

Engaging Youth Through Fiction: Insights on Genre and Format Preferences in the AIMS College Library

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines new trends in young adult fiction reading at the AIMS College Library, with particular attention to reading motives, genre choices, frequency of reading, and engagement with digital versus print mediums.

Design/methodology: The Google form survey method was employed and the link distributed to 500 students through whatsapp group and Gmail and also shared individually to ensure the more number of responses and out of 500, 290 responses were collected and analysed with tables and also data visualized using grapes and charts.

Findings; The most popular genres, according to the findings, are mystery/thriller (35%), romance (22%), and fantasy (18%). Stress alleviation (19%), personal development (22%), and language progress (34%), are important motivators. Though 25% prefer e-books and 10% utilize audio books, paper books continue to be the most popular medium (51%), despite growing digital availability. Notably, underutilization is seen in the fact that 55% of students never or never check out fiction novels from the library.

Critical research gaps identified in earlier literature are filled by this study, including the dearth of localized data on student fiction reading, the little examination of digital vs print fiction format preferences, and the scant attention paid to the influence of social media on reading choices. Additionally, it highlights the underrepresented topic of fiction involvement through academic libraries in previous research. The expansion of the fiction collection (digital and print), the creation of book clubs, and the promotion of reading culture on social media are among the suggestions.

KEYWORDS: Fiction reading trends, Young adult readers, Academic libraries, Genre preferences, Reading motivation, Print vs digital reading, Library usage, E-books, Audio books, Social media influence, Student reading habits, Reading culture, Mystery and romance fiction, College library engagement, Library collection development

INTRODUCTION

Reading, which has remained a fundamental ability since ancient times, is essential for both intellectual development and academic performance. Reading gives people access to instructional materials, improves their cognitive capacities, and advances their personal growth. Science demonstrates that reading fiction is a basic process that fosters people's capacities for creativity, analysis, empathy, and

creative ability. People may learn about human emotions, social interactions, and cultural intricacies across nations by reading fiction, which gives them unique access to a variety of worlds and people.

Since reading fiction is a leisure, stress reliever, and language development tool for young people, it has a significant influence on many aspects of their lives. While reading fiction helps people temporarily escape reality, it also improves their verbal and emotional intelligence. Reading fiction has a positive impact on readers' mental health by lowering stress and improving their ability to relax.

As technology advanced throughout the digital revolution, young adults' reading habits underwent substantial changes. Students' reading habits of fiction literature are impacted by technological developments in social media platforms, digital content delivery, and entertainment access. Because these mediums are still widely available, young readers today frequently supplement their book consumption with digital reading tools, audio books, e-books, and interactive storytelling platforms. Concerns over the reading habits of younger individuals are raised by the changes in reader preferences and reading habits.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIS STUDY ARE:

To explore both the frequency and the main reasons behind students reading fiction.

To study which genres and resources are most often found in fiction books?

To see which barriers exist for library users who want to read fiction books.

To create recommendations that can increase student involvement with reading at AIMS College Library.

With an eye on these areas, this research hopes to offer helpful ideas to academic libraries that will allow them to enrich their fiction collections and encourage students to read more.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative survey method to understand the fiction reading habits of student's community at AIMS College Library. A well structure questionnaire was created and the Google form questionnaire distributed to 500 students via whatsapp group and individual mail to ensure the highest number responses finally were received 290 responses, yielding a response rate of 58%. The sample consist 65% undergraduate students (n=189) and 35% postgraduate students (n = 101), including various academic years to ensure a comprehensive understanding of reading behaviours.

Both closed-ended and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire to explore multiple dimensions, including reading habits, motivations, genre preferences, library usage patterns, digital reading preferences, and the influence of social media. The questionnaire was administered online using Google Forms, facilitating greater accessibility and convenience, thereby enhancing participation rates. All responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality and reduce response bias.

