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Reading Habits and Library Usage Pattern among College Students in Bhopal

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ABSTRACT
Higher education cannot function without academic libraries, yet in the digital era, student reading habits are changing quickly. This research uses a thorough descriptive survey approach with a structured self-administered questionnaire to examine the reading habits and library use patterns of 100 college students in Bhopal. Chi-square, Wilcoxon signed-rank, and Pearson correlation tests were used to analyze the data using SPSS version 26.0 at a significance level of 0.05. The findings show that library use is primarily motivated by exams, with daily visits increasing from 8% during normal sessions to 45% during exam times. This difference was determined to be statistically significant (χ^2=58.42, $p<0.001$). Due to less eye strain and improved attention, print materials continue to be the preferred medium for 47% of respondents, greatly outperforming digital forms ($Z=-4.82$, $p<0.001$). Student happiness and the frequency of library visits are somewhat positively correlated ($r=0.42$, $p<0.001$). Outdated book collections (38%), inadequate seats (48%), and poor internet access (45%) are the main obstacles. According to the study's findings, college libraries in Bhopal are mostly used for exams. Institutions must immediately fix infrastructure shortcomings, improve the availability of digital resources, and aggressively encourage information literacy among the student body in order to promote long-term academic engagement and lifetime reading habits.
Keywords: Reading habits, Library usage pattern, College students, Bhopal, Print vs digital preference, Library satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic success, intellectual growth, and lifelong learning are all supported by reading, a basic cognitive activity. It is often acknowledged that developing strong reading habits throughout the early years of higher education is crucial for students' personal and professional development (1). In addition to improving information acquisition, reading fosters critical thinking, analytical abilities, and the ability to focus for extended periods of time—skills that are essential in the twenty-first-century knowledge economy (2). By offering access to a wide range of information resources, from conventional print collections to increasingly complex digital platforms, the college library—the intellectual center of every educational institution—plays a crucial role in encouraging these reading habits (3). For educators, librarians, and legislators who want to maximize learning settings and guarantee that students get the most out of accessible academic resources, it is crucial to comprehend the reading habits and library use patterns of college students.

In educational institutions, the college library promotes teaching, learning, and research by acting as an academic resource (4). It gives instructors and students access to a variety of

materials, such as books, online resources, and information literacy courses (5). Libraries may be seen as an extension of students' education as they allow them to read for recreational, inspirational, spiritual, and educational purposes (6). Research on college students' library usage typically shows that library use is positively correlated with academic performance, especially in both professional and academic life (7). Effective use of library resources is essential because students' academic performance may not improve if they do not make good use of the resources that are accessible or if the necessary library resources are not available (8).

Rapid improvements in information and communication technology have played a major role in the recent restructuring of the higher education environment (9). From being collections of printed books, college libraries have developed into vibrant learning hubs that include online databases, e-journals, digital resources, and virtual reference services (10). Two crucial factors are at the core of this shift: students' evolving reading habits and the expanding significance of digital resources (11). When taken as a whole, these elements are changing how information is obtained, assimilated, and used in academic settings. The present generation of students, known as "digital natives," has made a particularly noticeable transition from conventional print-based reading to digital media including e-books, online journals, and academic databases (12).

A lot of study has been done on how digital resources affect reading habits. According to studies, most students use digital resources extensively for academic reasons, especially for assignments, tests, and research projects, which account for more than 60% of reading activities (13). Male students are more likely to participate in research-oriented reading, whereas female students are more likely to use academic digital resources (14). A balanced combination of print and digital modes is still crucial, as shown by the fact that many respondents still choose print materials for longer reading sessions and greater understanding despite the widespread usage of digital technology (15). Eye strain, distraction, and reliance on internet access are major issues with digital reading that impede productive digital participation (16).

