditioned space, drinking water, comfort point, comfortable sitting, etc. These facilities make the users attracted to the library. The facilities provided by the libraries are shown in the figure below.

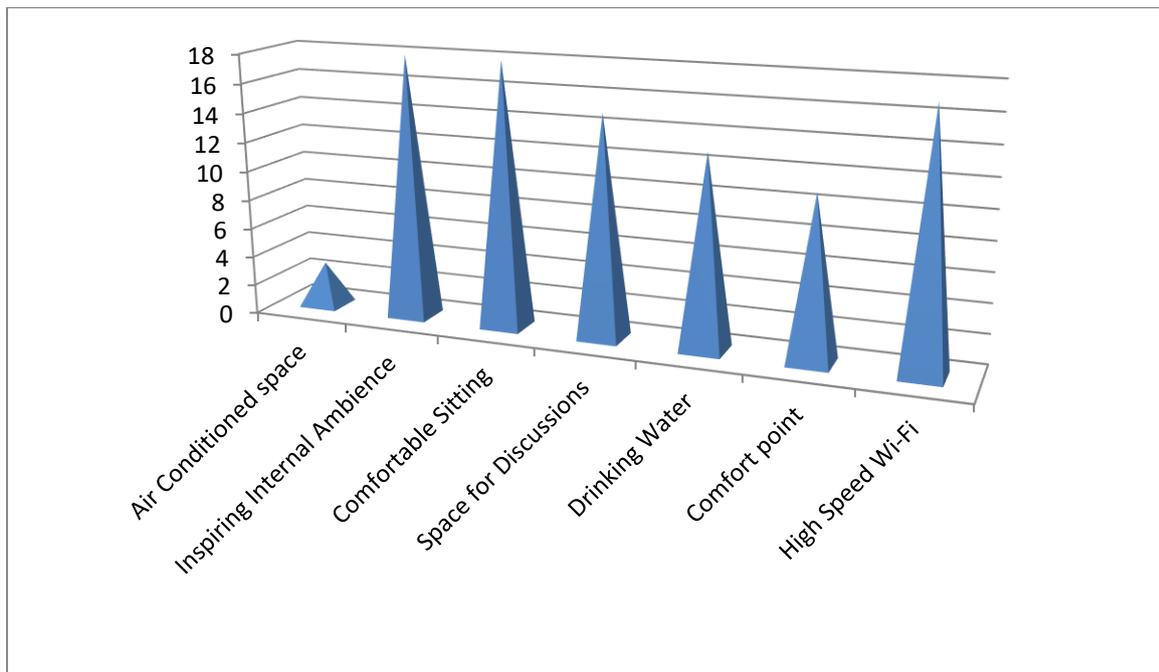


Figure 6

Facilities provided by the libraries

Figure 6 shows that most of the libraries provide basic facilities such as inspiring internal ambiance, comfortable sitting, space for discussions, drinking water, comfort point, and high-speed Wi-Fi. Least provided facility is air-conditioned space. Out of 19 colleges, only 3 of them provide air-conditioned space.

6.12.1 Special Services to Civil service aspirants.

The investigators asked whether any special services are provided to Civil Service Aspirants.

The responses are tabulated below:

Table 5

Services given to Civil Service Aspirants

| Services | Number | Percentage |
|----------|--------|------------|
| Yes | 5 | 26.3 |
| No | 14 | 73.7 |

Table 5 shows that majority of the libraries are not providing special services to Civil service aspirants. Only five colleges provide special services like e package information for Civil service aspirants and have civil service coaching academies with full-fledged facility.

6.12.2 Special Facilities for Civil service Aspirants

Here the investigators asked the respondents whether the facilities provided in the library are sufficient for Civil Service Aspirants.