In order to investigate multiple dimensions, including reading habits, motivations, genre preferences, and Google form questionnaire had both closed-ended and open ended questionnaire

The study utilized random sampling to select participants, which helps reduce selection bias and improves the generalizability of the findings within the college population. Given the sample size of 290 respondents out of a population of 500, the study calculated the sampling error to evaluate the reliability of the sample representation.

Using the standard formula for margin of error (E) at a 95% confidence level for proportions:

$$E = Z \times \sqrt{\frac{p(1-p)}{n}} \quad nE = Z \times \sqrt{p(1-p)} \quad E = Z \times np(1-p)$$

Where:

$Z=1.96$ $Z=1.96$ (Z-value for 95% confidence)

$p=0.5$ $p=0.5$ (assumed proportion for maximum variability)

$n=290$ $n=290$ (sample size)

Substituting values:

$E = 1.96 \times \sqrt{[(0.5)(1 - 0.5) / 290]}$

$E = 1.96 \times \sqrt{[0.25 / 290]}$

$E = 1.96 \times \sqrt{0.000862}$

$E = 1.96 \times 0.02937$

$E \approx 0.0576$ or 5.76%

Thus, the margin of error is approximately $\pm 5.74\%$, which is within an acceptable range for social science research, indicating that the sample sufficiently represents the population within this confidence interval.

Data analysis included descriptive statistics, such as frequency distributions, percentages, and graphical representations (tables, charts) to illustrate key patterns and trends. The inclusion of open-ended questions provided qualitative insights into students' attitudes and preferences, allowing a more nuanced understanding of reading motivations and library needs. This mixed quantitative and qualitative approach enabled a holistic assessment of students' fiction reading behaviours and preferences at AIMS College Library.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Reading habits significantly influence students' academic success and intellectual growth. Numerous studies have examined the multifaceted impact of reading on cognitive, emotional, and social development, highlighting the essential role of libraries and educational institutions in fostering a vibrant reading culture.

Kumara and Sampath Kumar (2019) conducted a comprehensive survey involving 2,463 postgraduate students, research scholars, and faculty members from universities across Karnataka. Their findings revealed that 69.1% of respondents preferred reading at home, while 57.7% engaged in daily reading. Newspapers and magazines emerged as the most frequently read materials (69.5%), followed by books (58.9%). Importantly, the study established a positive correlation between consistent reading habits and academic achievements. Regular readers demonstrated enhanced knowledge retention and superior academic performance. The authors emphasized that reading not only supports intellectual development but also fosters critical thinking, mental capacity, and lifelong learning skills. Consequently, they advocated for academic institutions and libraries to actively promote reading by facilitating access to diverse reading materials and encouraging literary engagement.

Cost (2014) explored the influence of fiction reading on a child's literacy development through a case study of a 10-year-old reader. The research underscored how engagement with fiction enhances language acquisition, comprehension skills, and creativity. Cost emphasized the role of narrative engagement in nurturing critical thinking and empathy, noting that fiction readers often exhibit stronger cognitive skills and a richer vocabulary compared to their non-fiction reading peers. The study recommended that educators and libraries prioritize fiction reading to boost reading fluency and comprehension among young learners.

Hollis and Estill (2021) examined the differential impact of fiction and nonfiction reading on students' critical thinking abilities. Their study found that fiction reading enhances empathy, imagination, and social cognition by allowing readers to experience diverse perspectives and emotions. In contrast, nonfiction reading was associated with improved analytical and factual reasoning skills. The authors suggested that academic curricula should balance fiction and nonfiction materials to promote comprehensive intellectual development.

Mar et al. (2006) investigated the relationship between fiction reading and social abilities, introducing the "fiction as simulation" theory. Their psychological study revealed that students who regularly read fiction displayed higher empathy, social awareness, and emotional intelligence. According to the theory, fiction allows readers to simulate real-life social interactions mentally, thereby improving their capacity to navigate complex social environments. This finding highlights the crucial role of fiction reading in the personal development of young adults.

