

The Impact of Reading on Social Thought: Fostering a Civil Society Through Public Libraries and Reading Initiatives

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Abstract: Reading has long been recognized as a powerful instrument for individual growth as well as social transformation. This study examines the broader impact of reading on social thought and explores how public libraries and organized reading initiatives contribute to the development of a civil and democratic society. Reading is not merely viewed as an academic activity, but as a social practice that nurtures critical thinking, empathy, ethical awareness, and informed decision-making among individuals. Through sustained engagement with books and diverse forms of written knowledge, readers develop a deeper understanding of social realities, cultural diversity, and collective responsibilities. The paper emphasizes the role of public libraries as inclusive social spaces that ensure equal access to information, regardless of socio-economic background. Libraries function as centers of lifelong learning, dialogue, and community interaction, thereby strengthening civic consciousness and participatory values. In addition, reading initiatives such as community reading programs, literacy campaigns, and library outreach activities are examined for their contribution to promoting social cohesion and democratic engagement. These initiatives encourage active participation, intellectual exchange, and awareness of social issues, which are essential components of a healthy civil society. Adopting an analytical and qualitative perspective, the study draws upon empirical observations and secondary sources to understand the relationship between reading culture and civic life. The findings suggest that societies which actively promote reading and invest in public library systems are better positioned to cultivate informed citizens who are capable of critical reflection and responsible social participation. The paper concludes that strengthening reading habits and expanding public reading infrastructure are essential strategies for fostering social thought, democratic values, and a resilient civil society in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Reading Culture, Public Libraries, Social Thoughts, Civic Engagement, Information Access, Civil society, Lifelong Learning

1. Introduction

Reading has historically played a central role in the intellectual and moral development of societies. Beyond its function as a tool for acquiring information, reading serves as a medium through which individuals engage with ideas, question existing social structures, and develop a sense of civic responsibility. In an era characterized by rapid technological change and the dominance of digital media, the practice of sustained reading has undergone significant transformation. This shift has raised important questions about the impact of reading habits on social thought, civic awareness, and the overall quality of public life.

Social thought is shaped not only by formal education but also by continuous exposure to diverse perspectives, narratives, and critical discourses. Reading enables individuals to understand complex social issues, appreciate cultural differences, and cultivate empathy toward others. Through engagement with literature, history, philosophy, and social commentary, readers develop the ability to reflect critically on societal norms and democratic values. As a result, reading contributes to the formation of informed citizens who are capable of participating meaningfully in civic and community life.

Public libraries occupy a vital position in this process, functioning as democratic institutions that provide free and equitable access to knowledge. Unlike commercial or exclusive educational spaces, public libraries are open to all members of society, regardless of age, gender, or socio-economic status. They act as centers for lifelong learning, social interaction, and intellectual exchange. By hosting reading programs, discussion forums, and community-oriented initiatives, libraries foster a culture of dialogue and collective engagement that strengthens the foundations of a civil society.

In addition to libraries, organized reading initiatives play an important role in promoting literacy, critical awareness, and social inclusion. Community reading programs, literacy campaigns, and outreach activities help extend the benefits of reading to marginalized and underserved populations. Such initiatives not only enhance individual learning but also encourage social participation and shared responsibility. In this context, reading emerges as a collective social practice that contributes to social cohesion and democratic engagement.

This paper seeks to examine the impact of reading on social thought and to analyze how public libraries and reading initiatives contribute to the development of a civil society. By exploring the relationship between reading culture and civic life, the study aims to highlight the importance of

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strengthening reading practices and public knowledge institutions as essential components of a thoughtful, informed, and participatory society.

Objectives of the Study

- To examine the role of reading in shaping social thought and civic awareness among individuals.
- To analyze how reading practices contribute to the development of critical thinking, empathy, and social responsibility within society.
- To assess the contribution of public libraries in fostering community interaction and democratic participation.
- To understand the impact of organized reading initiatives on social cohesion and civic engagement.
- To highlight the relationship between a strong reading culture and the formation of a civil and participatory society.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

A review of literature is an essential part of any research study because it helps to understand what has already been studied, identify research gaps, and establish the relevance of the present research. It provides a theoretical foundation by examining previous studies related to reading habits, public libraries, digital libraries, and social thought (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). For the present study, both Indian and international literature has been reviewed to understand how reading contributes to social awareness, civic responsibility, and the development of a civil society.

2.2 Studies by Indian Scholars

1) S. R. Ranganathan (1931) – *The Five Laws of Library Science*

S. R. Ranganathan, known as the father of Library Science in India, emphasized that libraries exist to serve society. His Five Laws of Library Science established that books are meant to be used and that libraries should continuously adapt to the changing needs of readers (Ranganathan, 1931). His work remains one of the strongest theoretical foundations for understanding the social role of libraries.

2) National Digital Library of India (2023)

The National Digital Library of India (NDLI) provides access to millions of educational resources for students, teachers, and researchers across the country. It demonstrates how digital libraries can improve access to knowledge and support lifelong learning (National Digital Library of India, 2023).

3) National Education Policy (2020)

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes reading, literacy, library development, and digital learning as essential components of quality education. The policy recommends strengthening school and public libraries to promote lifelong learning and critical thinking (Ministry of Education, Government of India, 2020).

4) Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation

The Raja Rammohun Roy Library Foundation has played a significant role in strengthening public library services across India through financial assistance, modernization, and library development programmes. The Foundation

recognizes libraries as important institutions for education and community development (RRRLF, 2022).

2.3 Studies by International Scholars

Stephen D. Krashen (2004)– *The Power of Reading*

Krashen argued that voluntary reading significantly improves language development, academic achievement, critical thinking, and knowledge acquisition. He emphasized that regular reading also supports intellectual and social development (Krashen, 2004).

Ross, McKechnie & Rothbauer (2006) – *Reading Matters*

Ross and colleagues explained that reading contributes not only to literacy but also to empathy, community participation, and lifelong learning. Their research highlighted the importance of public libraries in strengthening communities (Ross et al., 2006).

UNESCO (2021)

UNESCO highlighted that literacy and reading are essential for achieving sustainable development, social inclusion, gender equality, and democratic participation. According to UNESCO, access to books and libraries contributes directly to informed citizenship (UNESCO, 2021).

International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA, 2022)

The IFLA Trend Report emphasizes that libraries are evolving into knowledge hubs that provide equal access to information, digital literacy, lifelong learning, and civic participation. It also discusses the importance of integrating traditional and digital library services (IFLA, 2022).

2.4 Comparative Insights

Indian literature mainly focuses on strengthening public libraries, promoting literacy, and expanding digital access through government initiatives (Ministry of Education, 2020; RRRLF, 2022).

