

Empowering Women Library Professionals: Workforce Development in University Libraries in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

University libraries may improve their effectiveness, flexibility, and service quality by giving the same opportunities to women's library professionals as men's, which can be possible by decentralising authority & responsibility, leadership, and digital competency training. The previous research papers provide information on successful procedures and policies for empowering women in the changing academic library environment. The present study was conducted to know the workforce development, career opportunities & challenges of Women Library Professionals in selected central university libraries of Uttar Pradesh in the digital age. There are four selected central universities: Aligarh Muslim University, Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Banaras Hindu University, and the University of Allahabad. The study conducted a survey method by utilising Google Forms to make a structured questionnaire for data collection to fulfill the objectives of the study. The collected data were analysed based on the working experience, administration support, job satisfaction, and challenge. The gathered data was presented in the form of graphs, tables, and figures. The key findings of the study states that majority of the respondents believe they having satisfactory administration support. While most of the respondents are using digital tools for their professional work, some of the professionals face several challenges such as limited opportunities for career advancement and lack of new skills for their professional development.

Keywords: Women library professional; Central university; Women's empowerment; Digital library; Career advancement

1. INTRODUCTION

The life of women is filled with numerous responsibilities, including household planning, sacrifices, career training and development, self-determination, political voice, and legal protection¹. To develop their skills and boost their output, they have to face certain obstacles due to various reasons, like men and women are raised differently from early childhood into maturity²

Library and Information Science (LIS) is a discipline that deals with organizing, preserving, managing, and disseminating information³⁻⁴. A library professional is a person who has received the necessary training and education to oversee, arrange, and make information resources easier to access in a library^{5,6}. Professions in information and library services have historically drawn women. In both small and large libraries and information services, more and more women are advancing to senior positions, especially in areas with equal opportunity laws. Due to their greater ease of entry, women eventually began to dominate the field of librarianship, which men previously dominated⁷.

Women library professionals have always made important contributions to information science and librarianship by

managing collection development, serving as information scientists, and many more⁸⁻¹⁰. Synergising with digital technology, they also serve users with transformative digital library technologies and services and housekeeping operations¹¹. Their responsibilities vary, which include administering academic and special libraries, promoting public libraries, and fostering innovation in information management and digital librarianship^{8,1}.

The profession has grown because of the leadership of women in organizations like the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the American Library Association (ALA). In an information world that is evolving quickly, women librarians are mentoring the next generation by focusing on technology, diversity, and adaptation.

1.1 Women's Empowerment

Women can achieve their full potential and abilities in various spheres of life by empowering and just giving them equal opportunities as men. Empowerment is giving a chance or opportunity to whose achievements can be judged in terms of her values and objectives¹²⁻¹³. In other words, empowerment is the process of acquiring power and then exercising, maintaining, and preserving it. It is achieved through awareness and capacity building, which

increases involvement in decision-making processes and fosters control and transformative action. The concept of women's empowerment was first presented at the 1985 International Women's Conference in Nairobi¹⁴.

1.2 Need of Women's Empowerment

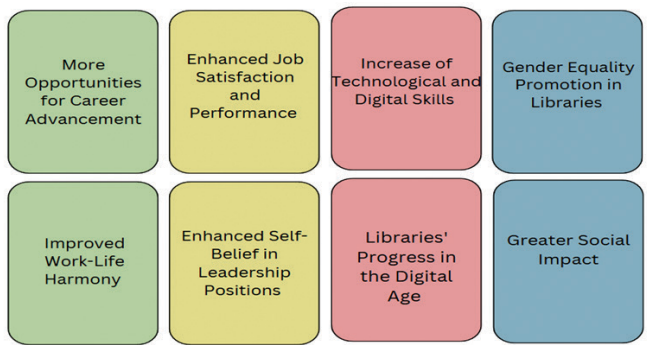


Figure 1. Need for women's empowerment.