The influence of digital platforms on reading habits was analyzed by Nielsen Book (2021), who focused on social media sites such as TikTok (BookTok), Instagram, and Goodreads. The report indicated that online book communities significantly affect young adults' fiction reading trends, with viral recommendations driving book selections. This trend has led to increased fiction sales, particularly in genres like young adult fiction, fantasy, and romance. Nielsen's findings illustrate how digital social engagement reshapes reading preferences, making it an important factor in literary consumption.

Brookbank et al. (2018) investigated academic libraries' role in supporting fiction reading among students. Their study found that many university libraries predominantly emphasize academic resources, often overlooking recreational fiction collections. However, libraries that introduced popular fiction sections observed a rise in student engagement. The researchers concluded that incorporating fiction in academic libraries helps reduce stress, stimulates creativity, and improves overall literacy.

Gallo (2007) studied the effect of mandatory academic readings on students' attitudes towards fiction. The research showed that required readings often diminish students' interest in leisure reading. Conversely, when students were permitted to choose their own fiction books, their enthusiasm for reading increased significantly. This underscores the importance of student autonomy in book selection to cultivate a lifelong reading habit.

Akanda et al. (2013) examined the impact of digital technology on university students' reading habits. Their findings revealed a preference for online articles and social media content over traditional print books, leading to a decline in fiction reading. Nevertheless, the emergence of e-books and audio books has sustained fiction engagement. The study recommends that academic institutions integrate digital fiction collections to accommodate evolving student preferences.

Vellaichamy and Jeyshankar (2014) highlighted the psychological benefits of fiction reading among university students. Their study demonstrated that fiction reduces stress, enhances concentration, and improves emotional intelligence. They emphasized that fiction provides an important escape from academic pressures, contributing to students' overall well-being.

DATA ANALYSIS

The division of the study represented the data collected from the students at AIMS college to understand their fiction reading habits, preferences, and challenges. The findings are organized into key thematic areas to provide a comprehensive view of user engagement with fiction books in the college library

TABLE-1: DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Category	Percentage	Number of Respondents
Male	40%	116
Female	60%	174
Course Of Study	Percentage	Number Of Respondent
Undergraduate	65%	189
Postgraduate	35%	101
Year of Study	Percentage	Number of respondent
1st Year	22%	64
2nd Year	34%	99
3rd Year	44%	127

The demographic analysis in the tables explores the distribution of survey respondents by gender, course of study, and academic year. This helps understand the background of students who engage with fiction reading.

The survey results indicate that 60% of respondents were female (n=174), while 40% were male (n=116). This suggests that female students have a stronger presence in fiction reading engagement at AIMS College Library.

The majority of respondents were undergraduate students (65%, n=189), while postgraduate students comprised 35% (n=101). The distribution of respondents across academic years shows that 1st-year students accounted for 22% (n=64), 2nd-year students 34% (n=99), and 3rd-year students 44% (n=127). This indicates that fiction reading interest tends to increase as students progress in their academic journey.

