A Comparative Analysis of Prison Library Services in Central Jails of Uttar Pradesh: An Inmate's Perspective

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Abstract India's vast penitentiary system, housing over half a million inmates across numerous facilities, underscores the critical need for effective prison rehabilitation programs. This study examines the library services offered specifically by Varanasi and Agra central jail in Uttar Pradesh. Study focused to find role of library in education and access to diverse reading material by the inmates. A comprehensive survey and comparative analysis have been performed to evaluate inmate's perceptions, library objectives, service satisfaction levels, and the availability of reading materials. Key findings highlight significant variations between Varanasi and Agra Central Jails in terms of inmate perceptions and utilization patterns of library services. While Varanasi inmates emphasize the educational aspect, Agra inmates exhibit higher satisfaction with library services. Disparities also exist in perceptions regarding the availability of updated materials and inmate preferences for reading materials. These findings underscore the importance of tailored strategies to enhance library services and inmate experiences in correctional facilities. By addressing inmates' unique needs and preferences, prison authorities can optimize the role of library to promote education, recreation, and skill development among inmates for their rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

Keywords: Prison library; Library services; Central jail; Inmate perspective; Agra; Varanasi

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1. INTRODUCTION

India possesses one of the most extensive penitentiary systems globally, ranking sixth in terms of the total number of incarcerated individuals. According to Prison Statistics of India (2022), 573,220 convicts in 1330 prisons were detained by the end of 2022. Uttar Pradesh has the highest number of prison 77 and inmates' capacity 67,600 (15.5% of total) among all states of India. The largest incarcerated population in India, with 121,609 persons, accounting for 21.2% of the total number of inmates account for Uttar Pradesh. In contrast, Lakshadweep has the smallest number of detainees.

The Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (United Nations, 1955) stipulated that every correctional facility must include a library equipped with recreational and educational materials for all categories of inmates. If authorities provide offenders with diverse reading materials about prison rehabilitation programs, the programs can achieve total effectiveness. According to IFLA (2005), a considerable proportion of the jail and detention population in several countries need more education and vocational abilities, originating from environments where reading is not frequent (IFLA Professional Reports: 92). IFLA formed the Working Group on Prison Libraries to revise the IFLA rules about library services provided to incarcerated individuals in 2019 and published 4th edition in February 2023. The languages listed in the guidelines includes Arabic, Spanish, Chinese, and German. It has established an email listserv to enhance global communication among the working group, prison libraries, and interested stakeholders. It is constantly updating bibliography of research materials and an overview of practical and valuable work tools (source: https://www.ifla.org/library-service-to-people-in-prisons/).

1.1 Prison library

Prison library is a central repository of books and information materials for convicts. The library resources enhance the emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of inmates. Through reading literature, inmates establish a connection with the world beyond the confines of the jail, thus alleviating their sense of isolation. This connection has the potential to facilitate the rehabilitation of the offenders (Tamilmani, 2018: Ch 1). The prison library plays a crucial role in rehabilitating convicts by pertinent knowledge, diverse perspectives, attitudes, philosophical insights, escapism, and apparent satisfaction. Prison libraries function as dedicated and distinct facilities. While isolation, the prison library should serve as a social hub, allowing inmates to interact with the outside world (Rani, 2021: 28).

1.2 Varanasi

Varanasi (Kashi, old name) is a city on the left bank of the Ganges River in Uttar Pradesh. It holds significant prominence within the Hindu pantheon of death, lamentation, and pilgrimage rituals (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1998). Varanasi is among the world's oldest continuously inhabited cities. During the sixth century BCE, it served as the imperial capital of the

kingdom of Kashi, where the Buddha delivered his inaugural sermon near Sarnath (Fogelin, 2015). According to Hindu tradition, a person attains moksha, or liberation from the cycle of rebirth and death, when they pass away in the sacred city of Varanasi on the Ganges River (San Chirico, 2012).