International literature places greater emphasis on reading as a means of developing empathy, democratic values, lifelong learning, and social inclusion (Krashen, 2004; UNESCO, 2021).

Both Indian and international studies agree that reading contributes significantly to personal development and the creation of an informed civil society.

2.5 Research Gap

Although several researchers have studied reading habits and library services, certain gaps still exist.

- Most previous studies have focused either on traditional libraries or digital libraries separately.
- Limited research combines both traditional and digital reading behaviour within one framework.
- Many studies concentrate only on students or academic institutions, while comparatively fewer studies examine public opinion across different age groups and occupations.

- There is limited research exploring how reading influences social thought and civic responsibility from the perspective of the general public.

The present study attempts to address these gaps by examining public perceptions regarding reading habits, library services, digital resources, and their relationship with social awareness.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed clearly indicates that reading plays an important role in intellectual development, social awareness, empathy, and civic responsibility (Krashen, 2004; UNESCO, 2021). Public libraries continue to serve as essential institutions for providing equal access to knowledge, while digital libraries have expanded opportunities for information access (IFLA, 2022).

Despite these developments, challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, unequal digital access, and declining reading habits continue to affect the growth of reading culture. Therefore, the present study seeks to contribute to existing knowledge by examining public perceptions of reading, libraries, and reading initiatives in fostering a civil society.

3. Research Methodology

1) Introduction

Research methodology is the backbone of any academic study. It provides a systematic plan to collect, analyze, and interpret data. Without a clear methodology, research findings cannot be trusted or validated. For this dissertation, the research methodology was designed to understand the impact of reading on social thought and to examine the role of public libraries, digital platforms, and reading initiatives in shaping civil society.

2) Research Design

The study uses a descriptive and analytical research design.

- Descriptive because it collects information from respondents about their reading habits, library usage, and opinions.
- Analytical because it interprets and compares the data to find out patterns, relationships, and conclusions.

The design is based on a survey method with questionnaire via google link which is considered the most effective way to capture the opinion of a large number of people in a short time in a single excel sheet

3) Population and Sample

- **Population:** The population of this study includes all readers and potential readers, especially students, professionals, homemakers, and senior citizens, who use either public libraries, digital libraries, or both.
- **Sample:** Approximately 160 respondents, representing diverse backgrounds, were selected through a Google Form survey. The participants included individuals from both urban and semi-urban areas.
- **Sampling Method:** The study followed random sampling so that every individual had an equal chance to participate.

This method reduced bias and increased the reliability of the findings.

4. Sources of Data

The study is based on two types of data:

1) Primary Data

- Collected directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire through Google Forms.
- Questions included both multiple-choice and open-ended types to capture opinions on reading habits, challenges, and suggestions.

2) Secondary Data

- Collected from books, journals, government reports, websites, previous research, and library records.
- Secondary data helped in understanding the background of the problem and comparing findings with earlier studies.

5. Research Tool – Questionnaire

The main tool for collecting primary data was a questionnaire. It was divided into different sections:

- **Section A:** Demographic details (age, gender, education, occupation).
- **Section B:** Reading habits (frequency, type of material, preference for digital/traditional).
- **Section C:** Library usage (public libraries, digital libraries, availability of resources).
- **Section D:** Challenges faced in reading and accessing libraries.
- **Section E:** Suggestions for improving reading culture and library services.

The questionnaire was kept short, simple, and bilingual (English/Hindi) so that all respondents could easily understand it.

6. Data Collection Method

- Data was collected online using Google Forms due to convenience and wider reach.
- The survey was conducted over a period of two months.
- Responses were automatically stored in Excel sheets for analysis.
- Apart from surveys, a few informal discussions were also conducted with teachers and library professionals to gain deeper insights.

7. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data was analyzed using statistical methods:

- **Percentage Method:** To understand how many people agreed/disagreed with specific questions.
- **Tabulation:** Responses were organized into tables for clarity.
- **Graphical Representation:** Pie charts, bar graphs, and histograms were used to visually represent the data.
- **Qualitative Analysis:** Open-ended answers were read carefully, coded into categories, and interpreted to understand the underlying views.

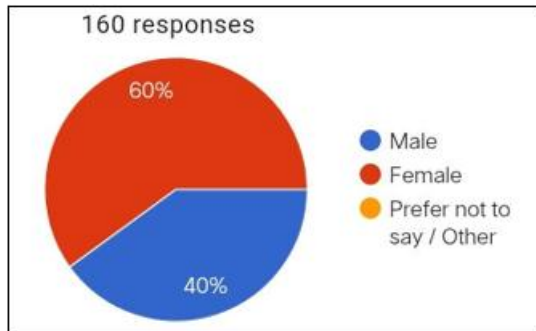
This mixed approach made the analysis both quantitative (numerical) and qualitative (descriptive).

8. Result And Findings

Data Analysis and Interpretation (Part 1: Demographics)

1) Gender of Respondents

Gender	Count	Percentage (%)
Female	96	60.0%
Male	64	40.0%



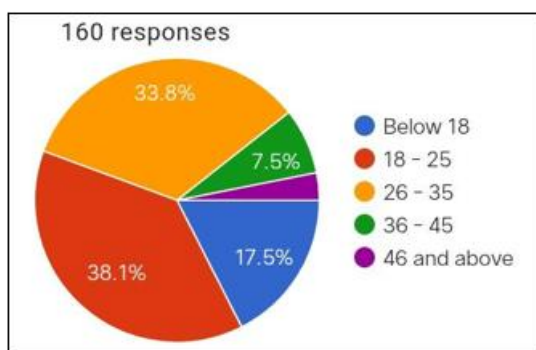
(Pie Chart: More females than males participated)

Interpretation:

The survey shows that a majority of respondents were female (60%), while males formed 40% of the total. This indicates that women showed greater participation in the study. It may also reflect the fact that reading and library-related initiatives are increasingly attracting female respondents, especially students and homemakers.

2) Age Group of Respondents

Age Group	Count	Percentage (%)
Below 18	28	17.50%
18-25	61	38.12%
26-35	54	33.75%
36-45	12	7.50%
46 & Above	05	3.12%



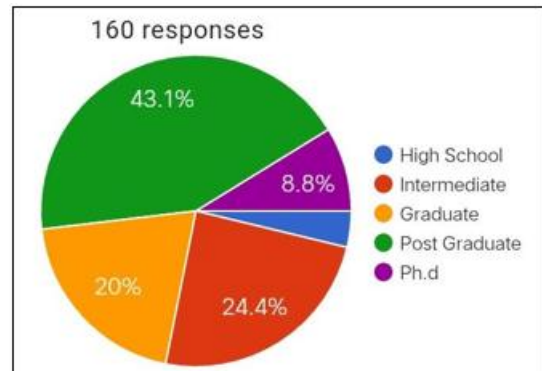
(Bar Graph: Majority between 18–35 years)

Interpretation:

Most respondents belong to the youth and young adult category (18–35 years = 71.87%). This shows that younger generations are the most active participants in reading surveys and library use. However, the representation of older respondents (46 and above = 3.12%) is very low, which suggests that reading initiatives need to focus more on middle-aged and senior citizens.