Studies carried out in different parts of India have yielded important information on college students' reading habits and library use trends. All 100 undergraduate students in the Dadra and Nagar Haveli districts have visited their campus library, according to a research (17). Getting reference study materials (59.84%), reading (22.83%), and doing assignments (11.81%) were the main reasons people visited libraries (18). Additionally, the survey found that students did not always have access to the study resources they required, which led to 51% of students using the internet and 54% of students asking library workers for help (19). Other Indian situations have shown similar results. According to a survey conducted in Belagavi, Karnataka, almost three-fourths of participants read general literature and textbooks, mostly to get ready for competitive and semester exams (20). Interestingly, a majority of respondents favored printed copies because they were seen to be more affordable and user-friendly, although 64.74% of respondents valued both printed and electronic resources equally (21). However, 80.79% of students said that screen glare and eye strain made it difficult for them to use e-resources (22). The majority of respondents said they were satisfied with their library's collection and operating hours, and they went to libraries every day to study and read books and newspapers (23).

The way that pupils interact with reading material has changed significantly in the digital age. People's whole way of life has been altered by technology, which is now a necessary component of everyday activities and has a big influence on education (24). This shift was further expedited by the COVID-19 epidemic, which changed students' reading habits and behavior and forced them to enter the digital world for their educational requirements (25). Students' reading habits have changed as a result of online learning; they now read PDFs shared in group chats, listen to audiobooks while driving, and find books using social media sites (26). Students on campuses continue to find solace, escape, and identity in reading despite modern distractions (27). However, there are worries that college students' reading habits are declining, which might have an impact on their academic performance and intellectual growth (28). A rising proportion of kids no longer make meaningful connections with books for enjoyment due to digital distractions, early screen exposure, academic expectations, and diminished family reading habits (29). The family-centered reading culture that formerly fostered reading habits has been replaced by early exposure to digital gadgets, cellphones, and screen-based learning applications (30).

Madhya Pradesh's capital, Bhopal, is a significant center for education in central India. It is home to a large number of colleges and universities, such as Barkatullah University, Bhoj University, and numerous affiliated colleges that offer a wide range of programs in the arts, sciences, business, and professional fields (31). Numerous central and college libraries that serve thousands of students are part of the city's educational infrastructure (32). Bhopal's college libraries have enormous collections. For example, one college library has 37,690 volumes of books covering every topic taught, in addition to books on general knowledge, competitive exams, and a variety of fiction and non-fiction (33). The city's libraries are open on Sundays and include reading rooms that can accommodate up to 80 pupils at a time (34). Students now have access to top-notch periodicals and online materials thanks to the establishment of virtual library facilities and institutional affiliations with organizations like the British Council Library (35). Despite this strong infrastructure, there is a lack of empirical studies that particularly look into Bhopal college students' reading preferences and library use patterns.

In light of this, the current research uses a sample of 100 respondents to examine the reading habits and library use patterns of college students in Bhopal. The research aims to ascertain the number of library visits, pinpoint the reasons for library use, evaluate preferences for print vs digital reading materials, investigate the obstacles students encounter while using library resources, and provide recommendations for ways to enhance library services. This study adds to the expanding corpus of research on reading habits and library usage in Indian higher education by concentrating on the Bhopal context. It also offers policymakers, college administrators, and librarians useful information to improve the efficiency of academic libraries in promoting student learning and development.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To determine the frequency and primary purposes of library visits.
2. To assess students' preferences for print versus digital reading materials.

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3. To evaluate the overall level of student satisfaction.

3. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference in the frequency of library visits between examination periods and regular academic sessions.
2. There is no significant preference between print and digital reading materials among college students.
3. There is no significant correlation between student satisfaction levels and frequency of library visits.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

The current study uses a descriptive survey research style, which is thought to be the best method for examining the preferences, habits, and existing practices of a particular group in their natural environment. This design allows the researcher to systematically gather quantitative data about college students' reading habits and library usage patterns without changing any variables, giving a thorough overview of the current situation in Bhopal's higher education institutions. The study's descriptive design makes it possible to measure frequencies, identify trends, and investigate relationships between important variables like user satisfaction, format preference, and frequency of library visits—all of which are directly related to the stated objectives and the testing of the developed null hypotheses.