Numerous eminent Indian philosophers, poets, writers, and performers currently reside or have previously lived in the city, which has also been a hub for education and music. Furthermore, the Benares Gharana style of Hindustani classical music originated in the town. The Benares Sanskrit College, the oldest Sanskrit institution in India, was established in 1791 under the rule of the East India Company. The late 19th-century emergence of Indian nationalism profoundly impacted subsequent educational developments in Benares. In 1898, Annie Besant established Central Hindu College. In 1916, Madan Mohan Malviya established the Banaras Hindu University, India's first modern residential university (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

1.3 Agra

Agra, situated along the Yamuna River in Uttar Pradesh, India, is an urban centre located approximately 230 kilometres (140 mi) to the southeast of the nation's capital. Agra is India's twenty-third most populous metropolis and the fourth most populated in Uttar Pradesh, with an estimated population of 1.6 million (India Census, 2011).

The ancient Sanskrit epic Mahabharata referred to an "Agravana" early on, and Ptolemy is supposed to have named the location "Agra." Earlier in the 16th century, Sultan Sikandar of the Lodi dynasty established the city as the capital of the Delhi sultanate. During several eras of the Mughal empire, Agra also functioned as the capital. The town was overrun in the late eighteenth century by the Jats, Marathas, Mughals, the Gwalior monarch, and, in 1803, the British. From 1833 until 1868, it served as the provincial capital of Agra (after known as North-Western), and it was also one of the primary hubs of the Indian Mutiny i.e. 1857–58 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2024). After attaining independence, Agra became an industrial metropolis bolstered by a thriving tourism sector and other manufacturing industries, including footwear and leather. Agra Fort and the Taj Mahal are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Garner (2017:337) extensively analysed prison libraries worldwide, shedding light on their historical evolution and contemporary practices. She underscored the crucial role of education and information dissemination in rehabilitating inmates. Notably, Garner pointed out the need for more understanding regarding the user experience within Australian prison libraries, highlighting a significant gap in research. Similarly, Tamilmani (2018:549) delved into the operations of prison libraries in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing the pivotal role of staff and inmates in maintaining library services despite constraints such as limited training. Building on this, Finlay and Bates (2018:129) proposed a novel theoretical framework that integrated criminological theory with library practice to deepen

the understanding of how prison libraries contribute to inmate lives. Wu (2019:16) stressed the importance of governmental support and policy formulation in bolstering prison library services in China, advocating for a more precise delineation of responsibilities and funding sources.

Meanwhile, Flores et al. (2020:3) identified the positive impact of focused classroom sizes on incarcerated girls in California, elucidating how smaller class settings enhanced their educational outcomes within correctional facilities. Mishra et al. (2021:290) investigated the role of prison libraries in promoting mental health and well-being among inmates in Uttar Pradesh, India, highlighting their function in alleviating stress and fostering a sense of purpose during incarceration. Finlay (2022:8) provided insights into the unique challenges faced by prison library staff in the U.K., emphasizing the critical need for ongoing professional development and effective communication strategies to overcome barriers. Asiru, Abioye, and Hamzat (2023:104) explored the potential of library resources in Southwestern Nigeria to mitigate recidivism by offering inmates meaningful engagement and access to information. Han (2023:110) underscored the significant function in his analysis of pertinent material and examples that prison libraries fulfil in providing educational prospects, safeguarding the mental well-being of convicts, fostering familial bonds, and facilitating personal development. The prison library plays a crucial role in the criminal system by interrupting the cycle of repeat offenses and fostering individual growth. Furthermore, we conclude that prison libraries should expect to assist convicts in their rehabilitation and facilitate them in achieving the library's purpose of promoting personal development. Collectively, these studies underscore the multifaceted role of prison libraries in facilitating rehabilitation and reformation efforts, highlighting the imperative for sustained research and support to optimize their impact.