1.3 Impact of Women's Empowerment

- Developing self-confidence and a positive self-image.
- Improving the capacity for critical thought.
- Promoting equitable involvement in the process of enacting social change.
- Promoting collective action to effect societal transformation.
- Increasing group cohesion and encouraging action and decision-making.
- Supplying the resources necessary for financial autonomy.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

- To analyse the educational background and designation of women library professionals.
- To examine the working experience of women library professionals in university libraries.
- To identify challenges faced by women professionals in advancing their careers.
- To assess job satisfaction among women library professionals.
- To examine challenges in career advancement for women library professionals.
- To rank university libraries based on opportunities provided to women professionals.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Yadav & Sinha¹⁵ Job satisfaction in Library and Information Science (LIS) is crucial for successful services and organizational success. Research shows that factors like pay, promotions, and work environment impact job satisfaction, with women in India showing moderate happiness but discontent with pay and professional advancement. Studies worldwide have identified gender-based disparities, employment stability, and freedom of work as factors influencing job satisfaction. ICT developments have also been studied to understand the impact of these factors on job satisfaction.

Raihen², *et al.* It highlights job satisfaction among library science professionals in Kerala's university libraries and highlights the importance of job happiness for successful organisational operations, employee retention, and efficient library services. Previous research has found that remuneration, job stability, and work freedom are key determinants of job satisfaction. Women generally report higher levels of satisfaction, but gender disparities persist. Technological developments also impact job satisfaction.

Ye M.¹⁶ highlighted the importance of digital literacy among library staff and suggested strategies for creating a digitally literate workforce. It examines current practices in resource management, infrastructure improvement, and digital service team building and uses fictitious data to demonstrate how these strategies can improve user satisfaction and library service efficiency.

Sorgner & Krieger¹⁷ Digitalisation offers opportunities for female empowerment and equitable participation in financial, labor, and entrepreneurial markets. Women are less likely to be replaced by machines and have stronger social skills, especially when combined with improved digital literacy and higher education. However, G20 states must address existing obstacles and make digital technologies more accessible to women, as this could lead to more equitable opportunities in the digital age.

Anunobi¹⁸, *et al.* Stated the challenges and mechanisms of Nigerian women academic Library and Information Professionals (LIPs) in the digital age, including the transition to ICT-driven operations, career advancement, and sociocultural norms. It uses a survey of southern Nigerian LIPs to gather data on career advancement, library operations, and societal expectations.

Verma & Singh⁶ Research on job performance and job satisfaction in Library and Information Science (LIS) has shown that organisational characteristics, work experience, and gender play a significant role. Studies have found that librarians' job satisfaction in India is influenced by praise and a balance between work and personal life. Demographic factors like age, education, and gender discrimination also affect job performance. Middle-aged professionals perform better, while psychological differences based on age and gender are also observed.

Marasinghe & Wijayarathne¹⁹ the impact of gender on job satisfaction among 125 library staff members in Sri Lankan university libraries. The research used a survey design and analysed five factors: work, coworkers, pay, promotion, and supervision. The study involved 125 library professionals from 15 universities, with 64 % of respondents responding. The Cronbach's alpha values were used to assess the findings.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study was conducted to give insights into "Empowering Women Library Professionals: Workforce Development in University Libraries in the Digital Era." The study deploys a survey method of data collection to fulfil the objectives of the study; a structured questionnaire

was distributed. Google form, among the women's library professionals, those who are currently working in the Central Universities libraries of Uttar Pradesh. The collected data were arranged, organised according to the needs of the study, and analysed with the help of MS Excel to represent data in tables and figures.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The analysis of data was collected from the responses of 41 women in LIS professionals working in the central library. The women library professionals are the age group are Below 25 years (00 %), 26-35 years 13(31.71 %), 36-45 years 19(46.34 %), 46-55 years 8(19.51 %), above 55 years 1(2.44 %), majorities of age group between 36-45 years old and the marital status of marital status are Unmarried 11(26.83 %), Married 29 (70.73 %), Divorced 1(2.44 %), Widowed (00 %).

4.1 Name of University, Age Group, and Marital Status

Figure 2 shows the selected central university of Uttar Pradesh, the 70 questionnaires distributed in this university by the survey method (Google form), and the respondents 41 outcomes in the university are 24(58.54 %) in Banaras Hindu University, 10(24.39 %) Aligarh Muslim University, 4(9.76 %) Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University and 3(7.31 %) University of Allahabad.