4.2 Locale of the Study

The research was carried out in Bhopal, the capital of Madhya Pradesh, a significant hub for education in central India. Bhopal is home to a number of significant universities, such as Barkatullah University and Bhoj University, as well as an extensive network of connected public and private institutions that provide a wide range of academic programs in the fields of the arts, sciences, business, and professions. Examining the reading habits and library use patterns of the student population was made possible by the city's strong educational infrastructure, which included many central and college libraries with sizable print collections and newly developed digital capabilities. Bhopal was chosen as the research site to guarantee that the results are pertinent to the larger conversation on academic library use in urban Indian educational centers.

4.3 Population and Sample

All undergraduate and graduate students now enrolled in different institutions within the municipal borders of Bhopal made up the study's target group. A sample size of one hundred respondents was found to be sufficient for producing significant insights while preserving the viability of data collection and analysis, given the logistical limitations and the particular purpose of the study. To increase the generalizability of the results within the specified scope, the sample was selected from many institutions around the city to guarantee a certain level of variety in terms of academic fields, including arts, science, commerce, and professional courses. In order to get a fair view of the prevalent reading habits and library use patterns, it was purposeful to include both male and female students as well as students from various academic years.

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4.4 Sampling Technique

The 100 respondents were chosen using a mix of stratified random sampling and convenience sampling methods. In order to prevent any one school or field from having a disproportionate impact on the total statistics, a stratified technique was first used to classify the student population according to their individual colleges and academic streams. Convenience sampling was then used within each stratum to choose specific respondents who were available and willing to take part in the research throughout the data collecting period. This dual strategy was judged suitable because it struck a compromise between the academic necessity for representational variety and the practical reality of fieldwork, enabling the acquisition of trustworthy data that could be submitted to significant statistical testing.

4.5 Data Collection Instrument

The main instrument for gathering data was a structured, self-administered questionnaire that was created after a careful analysis of relevant literature to guarantee content validity. The questionnaire was broken up into four sections: the first collected demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, college name, and academic discipline; the second examined library usage patterns, including frequency of visits during regular academic sessions and examination periods, the main reason for visits, and the length of stay; the third examined reading habits, including preferences for print versus digital formats, types of materials read, and reading frequency; and the fourth used a five-point Likert scale to measure user satisfaction levels regarding various library services, infrastructure, and collections. A small pilot group of 10 students pre-tested the questionnaire to find any ambiguities, make sure the wording was clear, and gauge the average completion time. After that, a few tiny changes were made before the official release.

4.6 Data Collection Procedure

In order to suit respondents' choices and accessibility, structured questionnaires were given in both paper and electronic versions throughout the four-week main data collecting period. Physical copies of the printed version were given to students in person during library visits or in classroom settings. The researcher gave them short verbal instructions and answered any questions they had questions about. To reach students who weren't on campus during the survey time, the electronic version—which was made using Google Forms—was sent via social media messaging apps like WhatsApp and institutional email groups. All respondents were guaranteed the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers, which was made clear in the questionnaire's introduction, and participation in the research was completely optional. The questionnaire was completed and submitted with implicit informed permission, and the information gathered was then assembled into a master database for methodical analysis.

4.7 Statistical Analysis

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was used to carefully code, input, and analyze the data gathered from the 100 respondents. The analysis was done in two stages: first, descriptive statistics, such as frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, were calculated to summarize the demographics, frequency of library visits, reasons for visits, preferred formats, and the main limitations mentioned by the students. To aid in visual

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perception, tables and charts were used to display these descriptive results. Second, the three null hypotheses were tested at a significance threshold of 0.05 using inferential statistics. Since the Chi-square test of independence is suitable for comparing categorical frequency distributions, it was specifically used to analyze H_{01}, which proposed no significant difference in the frequency of library visits between examination periods and ordinary academic sessions. Given the paired nominal nature of the preference data, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used for H_{02} about the choice between print and digital reading materials. Lastly, as both variables were evaluated on continuous or ordinal scales appropriate for parametric correlation analysis, the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated to test H_{03} about the link between student satisfaction levels and the frequency of library visits. Based on the computed p-values compared to the predefined alpha threshold of 0.05, each null hypothesis was either accepted or rejected.