3. OBJECTIVES

To develop that comprehension, we presented four objectives that an examination of two prison libraries would address:

1) To compare the library services offered by Varanasi and Agra Central Jails.
2) To determine the objectives of a prisoner's visit to the library and how they feel about library services available.
3) To ascertain whether the chosen central prison library contains current and pertinent books.
4) To examine the documents available in the library and document preferences of inmates.

4. METHODOLOGY

The present investigation assessed the efficacy of prison libraries about incarcerated individuals. The study employed a closed-ended and open-ended questionnaire for survey to address the research objectives. The researcher gathered quantitative data and examined it to comprehend objective numerical outcomes better. This study used descriptive analysis to identify core tendencies

in the quantitative data, namely calculating the frequency and mean. Data collection was carried out between two central jails in the districts of Agra and Varanasi. The requisite authorizations for data collection obtained from the Director General of Prisons, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh. The permission granted by the DGP office to carry out the study, subject to the condition that each central jail maximum twenty-five inmates may interact for the study. The stratified sampling technique was found appropriate for gathering the data via interviews and questionnaires. For each prison 25 structured questionnaire were given in both English and Hindi language, which comprised around twenty objective questions. A total of eight questions from the questionnaire are found suitable for the study to achieve identified objectives. From both central jails in the state, 50 questionnaires were collected, 25 from each. The data have been vetted in SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) and Microsoft Excel by applying various statistical techniques for enhanced visualization and comprehension.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The researchers arranged the research findings in a sequence of questions. Respondents chose multiple responses to provide information on the types of currently available documents and their preferred ones to read in the prison library (*see* Table 8). To determine their satisfaction level, the researchers asked inmates about their overall satisfaction levels regarding library services in prison separately (*see* Table 9).

Table 1 shows inmates' opinions about how necessary a prison library is. Comparing Varanasi Central Jail, Agra Central Jail reveals variations in the perceived necessity of library services among inmates. In Varanasi, 96% consider library services 'Extremely necessary,' with only 4% finding them 'Somewhat necessary.' In Agra, 84% view these services as 'Extremely necessary,' while 4% see them as 'Somewhat necessary.' However, 12% of Agra inmates perceive library services as 'Not necessary at all,' indicating differing opinions within the inmate population about the essential nature of these services. This comparison highlights distinct attitudes toward the significance of library services in these two prison facilities (see Fig.1).

Table 1: Necessity of prison library according to prisoners

Sl. No.	Scale of necessity	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	Percent	N	Percent
1.	Extremely	24	96	21	84
2.	Somewhat	1	4	1	4
3.	Not as Much	0	0	0	0
4.	Not important all	0	0	3	12

Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.1: *Frequency of library necessity according to inmates*

Table 2 displays the frequency of visits in to library by inmates. This comparative data offers insights into the varying degrees of library engagement among inmates in different settings. In Varanasi Central Jail, 20% visit the library daily, while 60% weekly, indicating consistent utilization—additionally, 8% visit monthly, another 8% occasionally, and 4% express complete negligence. Agra Central Jail shows a similar trend, with 24% daily visits and a slightly higher daily engagement. The majority, 60% engage weekly, and 8% visit monthly, 4% visit occasionally, while 4% express no desire to visit library. This comparison highlights the diverse patterns of library utilization within these incarcerated populations (see Fig.2).

Table 2: Frequency of visiting the library

Sl. No.	Frequency of visiting the library	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1.	Daily	5	20	6	24
2.	Weekly	15	60	15	60
3.	Monthly	2	8	2	8
4.	Occasionally	2	8	1	4
5.	Never	1	4	1	4
Total		25	100	25	100

Fig.2: *Frequency of library visit by inmates*

Table 3 explains the purpose of inmates visiting the prison library. The data comparing the two prisons underscores the multifaceted role of prison libraries in meeting inmates' diverse needs, including education, recreation, mental peace, and skill enhancement. In Varanasi Central Jail, 36% primarily visit for education, 24% for mental peace, and 28% for time utilization. Smaller percentages visit for recreation (4%), skill acquisition (4%), and various other purposes (4%). In Agra Central Jail, 52% prioritize education, indicating a heightened focus on academics, while 28% visit for time utilization. Another 12% visit to acquire skills, emphasizing an interest in skill development programs. This comparison highlights how prison libraries serve as crucial spaces for various inmate needs in these settings (see Fig.3).