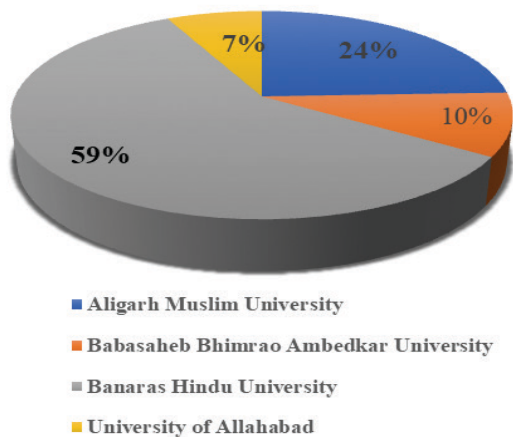


Figure 2. University-wise distribution.

4.2 Educational Background and Designation of Respondents

Figure 3 shows the educational qualifications of women library professionals in Central University of Uttar Pradesh. Data highlights that the majority of women library professionals have a master's degree in library science, which is 24 (58.54 %) of the total respondents, followed by Ph.D. 12 (29.27 %), Bachelor in Library Science & Diploma in Library Science with 1 (2.44 %) each, and 3 (7.31 %) of respondents having other degree also. And the designation of LIS women professionals are 7(17.07 %) Library attendant, 12(29.27 %) Library assistant, 11(26.83 %) Assistant librarian, 1(2.44 %) Deputy librarian, and 10(24.39 %) others.

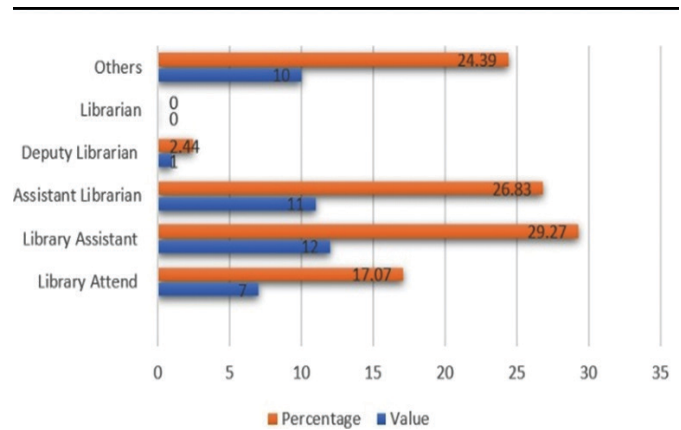


Figure 3. Education and designation of respondents.

4.3 Working Experience Library Professional

Figure 4 highlights the various years of working experience in women library professionals. The most significant study that 18(43.9 %) women working experience (0-10) Years of total respondents, 17(42.46 %) women working experience in (11-20) years and 6(14.64 %) women working experience (21-30) years, no any working experience given by the respondent to more than 30 years.

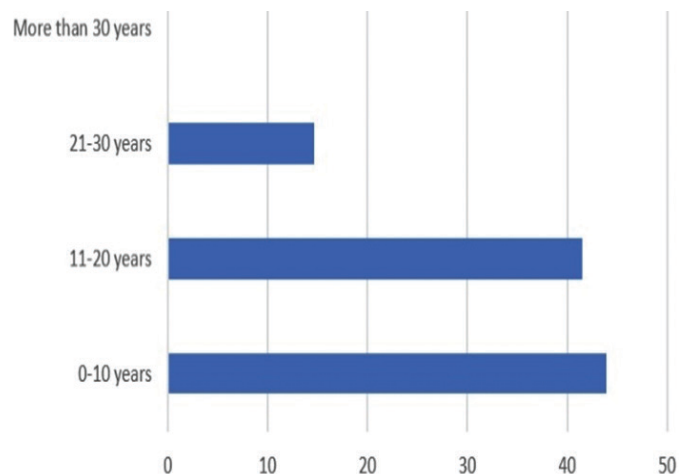


Figure 4. Working experience of women professionals.