5. RESULTS

The results of the data gathered from one hundred college students in Bhopal are presented in this section. The demographic profile of the respondents, descriptive data on library use and reading habits, and inferential statistical analysis for testing the null hypotheses at a significance level of 0.05 comprise the three subsections of the findings.

5.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 displays the demographic details of the 100 respondents. Male students made up 56% (n=56) of the sample, while female students made up 44% (n=44), according to the research. The age group of 21–23 years old accounted for the bulk of responses (62%, n=62), followed by 18–20 years old (28%, n=28), and 24 years and above (10%, n=10). In terms of academic streams, students in Commerce and Management made up the biggest group at 34% (n = 34), followed by Science at 28% (n = 28), Arts and Humanities at 22% (n = 22), and Engineering and Technology at 16%. Second-year students made up 35% (n = 35), third-year students made up 30% (n = 30), first-year students made up 20% (n = 20), and postgraduate students made up 15% (n = 15).

Table 1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (N=100)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56	56
	Female	44	44
Age Group	18-20 years	28	28
	21-23 years	62	62
	24 years & above	10	10
Academic Stream	Arts / Humanities	22	22
	Science	28	28
	Commerce / Management	34	34
	Engineering / Technology	16	16
Year of Study	1st Year	20	20
	2nd Year	35	35
	3rd Year	30	30

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	Postgraduate	15	15

5.2 Library Usage Pattern

5.2.1 Frequency of Library Visits

Table 2 shows the frequency of library visitors during normal academic sessions and test times. Most students visited seldom during normal sessions, with 22% (n=22) visiting seldom or never and 38% (n=38) visiting two to three times each month. Just 8% (n=8) said they visited every day. On the other hand, a significant rise was seen during examination periods, with 32% (n=32) visiting two to three times a week and 45% (n=45) visiting everyday. During exams, the percentage of students who visited seldom or never fell precipitously from 22% to 4%.

Table 2: Frequency of Library Visits During Regular Sessions vs. Examination Periods

Frequency of Visit	Regular Sessions	Examination Periods
Daily	8 (8%)	45 (45%)
2-3 times a week	16 (16%)	32 (32%)
Once a week	16 (16%)	12 (12%)
2-3 times a month	38 (38%)	7 (7%)
Rarely / Never	22 (22%)	4 (4%)
Total	**100 (100%)**	**100 (100%)**

5.2.2 Purpose of Library Visits

Respondents were allowed to choose more than one reason to visit the library. Exam preparation was identified as the most common reason by 78% (n=78) of respondents, as seen in Table 3. 52% (n=52) of respondents mentioned borrowing books for academic courses, 48% (n=48) mentioned doing assignments and projects, and 41% (n=41) mentioned utilizing the library for a quiet study space. Just 15% (n=15) said they used e-resources or digital databases, and only 18% (n=18) said they went to read newspapers or periodicals.

Table 3: Purpose of Library Visits (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Purpose	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Examination preparation	78	78
Borrowing books for academic courses	52	52
Completing assignments / projects	48	48
Peaceful study environment	41	41
Reading newspapers / magazines	18	18
Accessing e-resources / digital databases	15	15
Other (specify)	6	6

5.2.3 Duration of Library Stay

Table 4 shows the average length of stay for each library visit. While 28% (n=28) remained for two to three hours per time, the majority of students (42%, n=42) stayed for one to two hours. Just 8% (n=8) said they remained more than three hours, while 22% (n=22) said they stayed less than an hour.