3) Educational Qualification of Respondents

Education Level	Count	Percentage (%)
High School	06	3.75%
Intermediate	39	24.38%
Graduate	32	20.00%
Post Graduate	69	43.12%
PhD	14	8.75%



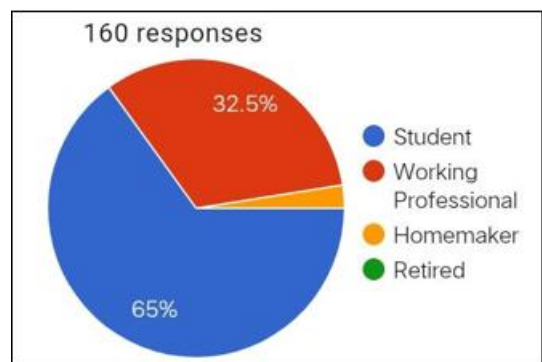
(Column Graph: Majority are Post-Graduates)

Interpretation:

The data shows that the largest group of respondents were Postgraduates (43.12%), followed by Intermediate students (24.38%) and Graduates (20%). This indicates that people with higher education are more likely to participate in surveys related to reading and libraries. The presence of Ph.D. holders (8.75%) also shows that even advanced learners value reading discussions.

4) Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	Count	Percentage (%)
Student	104	65.0%
Working Professional	52	32.5%
Homemaker	04	2.5%



(Pie Chart: Majority students)

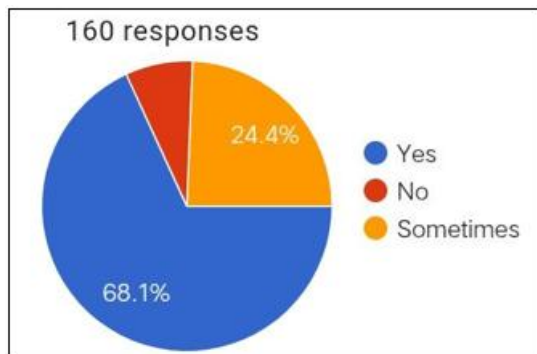
Interpretation:

The majority of respondents were students (65%), followed by working professionals (32.5%). A small percentage was homemakers (2.5%). This suggests that students form the most active group in terms of reading habits and library usage, while professionals also contribute significantly.

(Part 2: Reading Habits)

5) Do you read books/ magazines/ newspapers consistently?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	109	68.12%
Sometimes	39	24.38%
No	12	7.50%



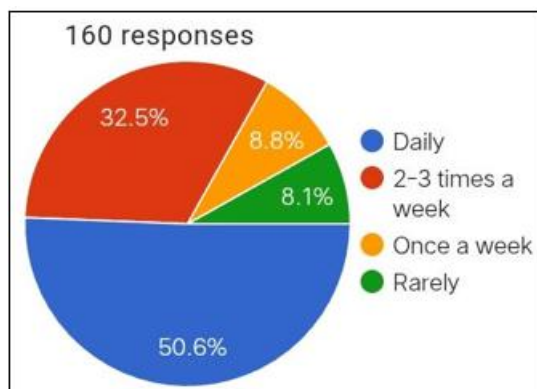
(Pie Chart: Majority read regularly)

Interpretation:

The data reveals that 68.12% respondents read regularly, while 24.38% read occasionally. Only a small section (7.5%) does not engage in regular reading. This indicates that reading is still considered an important part of people's lives, but the presence of "sometimes" and "no" categories also highlights that there is scope to improve consistency in reading habits.

6) How often do you read in a week?

Frequency	Count	Percentage (%)
Daily	81	50.62%
2-3 times a week	52	32.50%
Once a week	14	8.75%
Rarely	13	8.12%



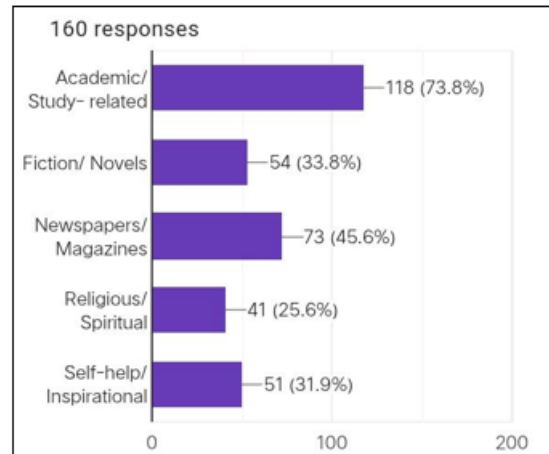
(Bar Graph: Half read daily)

Interpretation:

A significant portion of respondents (50.62%) reported that they read daily, which is a very positive sign. About one-third (32.5%) read two to three times a week, showing regular engagement. A small percentage (around 17%) read only once a week or rarely, which indicates inconsistency. This suggests that while reading is valued, there is still a need for campaigns and library programs to encourage more frequent habits.

7) What type of Content do you read most?

Type of content	Count	Percentage (%)
Academic/ Study-related	118	73.8%
Fiction/ Novel	54	33.8%
Newspapers/ Magazines	73	45.6%
Religious/ Spiritual	41	25.6%
Self-help/ Inspirational	51	31.9%



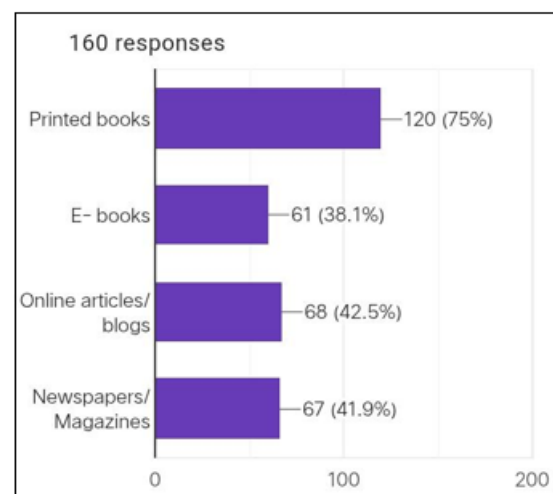
(Stacked Bar Graph: Academic dominates)

Interpretation:

The majority of respondents (27.5%) reported reading academic or study-related content, which reflects the dominance of students and professionals in the sample. Newspapers and magazines (8.12%) are also a common choice, followed by self-help, inspirational, fiction, and religious/spiritual content. Interestingly, many respondents (32%) selected multiple categories, showing that readers do not restrict themselves to a single type of material.