4.4 Empowerment of Women Library Professionals for the Workforce Development

Figure 5 shows that women in library professions believe that library administration supports their workforce development for professional training and development purposes. Fig. 4 highlights that the majority of 83 % of respondents believe the administration supports them, whereas 10 % of the respondents are unable to evaluate. Lastly, 19.51 % of respondents believe they are never supported by the library administration.

Figure 6 shows that the women library professionals participate in professional training and development programs in the university library. Most of the respondents, 15(36.58 %) say a few times a year, 13(31.7 %) once a year or less, 9(21.95 %) say never, and less than respondents 3(7.31 %) say at least once a month.

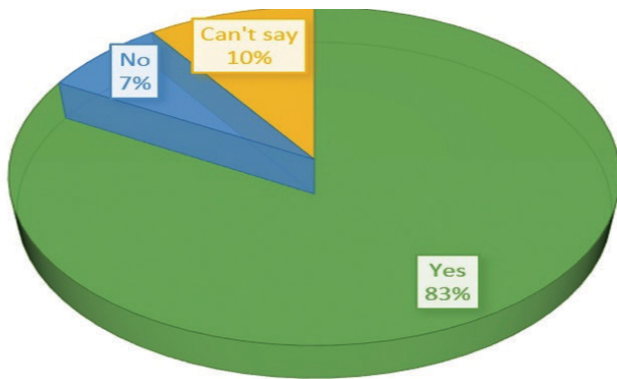


Figure 5. Workforce development by administration support.

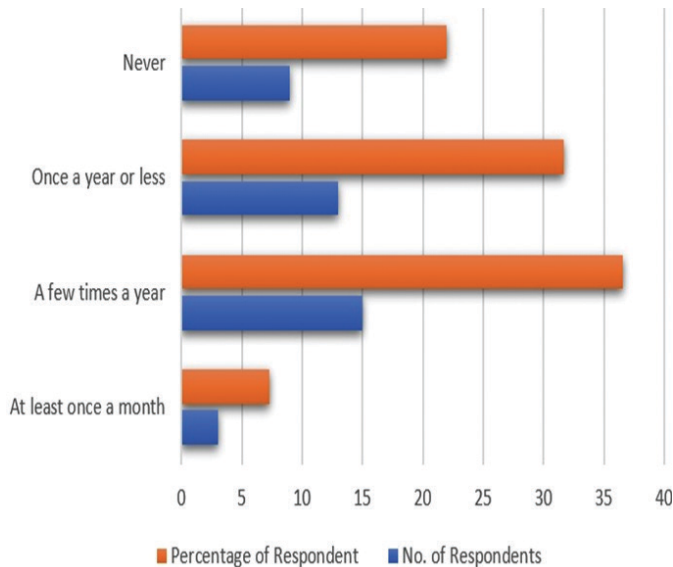


Figure 6. Empowerment workforce development.

4.5 Challenges Faced by Professionals in Advancing Careers in University

Figure 7 Women professionals believe that they face challenges in their careers in university libraries, with the majority of 27(65.86 %) in favor that they facing challenges, whereas, (21.95 %) believe they not having any hurdles in their job, and 5(12.19 %) are not wanted to comment on the statement. The figure states that the barriers to the career advancement of women library professionals they advance in their careers, women librarians frequently encounter a number of barriers. These include 13(54.2 %) Lack of training opportunities & work-life balance issues of the respondents, 12(50 %) of the respondents, gender bias, 9(37.5 %) limited leadership roles and 1(4.2 %) other of the given total respondents. Problems with work-life balance can make it difficult for people to take on demanding tasks or seek further education, especially for those who have caregiving duties.

4.6 Job Satisfaction of Women Library

Figure 8 shows the level of job satisfaction for women library professionals who are permanently based 36 (87.81 %) and contractually based 5 (12.19 %) working in the libraries.

The total outcome of respondents 41 out of 70 agreed 16 (39.02 %). The position provides many chances to apply qualities, skills, and experience & Obtaining influence from a profession, agree 15 (36.58 %) My current position provides sufficient possibilities for future growth agree, 14 (34.14 %) with Good satisfaction as a staff member & Friendly interactions with employees, agree 13 (31.70 %) Being happy and satisfied with a positive balance between personal and professional life, neutral 13 (31.70 %) Feeling satisfied with the progress of women in the field of library, agree 11 (26.82 %) I am comfortable with the work environment of library, and neutral 10 (24.39 %) I am satisfied with my current pay grade.