Table 3: Purpose for visiting the library

Sl. No.	Purpose for visiting the library	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	**Percent**	**Frequency**	**Percent**
1.	Education	9	36	13	52
2.	Recreation	1	4	1	4
3.	Mental Peace	6	24	1	4
4.	Time Spending/Utilization	7	28	7	28
5.	Acquiring Skills	1	4	3	12

6.	Others	1	4	0	0
	Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.3 *Purpose of library visit*

Table 4 shows weather the library holds up-to-date reading materials in Varanasi and Agra central jails. The data underscores the imperative for transparent communication and awareness campaigns to keep inmates well-informed about efforts to maintain current resources in jail libraries. In Varanasi Central Jail, 56% affirmed the acquisition of updated reading materials, with 28% in disagreement and 16% uncertain. This table highlights diverse opinions about the adequacy of updated resources. A parallel situation has been observed in Agra Central Jail, where 56% of respondents concurred with acquiring updated materials, yet 20% disagreed, and a higher proportion (24%) expressed uncertainty about acquisition practices. This comparison emphasizes the varying perceptions and the importance of clear communication in ensuring inmates are informed about library initiatives in these settings (see Fig.4).

Table 4: Whether the library has updated documents

Sl. No.	Up-to-date Materials	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1	Yes	14	56	14	56
2	No	7	28	5	20
3	Don't Know	4	16	6	24

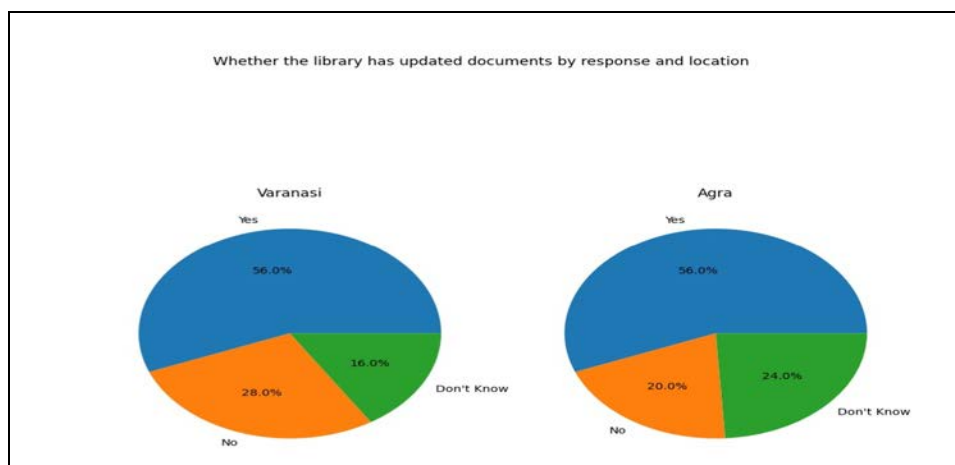| Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.4 *Whether library holds up-to-date reading materials*

Table 5 compares inmates' perceptions regarding the prison library's collection. In Varanasi, 12% of respondents rated the collection as excellent, contrasting with a higher 36% in Agra. A similar trend also observed in the 'Good' category, with 36% in Varanasi and a slightly higher 40% in Agra. However, a substantial disparity appears in the 'Average' category, where 44% in Varanasi believe it is average, in stark contrast to a minimal 4% in Agra. Notably, in the 'Poor' category, 8% of Varanasi respondents considered the collection poor, while 20% in Agra expressed this viewpoint. This comparative data highlights notable differences in perceptions between the two central jails, particularly in assessing the prison library's collection quality (see Fig.5).