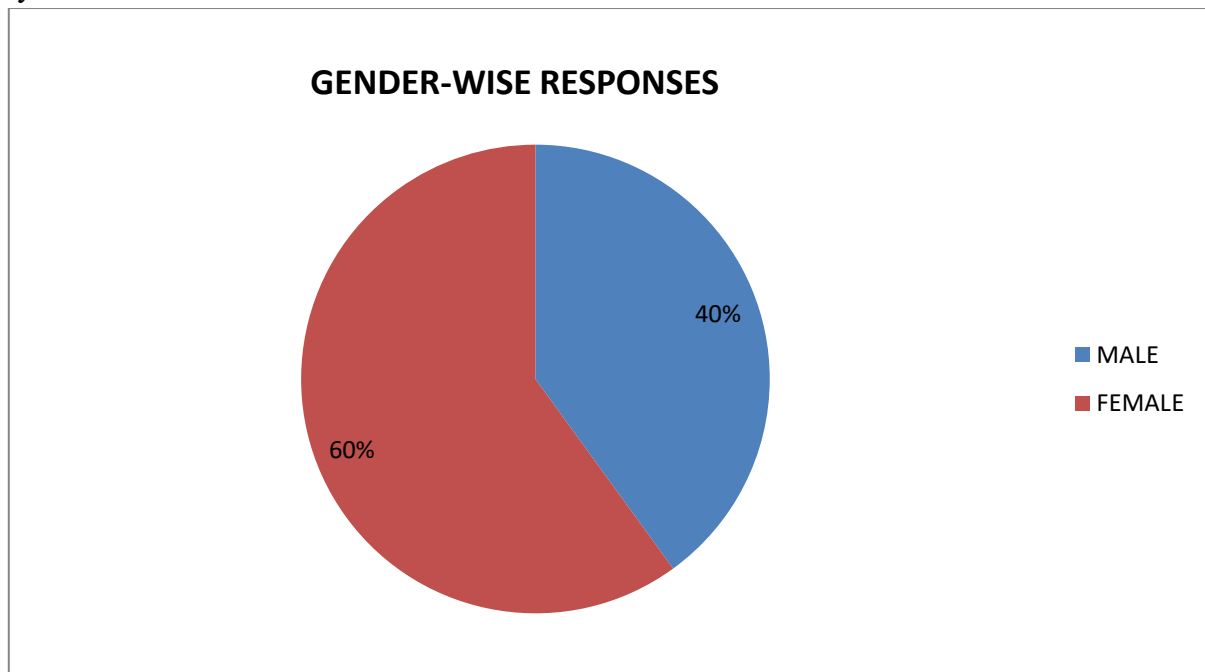
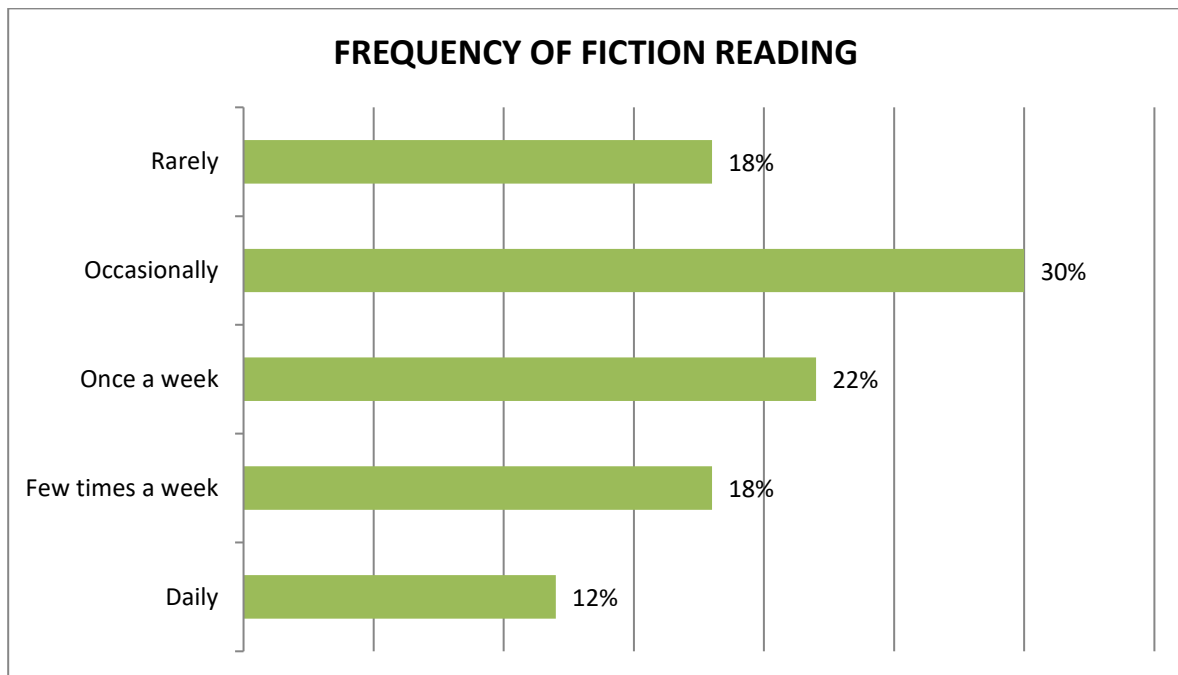


TABLE-2: FREQUENCY OF FICTION READING

FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Daily	12%	35
Few times a week	18%	52
Once a week	22%	64
Occasionally	30%	87
Rarely	18%	52

This analysis explores how frequently students prefer the fiction reading.