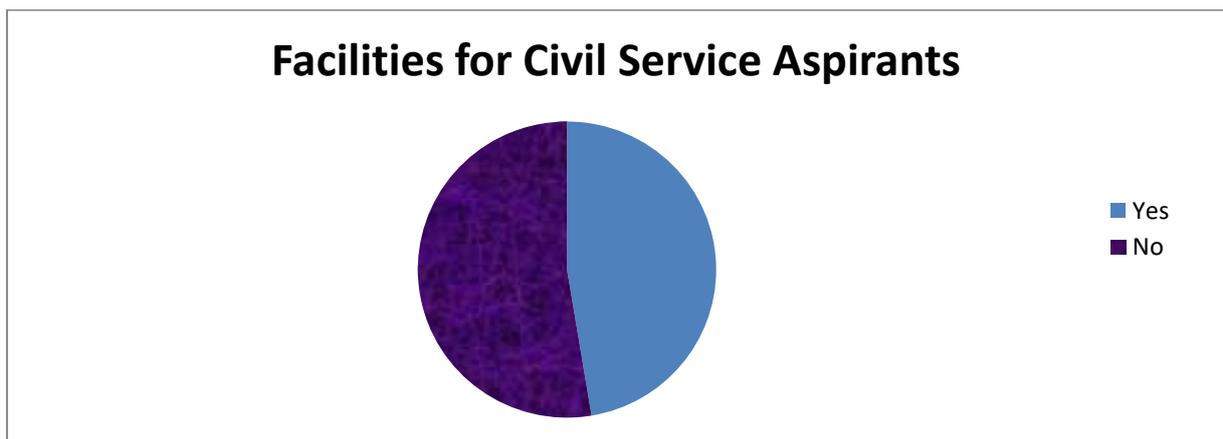


Figure 7

Facilities for Civil Service Aspirants

Figure 7 shows that half of the colleges think that facilities available in their library are sufficient for Civil Service Aspirants while half of them say that they are not sufficient for Civil service aspirants.

6.13 Training programs for Civil Service Aspirants

Libraries can organize seminars/workshops/training programs for Civil Service Aspirants as they may help to advance their knowledge. The respondents are asked to indicate whether the libraries conduct any such programs.

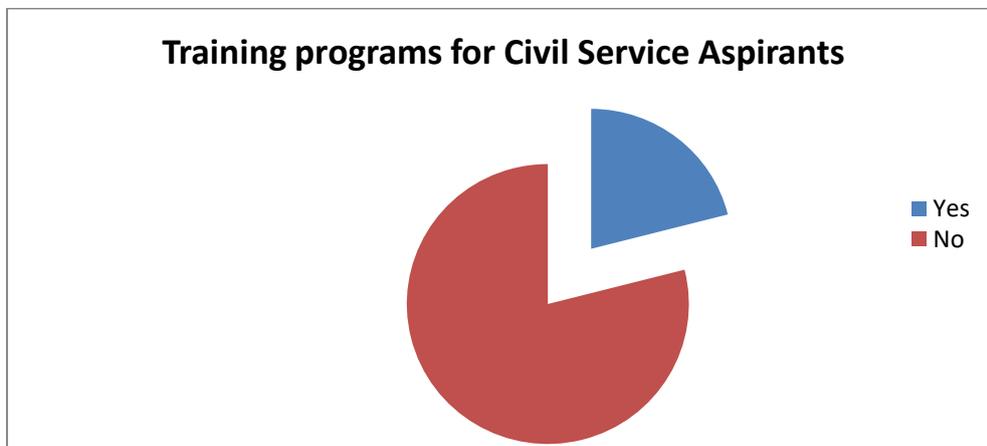


Figure 8

Training programs for Civil Service Aspirants

From figure 8, it is clear that majority of the libraries conduct training programs, especially for Civil service Aspirants. Only a few are not organizing such training programs.

6.14 Mock tests/Quizzes/Online test series for Civil Service Aspirants

The activities such as mock tests/quizzes/online test series will help the Civil Service Aspirants face the UPSC examination. This will allow them to be self-motivated to finish the examination with confidence.