Table 5: Library collection rating

Sl. No.	Scaling for collection of books	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1.	Excellent	3	12	9	36
2.	Good	9	36	10	40
3.	Average	11	44	1	4
4.	Poor	2	8	5	20
	Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.5: Rating of library collection by inmates

Table 6 evaluates the satisfaction levels among inmates regarding the availability of library. In Varanasi, 16% of respondents expressed being very satisfied, whereas a higher 48% in Agra shared this sentiment. Similarly, 20% are satisfied with the space in Varanasi, compared to a minimal 4% in Agra. The data reveals a substantial variation in the 'Neutral' category, with 8% in Varanasi compared to 16% in Agra. Furthermore, 28% of Varanasi respondents express dissatisfaction with available space, contrasting with a lower 8% in Agra. In the 'Very Dissatisfied' category, 28% of Varanasi respondents feel very dissatisfied with the library space, compared to 24% in Agra. This comparative analysis underscores distinct perceptions of inmate satisfaction with available library space, emphasizing the need for tailored improvements in these prison settings (see Fig.6).

Table 6: Satisfaction level among inmates on availability of library space

Sl. No.	Satisfaction rate for study room/space	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1.	Very Satisfied	4	16	12	48
2.	Satisfied	5	20	1	4
3.	Neutral	2	8	4	16
4.	Dissatisfied	7	28	2	8
5.	Very Dissatisfied	7	28	6	24

Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.6: If the prison provides proper library space

The comparative data on the availability of various documents inside the library. Table 7 provides insights into inmates' access to different resources. All respondents from both central jails unanimously agree on having access to printed textbooks, indicating a fundamental resource in the library. Regarding journals, five respondents from Varanasi and eight from Agra acknowledge having access. Similarly, 12 respondents from Varanasi and 11 from Agra report having access to newspapers. Regarding reference materials like dictionaries or encyclopaedias, five respondents from Varanasi and six from Agra affirm accessibility. Five respondents from Varanasi and six from Agra agree they also have access to other reading materials. This comparative analysis sheds light on the varying degrees of access to diverse documents within the libraries of Varanasi and Agra Central Jail (see Fig.7).

Table 7: Documents available in the Prison library

Sl. No.	Document types	Varanasi			Agra		
		N	Percent	Percent of cases	N	Percent	Percent of cases
1.	Printed books	25	48.1%	100.0%	25	44.6%	100.0%
2.	Journals	5	9.6%	20.0%	8	14.3%	32.0%

3.	Newspapers	1 2	23.1%	48.0%	1 1	19.6%	44.0%
4.	Dictionary/Encyclopae dia	5	9.6%	20.0%	6	10.7%	24.0%
5.	Others	5	9.6%	20.0%	6	10.7%	24.0%
	Total	5 2	100.0 %	208.0 %	5 6	100.0 %	224.0 %

Fig.7: Types of documents available in the prison libraries

In Table 8, comparative data on the types of reading materials preferred by inmates in Varanasi and Agra Central Jail offers insights into the diverse reading preferences within these libraries. Religious books are highly favoured, with 15 respondents from Varanasi and 21 from Agra expressing a preference for this category. Spiritual books are also popular, with nine respondents from Varanasi and eight from Agra indicating a preference. Academic study materials find favour, with 12 respondents in Varanasi and 11 in Agra, highlighting a shared interest in educational resources. Philosophical books attract four respondents from Varanasi and four from Agra, while moral textbooks are preferred by seven respondents in Varanasi and 9 in Agra. Legal books, aiding inmates in understanding their legal stand, are favoured by 13 respondents in Varanasi and 8 in Agra. Nine respondents in Varanasi and five in Agra prefer literature books, while ten respondents in Varanasi and three in Agra choose fictional books. Only two respondents from both central jails prefer other types of reading materials. This comparative analysis highlights the diverse literary preferences among inmates in Varanasi and Agra Central Jail (see Fig.8).