8) Which medium do you prefer for reading?

Medium	Count	Percentage (%)
Printed Book	120	75%
E- Book only	61	38.1%
Online articles/ Blog	68	42.5%
Newspaper/ Magazines	67	41.9%



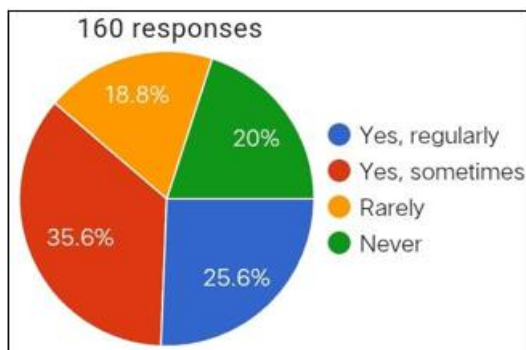
(Pie Chart: Print + Digital mix popular)

Interpretation:

The analysis shows that while printed books remain the most preferred medium (31.25%), a large group of respondents (nearly 40%) reported using a combination of print and digital resources. Pure digital preferences like e-books (6.88%) and online articles (3.12%) are lower, but significant. This indicates a transition period where traditional and modern mediums coexist, and readers adapt according to availability and convenience.

(Part 3: Role of Public Library)**9) Do you visit a public library?**

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes, sometimes	57	35.62%
Yes, regularly	41	25.62%
Rarely	30	18.75%
Never	32	20.00%



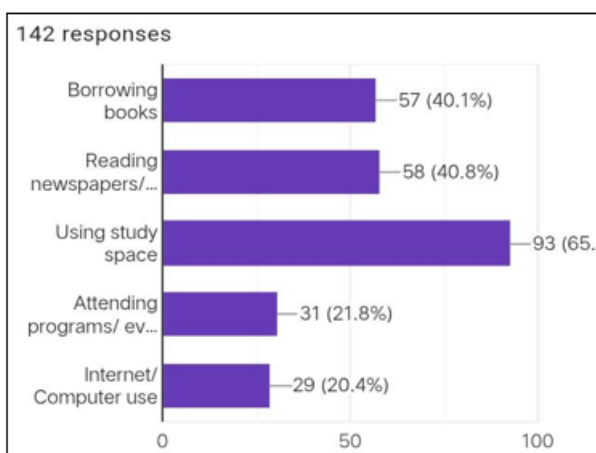
(Pie Chart: Many visit sometimes, but not regularly)

Interpretation:

The results show that only one-fourth (25.62%) visit regularly, while the majority (35.62%) visit only sometimes. A considerable number rarely or never visit (38.75%), highlighting the declining role of public libraries. Although libraries remain relevant, they are not used as frequently as expected.

10) If yes, what services do you use most in the library?

Service	Count	Percentage (%)
Using study space	93	65.1%
Reading newspaper/magazines	58	40.8%
Borrowing books	57	40.1%
Attending programs / events	31	21.8%
Internet/ Computer use	29	20.4%



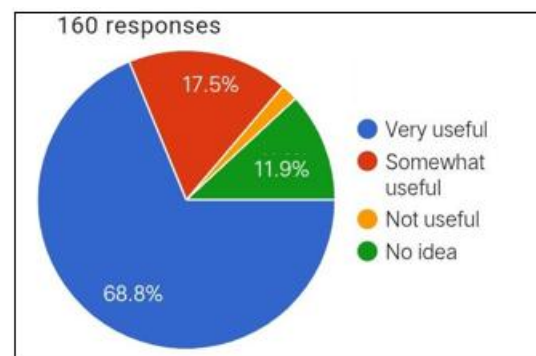
(Bar Graph: Study space most popular, but mixed use common)

Interpretation:

The most frequently used service is study space (65.1%), followed by newspapers/magazines (40.8%) and borrowing books (40.1%). However, a significant portion of respondents (42.2%) used multiple services together, which shows that libraries serve as multifunctional community spaces.

11) How do you rate the usefulness of public libraries in your area?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Very useful	110	68.75%
Somewhat useful	28	17.50%
No idea	19	11.88%
Not useful	03	1.88%



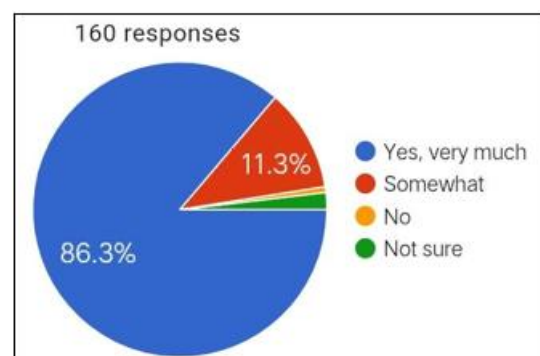
(Pie Chart: Highly valued by majority)

Interpretation:

A large majority (68.75%) rated public libraries as very useful, while 17.5% said they are somewhat useful. Only a negligible fraction (1.88%) considered them not useful. This shows that libraries still hold great social value, even though regular usage is lower.

(Part: 4 Reading and social thoughts)**12) Do you think reading has improved your understanding of society?**

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes, very much	138	86.25%
Somewhat	18	11.25%
Not sure	03	1.88%
No	01	0.62%



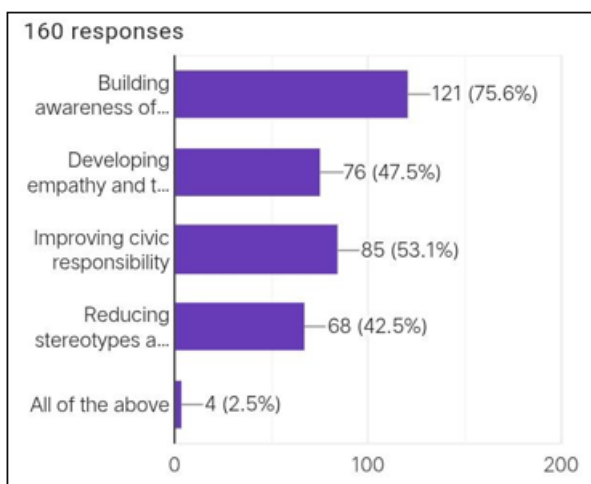
(Pie Chart: Overwhelmingly positive response)

Interpretation:

A majority of respondents (86.25%) believe that reading has greatly improved their understanding of society. Another 11.25% feel it has helped them somewhat. Very few (less than 3%) reported “not sure” or “no.” This clearly shows that reading is directly linked with developing social awareness and critical thinking.