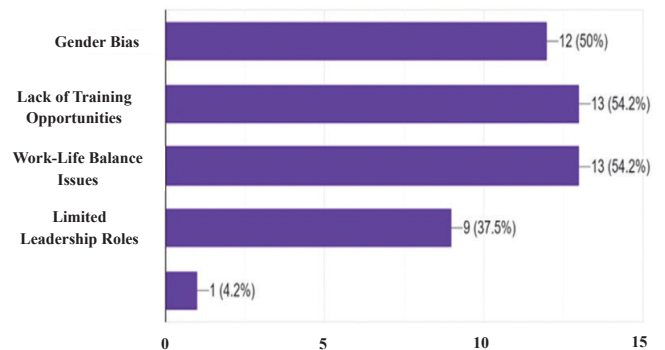


Figure 7. Faced challenges by professional.

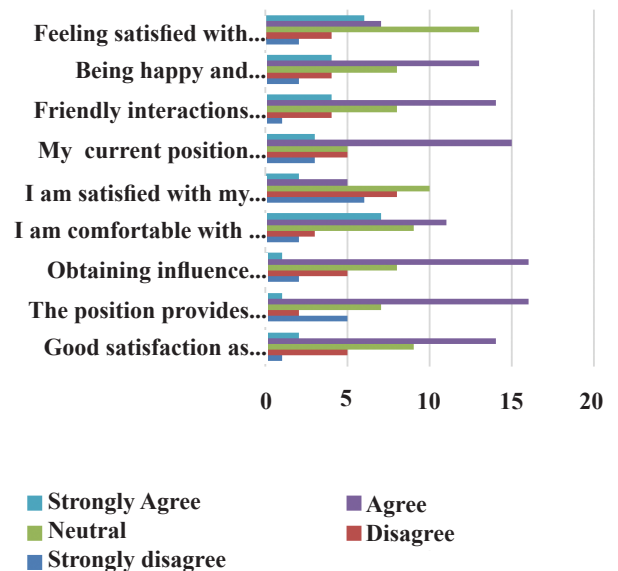


Figure 8. Job satisfaction of professionals.

4.7 Digital Tools and Technology Use by Professionals

Figure 9 highlights library professionals' proficiency and use of digital skills, of which 39 (95.12 %) believe that they have proficiency in utilising digital skills, whereas 2(4.88 %) do not. The figure also states the use by women professional digital tool and technology out of total respondents 18(58.1 %) Integrated library system & online research resources, The respondents using 12 (38.7 %) digital repositories, some respondents using 8(25.8 %) data analysis tools and rest of the respondents using 4 (12.3 %) other.

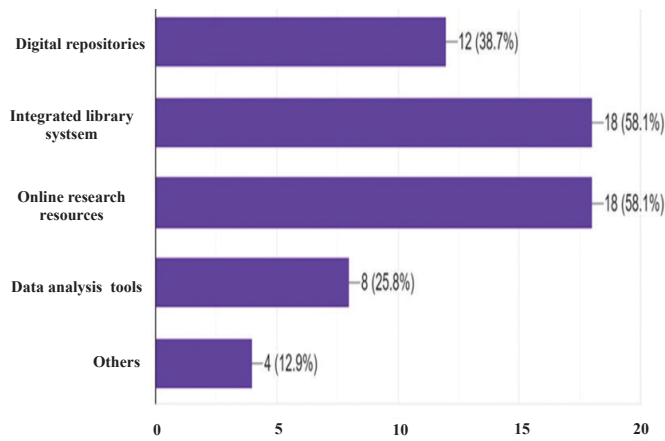


Figure 9. Using digital tools and technology.

4.8 Barriers to Utilising Digital Technology

Figure 10 shows that the barriers to adopting digital technology utilising most of respondents 13(41.9 %) minimal possibilities for training, 11(35.5 %) opposition to change, 9(29 %) lack of infrastructure or resources, and minimum respondents utilising 6(19.4 %) other.