Table 8: Document Preference of Inmates

Sl. No.	Document types	Varanasi			Agra		
		N	Percent	Percent of cases	N	Percent	Percent of cases
1	Religious	15	17.2%	60.0%	21	26.3%	84.0%
2	Spiritual	9	10.3%	36.0%	8	10.0%	32.0%
3	Academic	12	13.8%	48.0%	11	13.8%	44.0%
4	Philosophical	4	4.6%	16.0%	4	5.0%	16.0%
5	Moral	7	8.0%	28.0%	9	11.3%	36.0%
6	Legal	13	14.9%	52.0%	8	10.0%	32.0%
7	Technological	9	10.3%	36.0%	5	6.3%	20.0%
8	Literature	6	6.9%	24.0%	9	11.3%	36.0%
9	Fiction	10	11.5%	40.0%	3	3.8%	12.0%
10	Other	2	2.3%	8.0%	2	2.5%	8.0%
	Total	87	100.0%	348.0%	80	100.0%	320.0%

Fig.8: Documents preference of inmates

Table 9 reveals the data comparing Varanasi and Agra Central Jail's significant variations in inmate satisfaction levels with library services. Total 32% of respondents in Varanasi expressed being very satisfied, while a notably higher 72% in Agra shared this sentiment. Conversely, 48% of Varanasi inmates are satisfied with the services, contrasting sharply with only 4% in Agra. In the 'Neutral' category, 8% in Varanasi held no clear opinion, while no respondents in Agra expressed neutrality. Dissatisfaction levels are also divergent, with 8% in Varanasi compared to 20% in Agra. Strikingly, 8% of respondents in both central jails reported dissatisfaction with the library services. This comparative analysis underscores the substantial differences in inmate perceptions regarding satisfaction levels with library services, emphasizing the need for tailored improvements to enhance overall service quality (see Fig.9).

Table 9: Overall satisfaction level among inmates for library services in prison

Sl. No.	Satisfaction level of the prison library system	Varanasi		Agra	
		Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1.	Very Satisfied	8	32	18	72
2.	Satisfied	12	48	1	4
3.	Neutral	2	8	0	0
4.	Dissatisfied	2	8	5	20
5.	Very Dissatisfied	1	4	1	4
	Total	25	100	25	100

Fig.9: *Satisfaction level among inmates on library services in prison*

6. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION
6.1 Comparing Library Services:
Table 1 demonstrates inmates' perceptions regarding the necessity of prison libraries, revealing variations between Varanasi and Agra Central Jails. While 96% of inmates in Varanasi view library services as 'Extremely necessary,' the figure stands at 84% in Agra. Conversely, 12% of Agra inmates perceive these services as 'Not necessary at all,' highlighting differing opinions. This aligns with Mishra et al. (2021), who highlighted the critical role of prison libraries in promoting mental health and well-being among inmates, showing the necessity of such services for inmate rehabilitation.

Table 2 illustrates the frequency of inmate visits to the library, indicating diverse engagement patterns. In Varanasi, 20% visit daily and 60% weekly, while in Agra, 24% visit daily and 60% weekly. The data underscores variations in library utilization among inmates in different settings, supporting Tamilmani's (2018) findings on the importance of staff and inmate involvement in maintaining effective library operations despite constraints.

6.2 Determining Objectives and Satisfaction:
Table 3 outlines inmates' reasons for visiting the library, revealing the multifaceted role of prison libraries in meeting diverse needs. In Varanasi, 36% prioritize education, while in Agra, 52% do so, highlighting a heightened academic focus in the latter. This supports Flores et al. (2020), who found that smaller class settings enhance educational outcomes in correctional facilities.

Table 9 compares inmate satisfaction levels with library services between Varanasi and Agra. While 32% of Varanasi inmates express being very

satisfied, a significantly higher 72% in Agra share this sentiment. Dissatisfaction levels vary, with 8% in Varanasi compared to 20% in Agra. These findings resonate with Han (2023), who underscored the significant function of prison libraries in safeguarding the mental well-being of convicts and fostering personal development.