13) In your opinion, reading helps in...

Impact of Reading	Count	Percentage (%)
Building awareness of social issues	121	75.6%
Developing empathy and tolerance	76	47.5%
Improving civic responsibility	85	53.1%
Reducing stereotypes and prejudices	68	42.5%
All of the above	04	2.5%



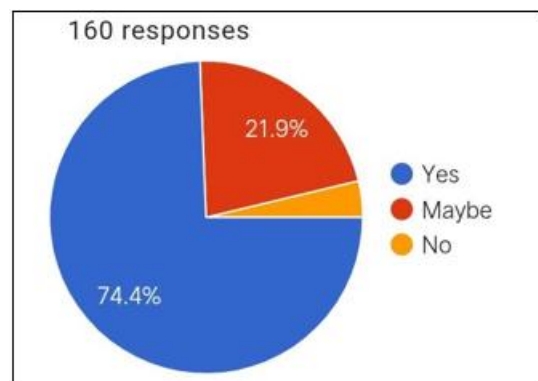
(Bar Graph: Awareness most common, multiple impacts also high)

Interpretation:

The analysis shows that reading has multiple social benefits. The most common impact identified was awareness of social issues (75.5%), followed by civic responsibility (53.1%) and empathy/tolerance (47.5%). A small group (2.5%) selected more than one impact, showing that reading contributes to society in many ways at once.

14) Do you believe community reading programs (book fairs, reading campaigns, and mobile libraries) can create social change?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	119	74.38%
Maybe	35	21.88%
No	06	3.75%



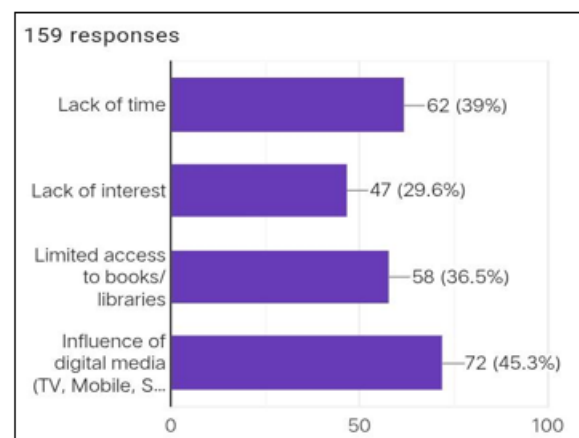
(Bar Graph: Strong support for reading programs)

Interpretation:

Most respondents (74.38%) strongly believe that community reading programs can bring social change, while only 3.75% disagreed. This shows that reading initiatives are considered effective tools for improving awareness and building civil society.

15) What are the main barriers you face in developing a reading habit?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Lack of time	62	39%
Lack of interest	47	29.6%
Limited access of books/ libraries	58	36.5%
Influence of digital media (TV, Mobile, social media)	72	45.3%



(Bar Graph: Main Barriers in Developing a Reading Habit among Respondents)

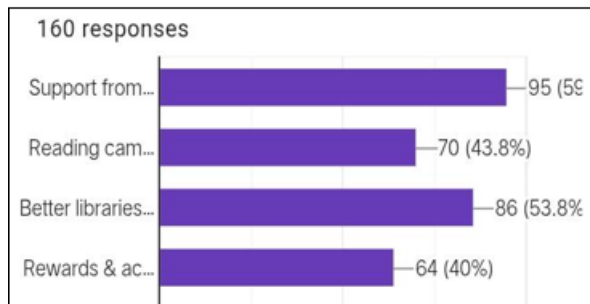
Interpretation:

The bar graph shows that the major barrier in developing a reading habit is the influence of digital media (45.3%), followed by lack of time (39%) and limited access to books or libraries (36.5%). The lack of interest (29.6%) is also a significant factor. This indicates that digital distractions and time constraints are the primary challenges preventing individuals from cultivating regular reading habits.

(Part: 5 Challenges & Suggestions)

16) What can be done to improve reading habits in society?

Suggestion	Count	Percentage (%)
Support from schools & families	95	59.7%
Reading campaigns & book fairs	70	43.8%
Better libraries & digital access	86	53.8%
Rewards & motivational activities	64	40%



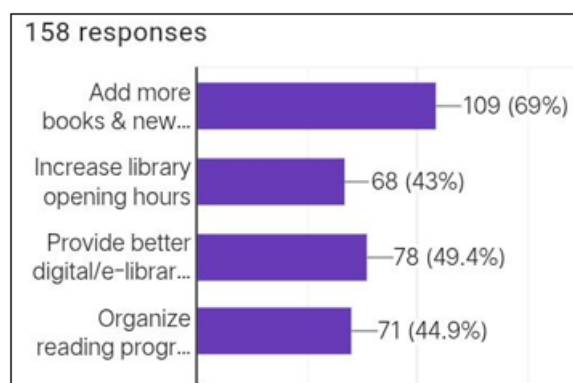
(Stacked Bar Graph: Schools/families + libraries most common)

Interpretation:

The bar graph illustrates various suggestions given by respondents to improve reading habits in society. The majority (59.4%) believe that support from family, teachers, and friends plays a crucial role in encouraging reading. Around 53.8% of respondents suggested the need for better libraries and reading spaces, while 43.8% emphasized organizing reading campaigns and awareness programs. Additionally, 40% felt that rewards and appreciation can motivate individuals to develop a reading habit.

17) Any suggestion for improving public library services?

Suggestion	Count	Percentage (%)
Add more books & collections	109	69%
Provide digital/e-library access	78	49.4%
Organize reading events	71	44.9%
Increase opening hours	68	43%



(Stacked Bar Graph: More books + digital access are top needs)

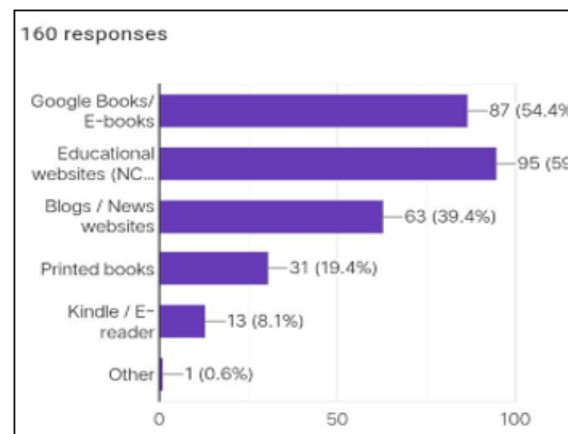
Interpretation:

The most common suggestion was adding more books and updated collections (69%), followed by better digital access and events. Around 31% gave multiple suggestions, which shows that people expect both modernization and traditional improvements in public libraries.