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Table 4: Average Duration of Stay per Library Visit

Duration	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	22	22
1 to 2 hours	42	42
2 to 3 hours	28	28
More than 3 hours	8	8
Total	**100**	**100**

5.3 Reading Habits and Format Preference

5.3.1 Preferred Reading Format

Table 5 displays the respondents' favorite reading format. With 47% (n=47) of students choosing print only for academic reading, print materials continued to be the most popular option. Only 17% (n=17) favored digital format entirely, while another 36% (n=36) liked both print and digital media equally.

Table 5: Preferred Reading Format for Academic Study

Preferred Format	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Print	47	47
Both Equally	36	36
Digital	17	17
Total	**100**	**100**

5.3.2 Reasons for Format Preference

Reduced eye strain (67%), improved focus and retention (58%), and unreliable internet connectivity (43%) were the main reasons given by those who chose print (n=47). The main benefits for consumers of digital formats (n=17) were text searchability (61%) and ease of mobility (72%). Of those who used both forms (n = 36), 81% said they used digital for rapid references and print for in-depth research.

Table 6: Reasons for Format Preference

Print Preference Reasons (n=47)	%	Digital Preference Reasons (n=17)	%
Reduced eye strain	67	Easy portability	72
Better concentration and retention	58	Searchability of text	61
Lack of reliable internet access	43	More affordable / free access	49
Both Equally (n=36)	**%**		
Print for in-depth study, digital for quick references	81		

5.3.3 Types of Reading Materials Accessed

The kinds of reading resources that pupils have access to are shown in Table 7. According to 88% (n=88) of respondents, the most frequently accessible items were textbooks and reference books. Newspapers and magazines were accessed by 28% (n=28), whilst academic journals and research publications were accessed by 34% (n=34). Just 19% (n=19) reported using fiction and non-fiction for leisure, while 16% (n=16) reported using online blogs or social media instructional material.

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Table 7: Types of Reading Materials Accessed (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Type of Material	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Textbooks / Reference books	88	88
Academic journals / Research articles	34	34
Newspapers / Magazines	28	28
Fiction / Non-fiction (leisure)	19	19
Online blogs / Social media educational content	16	16

5.4 Satisfaction Levels and Constraints

5.4.1 Satisfaction with Library Services

A five-point Likert scale (1 = Very Dissatisfied to 5 = Very Satisfied) was used to gauge how satisfied patrons were with different library services. The mean scores and standard deviations for each parameter are shown in Table 8. The book collection (Mean=3.6, SD=1.1), infrastructure and seating (Mean=3.4, SD=1.2), and library staff support obtained the highest mean satisfaction score (Mean=3.8, SD=0.9). The availability of current e-resources and databases (Mean=2.9, SD=1.3) and internet and Wi-Fi access (Mean=2.7, SD=1.4) had the lowest satisfaction ratings. Across all factors, the average satisfaction score was 3.3 (SD=1.2).

Table 8: Satisfaction Levels with Library Services (N=100)

Parameter	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Collection of books (relevance & quantity)	3.6	1.1
Availability of current e-resources / databases	2.9	1.3
Library infrastructure (seating, lighting, space)	3.4	1.2
Internet / Wi-Fi connectivity	2.7	1.4
Library staff assistance & behavior	3.8	0.9
Library working hours / timings	3.4	1.1
Overall Mean Satisfaction	**3.3**	**1.2**

5.4.2 Major Constraints Faced by Students

The primary challenges that students face while using the library are listed in Table 9. Inadequate seating was cited by 48% (n=48) of respondents, followed by inadequate internet connectivity at 45% (n=45), outdated book collections at 38% (n=38), and ignorance of available e-resources at 34% (n=34). 12% (n=12) complained of digital eye strain, while 16% (n=16) reported insufficient staff support.