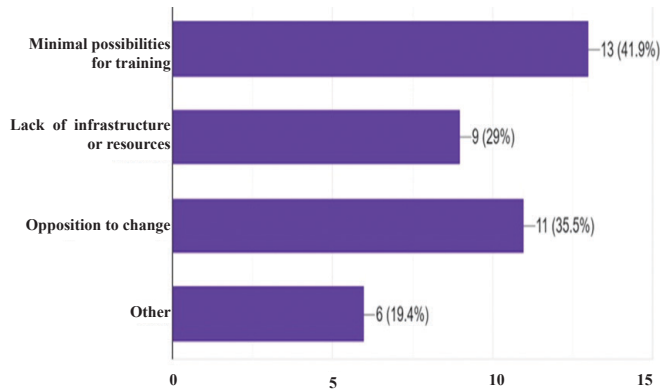


Figure 10. Barriers of digital technology.

4.9 Challenges in Career Advancement

Figure 11 shows the challenges of career advancement in LIS professionals; the outcomes of analysis more than respondents 21(67.7 %) had limited chances for career advancement or skill improvement, 13(41.9 %) were unable to obtain necessary data or resources, 8(25.8 %) inadequate communication or unclear team goals and the minimum respondents 3(9.7 %) burnout or a lack of drive in their career.

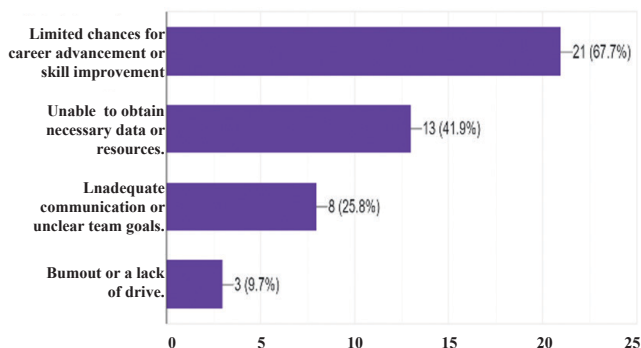


Figure 11. Challenges to career advancement.

4.10 Perception of Professionals Towards Development Opportunities

Figure 12 shows the portrait of organisations in terms of professional development opportunities in the LIS profession. The study noted that 13(32 %) says needs improvement, 9(22 %) satisfactory & above average, 7(17 %) outstanding, and 3(7 %) non-existent. An organisation's professional development possibilities for women library professionals. Higher-ranked organizations prioritise gender-inclusive policies and offer seminars for skill development or financial support for additional education.

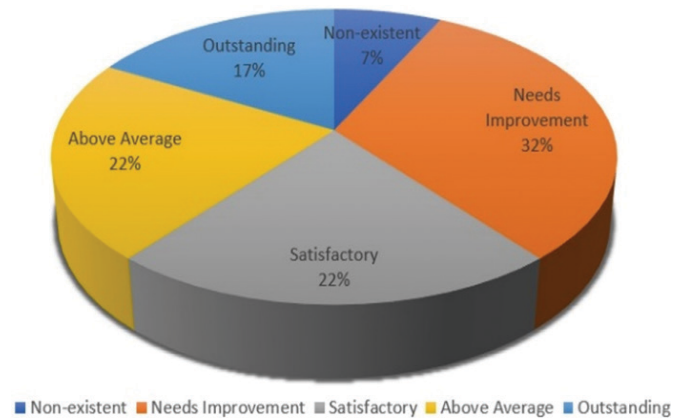


Figure 12. Rank organisation.

5. CONCLUSION

Empowering workforce development of women library professionals in university libraries, conducting the accessibility, dynamics, and efficiency of the digital era. Professions in information and library services have historically drawn women. In both small and large libraries and information services, more and more women are advancing to senior positions, especially in areas with equal opportunity laws. Due to their greater ease of entry, women eventually began to dominate the field of librarianship, which men previously dominated⁷. The present study suggested that workforces can help women library professionals prepare for promotions and new opportunities. Regular training programs and genuine platform where they can express their ideas and suggestions, provide them training and career building opportunities, giving more appropriate training for future progress, organize workshops on topics such as career planning, resume building, interview skills, and negotiation techniques.

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