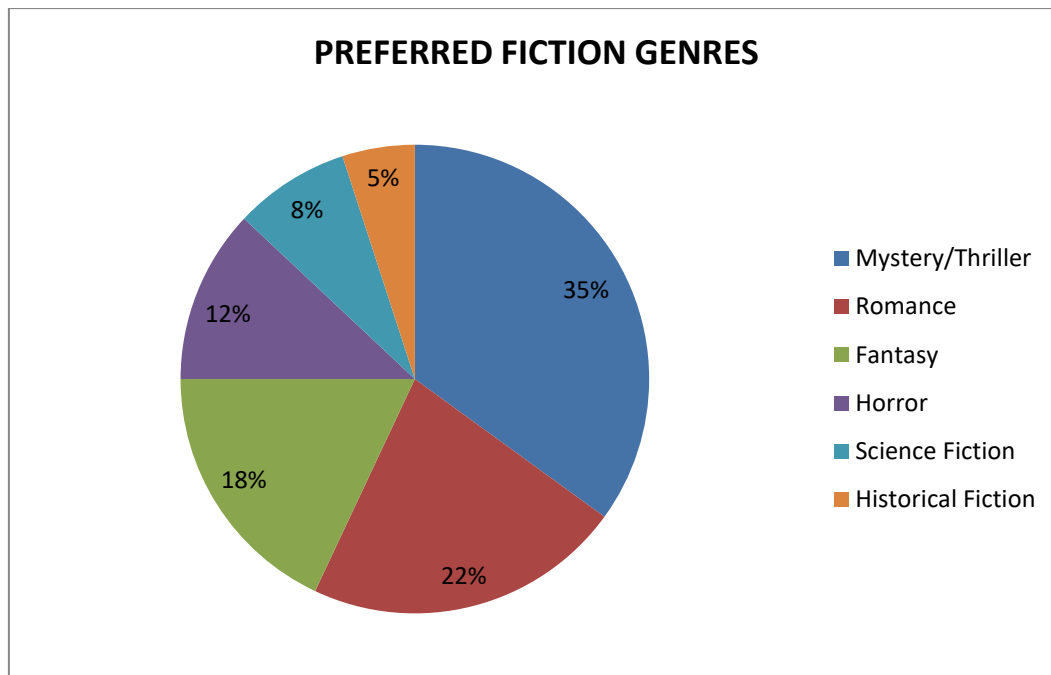


The frequency of fiction reading varies among students. The results show that only 12% (n=35) read fiction daily, while 18% (n=52) read a few times a week. The largest group of respondents, 30% (n=87), read occasionally, and 18% (n=52) rarely engage in fiction reading. This highlights a significant gap in habitual reading, suggesting a need for initiatives to encourage more frequent engagement with fiction.

TABLE-3: PREFERRED FICTION GENRES

GENRE	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Mystery/Thriller	35%	102
Romance	22%	64
Fantasy	18%	52
Horror	12%	35
Science Fiction	8%	23
Historical Fiction	5%	14

Understanding preferred genres helps in library acquisitions policy to ensure best utilization of resources.



Mystery/Thriller is the most popular genre, followed by Romance and Fantasy. The high engagement with suspenseful and romantic literature suggests a preference for immersive and engaging storytelling. Horror and science fiction have niche audiences, indicating varied reading interests among students.