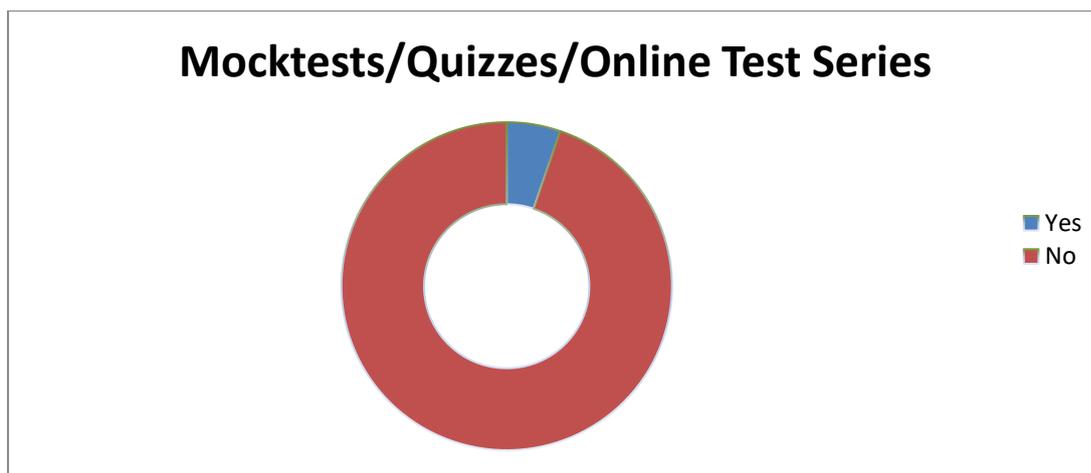


Figure 9

Mock tests/Quizzes/Online test series for Civil Service Aspirants

Figure 9 depicts that most libraries do not conduct any mock tests/quizzes/online test series or likewise programs for Civil Service Aspirants.

6.15 Challenges faced in providing services to Civil Service Aspirants

This question intends to know the challenges faced by librarians in providing services to Civil Service Aspirants. The responses are given in the table below:

Table 6

Challenges faced in providing services to Civil Service Aspirants

| Challenges | Number | Percentage |
|------------------------|--------|------------|
| Lack of budget | 16 | 84.2 |
| Lack of staffs | 12 | 63.2 |
| Lack of Infrastructure | 6 | 31.6 |
| Lack of materials | 8 | 42.1 |

From table 6, we can infer that lack of budget is the major problem faced by libraries, followed by the lack of staff. A good number of libraries face the problem of lack of materials and infrastructure. One of the librarians indicated that lack of time is also a challenge faced by them.

6.16 Role of a library in Civil Service Examination

Libraries can play a significant role for aspirants preparing for the UPSC examination. Through this question, librarians are asked about how a library can be a part of the Civil Service Examination.

Table 7
Role of a library in Civil Service Examination

| Role of library | Number | Percentage |
|---|--------|------------|
| The library can provide excellent materials and services to Civil Service Aspirants | 19 | 100 |
| The library can conduct regular coaching programs for the UPSC examination | 8 | 42.1 |
| The library can provide a peaceful and comfortable ambiance for Civil Service Aspirants | 17 | 89.5 |
| The library can organize test series, quizzes, etc. for Civil Service Aspirants | 9 | 47.4 |
| Aspirants can secure high rank with the effective use of the library | 17 | 89.5 |

All the librarians said that the libraries can provide excellent materials and services to Civil Service Aspirants. The majority of librarians believe that libraries can provide a peaceful and comfortable ambiance to Civil Service Aspirants and aspirants can secure high rank with the effective use of the library. A good number of librarians are on par with the suggestion that the library can organize test series, quizzes, etc., and conduct regular coaching programs for UPSC examination.

7. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

- All the autonomous colleges in Kerala are automated, and most libraries use KOHA as their automation software.
- All the autonomous colleges in Kerala have a career guidance cell as part of the library. They are involved in the activities such as maintaining materials for competitive examinations, passing on career-oriented information, displaying career-oriented information, and informal guidance/counseling.
- All the college libraries provide books and periodicals that help in career guidance. The majority of them are providing magazines and newspapers for career development. Journals and electronic resources are also being provided by most of the libraries.
- Among 19 colleges, 18 provide specific materials for Civil service aspirants, while one college is not providing specific materials for Civil Service Examination. The majority of the libraries possess the information sources such as Textbooks, Periodicals, Newspapers, Magazines, Question banks, and objective materials for UPSC preparation. Comparatively, libraries lack NCERT Books, Journals, and electronic resources for Civil Service aspirants.
- The majority of the library provides reading spaces for Civil service aspirants.

- Most of the libraries provide the library's usual services such as lending, reference, current awareness, Photocopying, Library website referral, and SDI. Translation service and library blog are the least provided services.
- The majority of the libraries are not providing special services to Civil service aspirants. Only five colleges are providing special services to them.
- Most libraries provide basic facilities such as inspiring internal ambiance, comfortable sitting, space for discussions, drinking water, comfort point, and high-speed Wi-Fi. Air-conditioned space is the least provided facility.
- Half of the colleges think that facilities available in their library are sufficient for Civil Service Aspirants. In contrast, half of them say that they are not sufficient for Civil service aspirants.
- The majority of the libraries conduct training programs, especially for Civil service Aspirants.
- The large majority of the libraries do not conduct any mock tests/quizzes/online test series or likewise programs for Civil Service Aspirants.
- Lack of budget is the major problem faced by libraries, followed by the lack of staff.
- All the librarians opined that the libraries can provide excellent materials and services to Civil Service Aspirants. The majority of librarians believe that libraries can provide a peaceful and comfortable ambiance to Civil Service Aspirants and aspirants can secure high rank with the effective use of the library.

8. CONCLUSION

All of the autonomous colleges in Kerala have career guidance cell as part of the library. The librarians should give due importance to the Civil Service examination as it is the dream job of many college students. The majority of the libraries are providing specific materials for Civil Service aspirants but most lack NCERT books and journals, which are the

best sources for civil service examination. It is suggested that every college must have a competitive examination cell to improve students' IQ and general awareness, and the library must support the cell. One college library is conducting online classes for Civil Service Aspirants in collaboration with Alternative Learning Systems (ALS), Delhi. This is a particular model for other libraries and can take the initiative for such classes. Libraries should be welcome space for Civil Service Aspirants. College Libraries can provide excellent range of materials, special services and peaceful and comfortable ambience exclusively for Civil Service Aspirants.

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APPENDIX

List of autonomous colleges in Kerala

APJ ABDUL KALAM TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

1. Mar Baselios College of Engineering and Technology, Mar Ivanios Vidyanagar, Thiruvananthapuram
2. Rajagiri School of Engineering & Technology, Rajagiri Valley, Kakkanad, Kochi
3. Saintgits College of Engineering, Pathamuttom, Kottayam

MAHATMA GANDHI UNIVERSITY, KOTTAYAM

4. Assumption College, Chanaganacherry, Kottayam
5. CMS College, Kottayam
6. Maharaja's College, Park Avenue, Ernakulam, Kochi
7. Mar Athanasious College, Kothamangalam Dist., Ernakulam
8. Marian College, Kuttikkanam
9. Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kalamassery, Kochi
10. Sacred Heart College, Thevara, Kochi
11. St. Albert's College, Benerji Road, Ernakulam, Kochi
12. St. Berchmans College, Changanassery, Kottayam
13. St. Teresa's College, Ernakulam

UNIVERSITY OF CALICUT

14. Christ College, Irinjalakuda,
15. Farook College, Calicut
16. M.E.S. Mampad College, Malappuram
17. St. Joseph's College, Devagiri, Calicut

18. St. Joseph's College, Irinjalakuda, Thrissur

19. St. Thomas College, Thrissur

20. Vimala College, Thrissur

UNIVERSITY OF KERALA

21. Fatima Mata National College, Kollam

22. Mar Ivanios College, Mar Ivanios Vidya Nagar, Thiruvananthapuram