(Part: 6 Online Reading Habit)

18) Which platforms do you use most for online reading?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Google Books / E-books	87	54.4%
Educational websites (NCERT, Govt. portals, etc.)	95	59.85%
Blogs / News websites	63	39.4%
Printed books	31	19.4%
Kindle / E-reader	13	8.1%



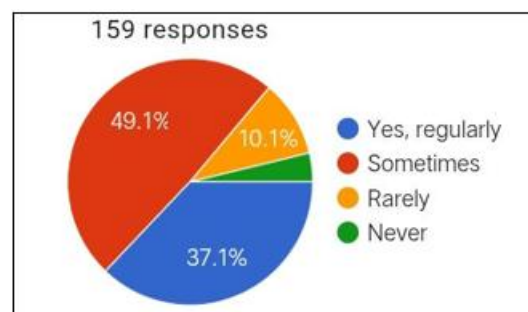
(Stacked Bar Graph: Online reading platforms)

Interpretation:

The data reveals that the majority of respondents prefer educational websites (59.4%) and Google Books/E-books (54.4%) for online reading. Blogs and news websites (39.4%) are also fairly popular, while a smaller portion still engages with printed books (19.4%) and Kindle/E-readers (8.1%). This indicates a clear shift toward digital and educational platforms for reading, reflecting the growing accessibility and convenience of online resources.

19) Do you read e-books or online articles?

Response	Percentage (%)
Yes, regularly	37.1%
Sometimes	49.1%
Rarely	10.1%
Never	3.8%



(Bar chart: E-books & online articles)

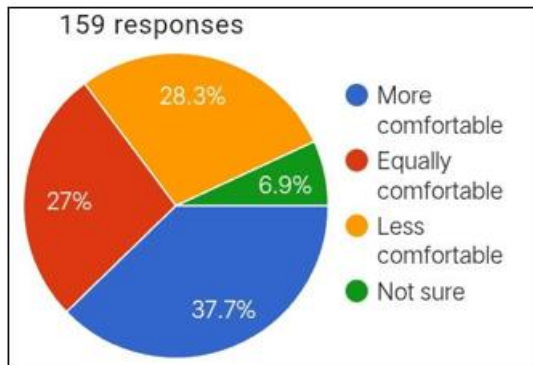
Interpretation:

The data shows that a majority of respondents engage in online reading to some extent. About 37.1% read e-books or online articles regularly, while 49.1% do so sometimes. Only 10.1% read rarely, and a minimal 3.8% never engage in online

reading. This suggests that online reading has become a common practice, with most respondents incorporating it into their routine either regularly or occasionally

20) Compared to printed books, how do you find online reading?

Response	Percentage (%)
More comfortable	37.7%
Equally comfortable	27%
Less comfortable	28.3%
Not sure	6.9%



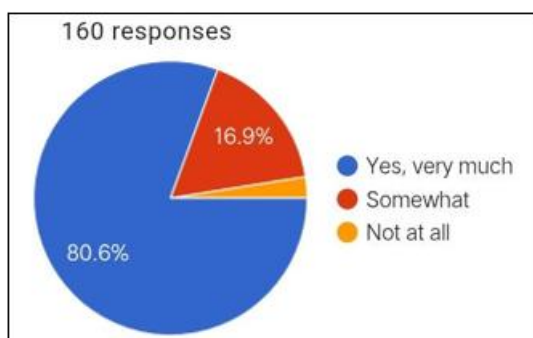
(Bar Graph: Traditional reading & online reading)

Interpretation:

The results indicate that 37.7% of respondents find online reading more comfortable than printed books, while 27% feel equally comfortable with both formats. However, 28.3% consider online reading less comfortable, and a small 6.9% remain unsure. This suggests that although a significant portion prefers the convenience of online reading, a considerable number still experience some discomfort compared to traditional printed books.

21) Does online reading help you stay updated on current social issues?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes, very much	129	80.62%
Somewhat	27	16.88%
Not at all	04	2.5%



(Pie Chart: Digital reading boosts awareness)

Interpretation:

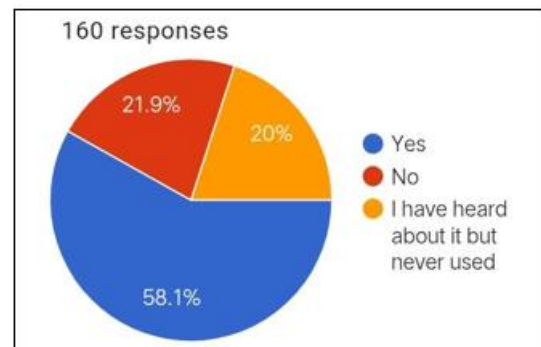
An overwhelming 80.62% agreed that online reading helps them stay updated on social issues, while 16.88% said "somewhat." Only 2.5% felt it had no impact. This proves that digital reading platforms play a crucial role in spreading

awareness, though they cannot completely replace the community-building role of traditional libraries.

(Part: 7 Digital libraries)

22) Have you ever used a digital library (like National Digital Library of India, NPTEL, or University portals)?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	93	58.13%
No	35	21.88%
Heard about it, never used	32	20.00%



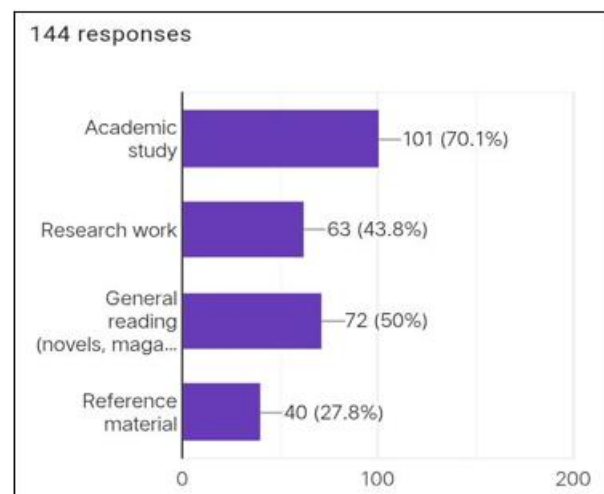
(Pie Chart: Digital use more than half, but awareness gap exists)

Interpretation:

More than half (58.13%) have used a digital library, but a significant 42% have either never used or only heard about it. This indicates both growing popularity and a digital divide.