6.3 Assessing Library Holdings:

Table 4 evaluates the presence of updated reading materials in Varanasi and Agra Central Jails, indicating diverse perceptions among inmates. While 56% in Varanasi affirm the acquisition of updated materials, 20% in Agra disagree, underscoring the importance of clear communication. Wu (2019) emphasized the necessity of governmental support and clear policy formulation to ensure adequate library resources, which is evident in the varying perceptions of material updates in this study.

6.4 Document Availability and Preferences:

Tables 5 and 6 sheds light on the quality of library collections and inmate preferences. While Table 5 highlights disparities in perceptions regarding collection quality, Table 6 reveals diverse inmate preferences for reading materials, emphasizing the role of libraries in catering to varied interests and needs. These findings align with Asiru, Abioye, and Hamzat (2023), who explored the potential of library resources to mitigate recidivism by offering inmates meaningful engagement and access to information.

6.5 Discussion:

Mishra et al. (2021) highlighted the role of prison libraries in mental well-being, aligning with our findings that these facilities are crucial for alleviating stress and fostering a sense of purpose among inmates. The findings underscore the multifaceted role of prison libraries in supporting education, recreation, mental well-being, and skill enhancement among inmates, emphasizing the significance of these facilities in the rehabilitation and reformation process. The Prison Library Impact Framework by Finlay and Bates (2019) provides a valuable lens through which to interpret these findings, emphasizing the importance of considering inmates' well-being and mental health, identity transformation, and the development of social capital. This framework suggests that prison libraries should not only focus on desistance but also on improving the psychological well-being of inmates, a point supported by Garner (2017) and Tamilmani (2018), who emphasized the critical role of education and library staff in maintaining effective services despite constraints.

Wu (2019) and Han (2023) stressed the importance of governmental support and clear policy formulation to ensure adequate library resources, highlighting the need for a coordinated effort to optimize the impact of prison libraries. Flores et al. (2020) identified the positive impact of smaller classroom settings on educational outcomes in correctional facilities, supporting our finding that libraries play a crucial role in meeting diverse educational needs. Asiru, Abioye, and Hamzat (2023) explored the potential of library resources to mitigate

recidivism by offering inmates meaningful engagement and access to information, which aligns with our findings on the diverse inmate preferences for reading materials. The role of prison libraries in fostering personal development and identity transformation, as discussed by Maruna (2001) and others, is evident in the varied inmate engagement patterns observed in our study.

This comparative analysis provides valuable insights into the functioning and perceptions of prison libraries in Varanasi and Agra Central Jails, underscoring the need for tailored strategies to enhance service delivery and inmate satisfaction.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has comprehensively compared library services, inmate objectives, document availability, and satisfaction levels between Varanasi and Agra Central Jails, fulfilling its stated goals. The findings reveal notable variations in perceptions, utilization patterns, and preferences across different aspects of prison library operations. While inmates in both jails generally perceive library services as necessary and recognize the availability of essential documents, distinct differences in satisfaction levels and preferences for reading materials highlight the importance of tailored approaches to meet unique inmate needs in each setting. These findings underscore the importance of tailored approaches to address inmates' unique needs and preferences in each setting. Additionally, the study highlights the multifaceted role of prison libraries in supporting education, recreation, mental well-being, and skill enhancement among inmates, emphasizing the significance of these facilities in the rehabilitation and reformation process. However, prison authorities must consider these insights when formulating policies and strategies to optimize library services and enhance inmate experiences in correctional facilities. Through targeted interventions and ongoing evaluation, prison libraries can continue to serve as vital resources in promoting inmate well-being and facilitating successful reintegration into society post-incarceration.

8. DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The authors report that there are no competing interests to declare.

9. DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting this study's findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

10. FUNDING

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