Table 9: Major Constraints Faced in Library Usage (Multiple Responses Allowed)

Constraint	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Insufficient seating space	48	48
Poor internet / Wi-Fi connectivity	45	45
Outdated / irrelevant book collection	38	38
Lack of awareness about available e-resources	34	34
Library timings not suitable	22	22
Inadequate staff support	16	16
Digital eye strain / fatigue	12	12

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Other (specify)	5	5

5.5 Testing of Hypotheses

The significance threshold (α) for all statistical tests was set at 0.05. Below are the findings from the hypothesis test.

5.5.1 Testing of H_{01}: Frequency of Library Visits Between Examination Periods and Regular Academic Sessions

The first null hypothesis (H_{01}) states that there is no appreciable difference in the frequency of library visits between exam periods and regular academic sessions. The Chi-square test of independence was applied to the category frequency data shown in Table 2. The results are shown in Table 10. The study yielded a p-value of less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$) and a Chi-square value (χ^2) of 58.42 with four degrees of freedom. Given that the p-value is significantly below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 10: Chi-square Test Results for H_{01}

Parameter	**Value**
Chi-square (χ^2)	58.42
Degrees of Freedom (df)	4
Asymptotic Significance (p-value)	< 0.001
Decision (α = 0.05)	**Rejected**

5.5.2 Testing of H_{02}: Preference Between Print and Digital Reading Materials

The second null hypothesis (H_{02}) states that there is no discernible preference among college students between digital and paper reading materials. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to evaluate the paired categorical preference data. The results are shown in Table 11. The test yielded a Z-statistic of -4.82 and a corresponding p-value of less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$). Since the p-value is below the significance threshold of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11: Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results for H_{02}

Parameter	**Value**
Z-statistic	-4.82
Asymptotic Significance (p-value)	< 0.001
Decision (α = 0.05)	**Rejected**

5.5.3 Testing of H_{03}: Correlation Between Student Satisfaction Levels and Frequency of Library Visits

According to the third null hypothesis (H_{03}), there is no meaningful relationship between the frequency of library visits and student satisfaction levels. The ordinal frequency of library visits (coded as 1 = Rarely) and overall satisfaction levels (mean of Likert-scale answers) were compared using the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient.Never, 2 = twice a month, 3 = once a week, 4 = twice a week, and 5 = every day). Table 12 presents the findings. With a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.42 and a p-value of less than 0.001 ($p < 0.001$), the study showed a moderately favorable association. The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

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Table 12: Pearson Correlation Results for H_{03}

Parameter	Value
Pearson Correlation Coefficient (r)	0.42
Coefficient of Determination (r^2)	0.176
Significance (p-value)	< 0.001
Decision (α = 0.05)	**Rejected**

5.6 Summary of Hypothesis Testing

A summary of the hypothesis testing results is presented in Table 13. All three null hypotheses were rejected at the 0.05 significance level.

Table 13: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Statement	Statistical Test	Test Value	p-value	Decision (α = 0.05)
H_{01}	No significant difference in library visit frequency between examination periods and regular sessions	Chi-square (χ^2)	58.42	< 0.001	**Rejected**
H_{02}	No significant preference between print and digital reading materials	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank (Z)	-4.82	< 0.001	**Rejected**
H_{03}	No significant correlation between satisfaction levels and frequency of library visits	Pearson Correlation (r)	0.42	< 0.001	**Rejected**

6. CONCLUSION

The current research examined the library use trends and reading habits of one hundred college students in Bhopal. The results show that library use is primarily motivated by exams, with a statistically significant rise in visit frequency during exam times relative to ordinary academic sessions. Because they are easier to focus on and cause less eye strain than digital resources, print materials continue to be the most popular reading medium. The frequency of library visits and student satisfaction levels were shown to be significantly positively correlated, suggesting that improved infrastructure directly encourages more participation. Optimal library use is significantly hampered by major limitations, such as obsolete collections, inadequate seating, and poor internet access. The research comes to the conclusion that in order to turn college libraries in Bhopal into reliable academic centers rather than exam-focused areas and encourage students to develop sustainable reading habits, it is imperative that they fix infrastructure shortcomings and advance digital literacy.

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