23) If yes, what do you use digital libraries for?

Purpose	Count	Percentage (%)
Academic study	101	70.1%
Research work	63	43.8%
General reading (novels, magazines)	72	50%
Reference material	40	27.8%



(Bar Graph: Mostly academic use, but mixed purposes high)

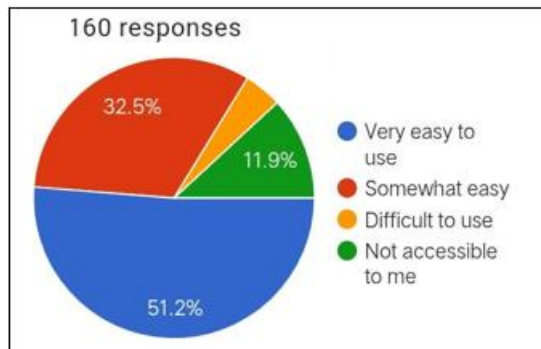
Interpretation:

Digital libraries are used mainly for academic study (70.1%) and research (43.8%), but also for general reading (50%). A

large portion of respondents use them for multiple purposes, showing that digital libraries provide versatile support.

24) How do you rate digital libraries in terms of accessibility?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Very easy to use	82	51.25%
Somewhat easy	52	32.50%
Difficult to use	07	4.38%
Not accessible	19	11.88%



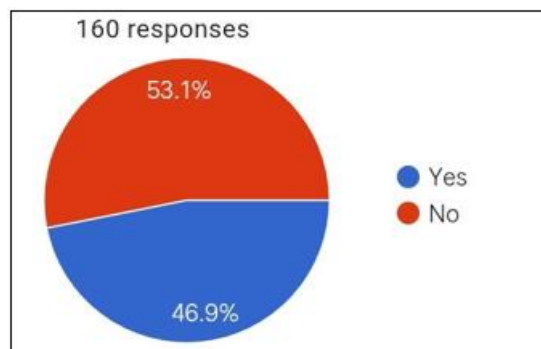
(Pie Chart: Generally easy, but access gap remains)

Interpretation:

Most respondents (83.75%) find digital libraries easy or somewhat easy to use, but about 12% still find them not accessible. This suggests the need for user-friendly design and wider digital reach.

25) Do you think digital libraries can replace traditional public libraries?

Response	Count	Percentage (%)
Yes	75	46.88%
No	85	53.12%



(Bar Graph: Divided opinion)

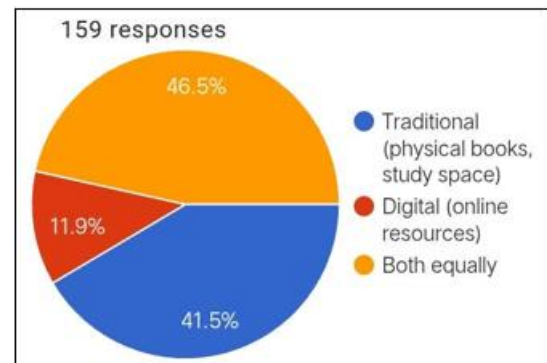
Interpretation:

Respondents were almost evenly split: 53% said “No”, while 47% said “Yes.” This shows that although digital platforms are popular, many still value the physical and social role of traditional libraries.

(Part: 8 Traditional libraries & Digital libraries)

26) Which type of libraries do you prefer?

Preference	Count	Percentage (%)
Both equally	74	46.25%
Traditional (physical)	66	41.25%
Digital (online)	19	11.88%



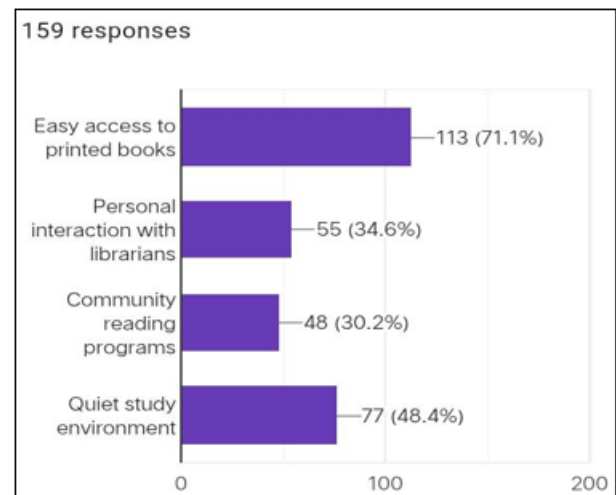
(Pie Chart: Balanced preference, but traditional still strong)

Interpretation:

Almost half (46.25%) prefer both traditional and digital equally, while 41.25% prefer traditional libraries. Only 11.88% preferred digital libraries alone. This indicates that the future of reading will likely be hybrid, where both types coexist.

27) What advantages do you see in traditional libraries?

Advantages in traditional libraries	Count	Percentage (%)
Easy access to printed books	113	71.1%
Quiet study environment	77	48.4%
Community reading programs	48	30.2%
Personal interaction with librarians	55	34.6%



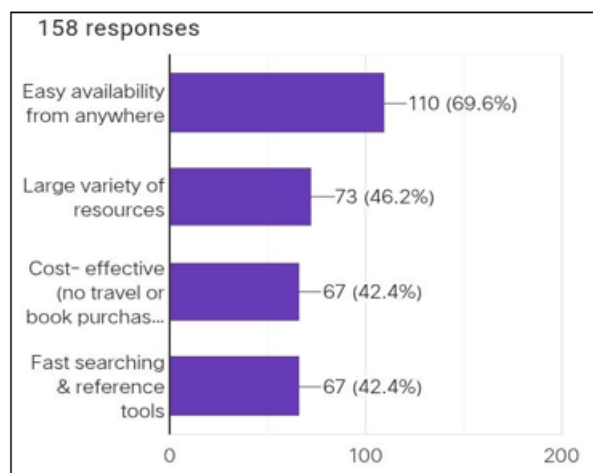
(Bar Graph: Advantages in traditional libraries)

Interpretation:

The data indicates that the main advantage of traditional libraries is easy access to printed books (71.1%). This is followed by a quiet study environment (48.4%), which many respondents value for focused learning. Personal interaction with librarians (34.6%) and community reading programs (30.2%) are also appreciated, though to a lesser extent. Overall, traditional libraries are preferred for their physical resources and conducive study atmosphere.

28) What advantages do you see in digital libraries?

Advantages in digital libraries	Count	Percentage (%)
Easy availability from anywhere	110	69.6%
Cost-effective (no travel or book purchase needed)	67	42.4%
Fast searching & reference tools	67	42.4%
Large variety of resources	73	46.2%



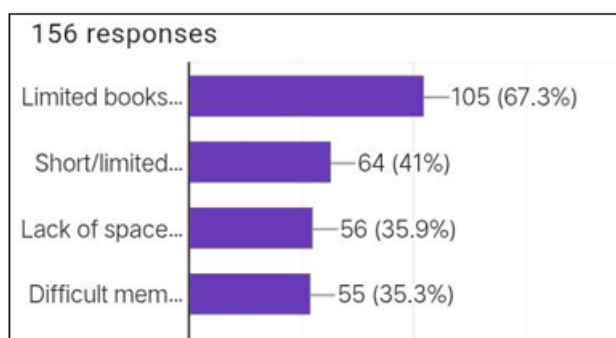
(Bar Graph: Advantages in digital libraries)

Interpretation:

The data shows that the majority of respondents (69.6%) find easy availability from anywhere as the main advantage of digital libraries. This is followed by a large variety of resources (46.2%). Additionally, cost-effectiveness and fast searching & reference tools are valued equally by 42.4% of respondents. Overall, accessibility and convenience appear to be the most significant benefits of digital libraries.

29) What challenges do you face in using traditional libraries?

Challenges in Traditional Libraries	Count	Percentage (%)
Limited books or outdated collection	105	67.3%
Short/limited opening hours	64	41%
Difficult membership or access	55	35.3%
Lack of space or facilities	56	35.9%



(Bar Graph: Most common = outdated collection + multiple issues)

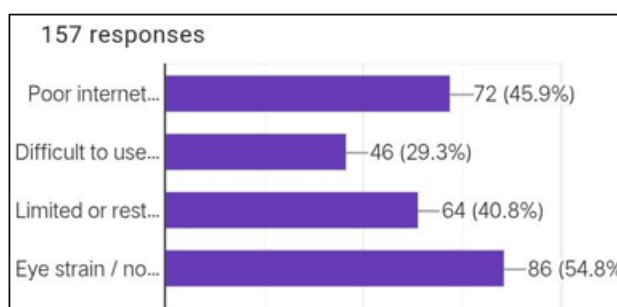
Interpretation:

The most commonly reported issue was limited or outdated book collections (67.3%), followed by restricted opening hours (41%) and difficult membership processes (35.3%). Lack of space or facilities (35.9%) was also highlighted.

Respondents faced multiple problems together, showing that public libraries suffer from both structural and resource-related challenges.

30) What challenges do you face in using digital libraries?

Challenges in Digital Libraries	Count	Percentage (%)
Eye strain / discomfort in long reading	86	54.8%
Limited or restricted access to materials	64	40.8%
Poor internet / connectivity issues	72	45.9%
Difficult to use / technical problems	46	29.3%



(Stacked Bar Graph: Digital divide + usability issues dominate)

Interpretation:

The key challenges in digital libraries include eye strain (54.8%), restricted access (40.8%), and poor internet connectivity (45.8%). Technical difficulties (29.3%) also emerged as a concern. Respondents faced multiple digital problems together, reflecting both digital divide issues and ergonomic problems.

9. Discussion

The findings of the present study are consistent with existing literature that emphasizes reading as a crucial factor in shaping social thought and civic awareness. Previous scholarly works have highlighted that regular reading enhances critical thinking and reflective abilities, enabling individuals to engage more thoughtfully with social and political issues. The positive relationship identified between reading habits and civic awareness in this study supports the argument that reading contributes to the development of informed and responsible citizens.

Literature on reading and social development has consistently suggested that exposure to diverse texts plays an important role in fostering empathy and social sensitivity. Studies focusing on literature and narrative engagement argue that reading allows individuals to understand experiences beyond their immediate social environment. The findings of this study align with these perspectives, as respondents demonstrated increased tolerance and ethical awareness through reading, reinforcing the idea that reading strengthens social cohesion and mutual understanding.

The role of public libraries observed in this study corresponds with existing research that identifies libraries as democratic and inclusive institutions. Scholarly discussions on public libraries emphasize their function in providing equitable access to information and supporting lifelong learning. The

findings affirm this view by highlighting libraries as spaces that reduce knowledge inequality and promote inclusive learning opportunities, particularly for individuals from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Furthermore, literature has increasingly recognized public libraries as community-centered institutions rather than merely repositories of books. Research suggests that libraries serve as social spaces where dialogue, cultural exchange, and civic interaction take place. The present study supports this perspective by demonstrating that library-based activities encourage community interaction and democratic participation, thereby contributing to the strengthening of civil society.

Studies on reading initiatives and literacy programs have also emphasized their role in enhancing civic engagement and social participation. Existing literature suggests that organized reading campaigns and community literacy efforts increase awareness of social issues and encourage active involvement in public life. The findings of this study are aligned with these observations, as participants involved in reading initiatives exhibited higher levels of civic interest and community engagement.

Overall, the discussion in light of existing literature indicates that reading, public libraries, and organized reading initiatives collectively function as catalysts for social thought and civil society formation. While earlier studies have often examined these elements independently, the present study contributes to the literature by integrating them into a broader framework that highlights their combined impact on fostering democratic values, social responsibility, and participatory citizenship.

10. Conclusion

The present study highlights the significant role of reading in shaping social thought and fostering the foundations of a civil society. The findings demonstrate that reading extends beyond individual intellectual development and functions as a social practice that enhances critical thinking, empathy, and civic awareness. Through sustained engagement with reading, individuals develop a deeper understanding of social issues and democratic values, enabling them to participate more actively and responsibly in public life.

The study underscores the importance of public libraries as inclusive and democratic institutions that provide equitable access to knowledge and learning opportunities. Public libraries not only support lifelong learning but also serve as community spaces that encourage dialogue, interaction, and collective engagement. By facilitating access to diverse information resources and organizing community-oriented activities, libraries contribute to social cohesion and informed citizenship.

Furthermore, the research emphasizes the positive impact of organized reading initiatives in promoting civic participation and social responsibility. Reading programs and literacy initiatives play a crucial role in extending the benefits of reading to wider sections of society, particularly marginalized and underserved communities. These initiatives strengthen

awareness of social issues and encourage individuals to engage in community and civic activities.

Overall, the study concludes that a strong reading culture, supported by accessible public libraries and effective reading initiatives, is essential for nurturing social thought and sustaining a participatory civil society. The findings suggest that policies and practices aimed at promoting reading and strengthening public knowledge institutions can contribute meaningfully to the development of informed, empathetic, and socially responsible citizens in the contemporary world.

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