TABLE-4: FORMAT PREFERENCES OF READERS

FORMAT PREFERENCE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Print Books (Physical Copies)	147	50.7%
E-books (Kindle, PDF, Apps)	74	25.5%
Audiobooks	30	10.3%
No Preference	38	13.1%
Videos	1	0.3%

A majority of readers (50.7%) still preferred the physical books, exploring the strong attachment and reading comforts of traditional method and e books/ digital methods are second top preference indicating that benefits of availability and easy access of digital materials. A small segment prefers audio books, likely for multitasking or passive listening. 13.1% of respondents claim no specific preference for reading, showing openness to various formats. Video format reading showing least preferred in this group.

TABLE - 5: MOTIVATION FOR READING FICTION BOOKS

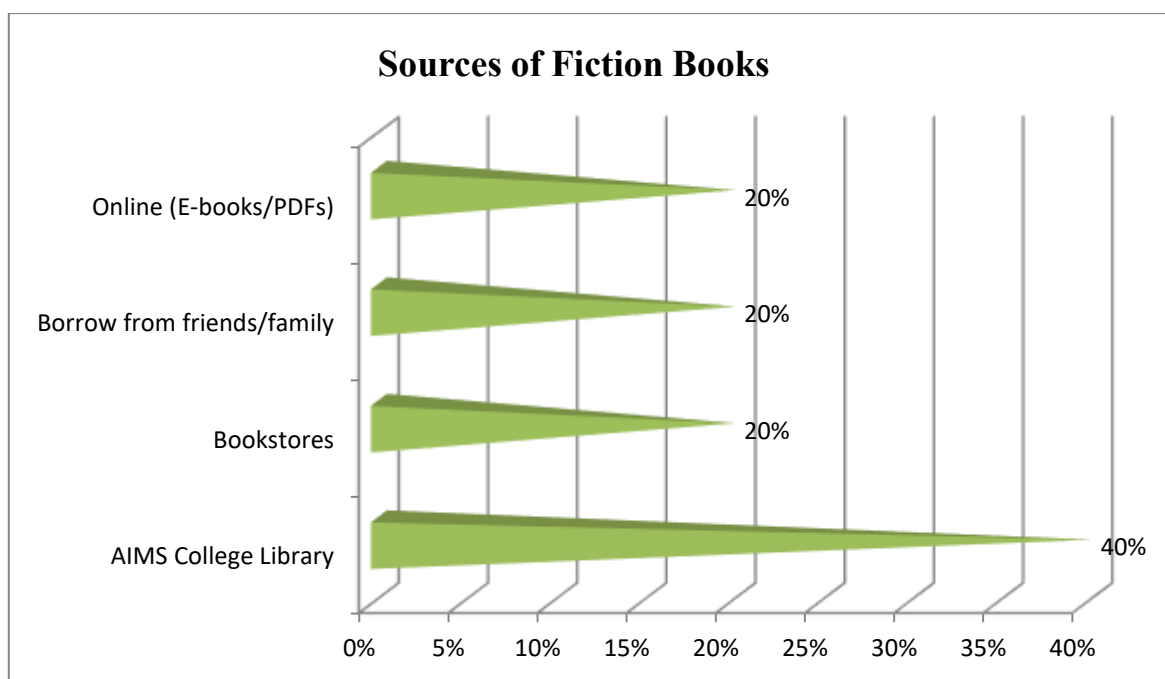
MOTIVATION	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Improving language and vocabulary	100	34.5%
Personal growth	65	22.4%
Stress relief	55	18.9%
Academic purposes	35	12.1%
Pleasure reading	25	8.6%

Entertainment	10	3.4%
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34.5% of respondent selected language and vocabulary development as motivation for fiction reading showing that fiction reading role in educational and communication enrichment. 22.4% choose personal growth and 19% stress relief indicating that fiction also serves emotional and psychological well-being. Academic purposes 12.1% highlights fiction integration in academic learning. A smaller portion reads purely for pleasure (8.6%) or entertainment (3.4%) showing that many readers value purposeful engagement over leisure alone

TABLE – 6 SOURCES OF FICTION BOOKS

Source	Percentage	Number of Respondents
AIMS College Library	40%	116
Bookstores	20%	58
Borrow from friends/family	20%	58
Online (E-books/PDFs)	20%	58

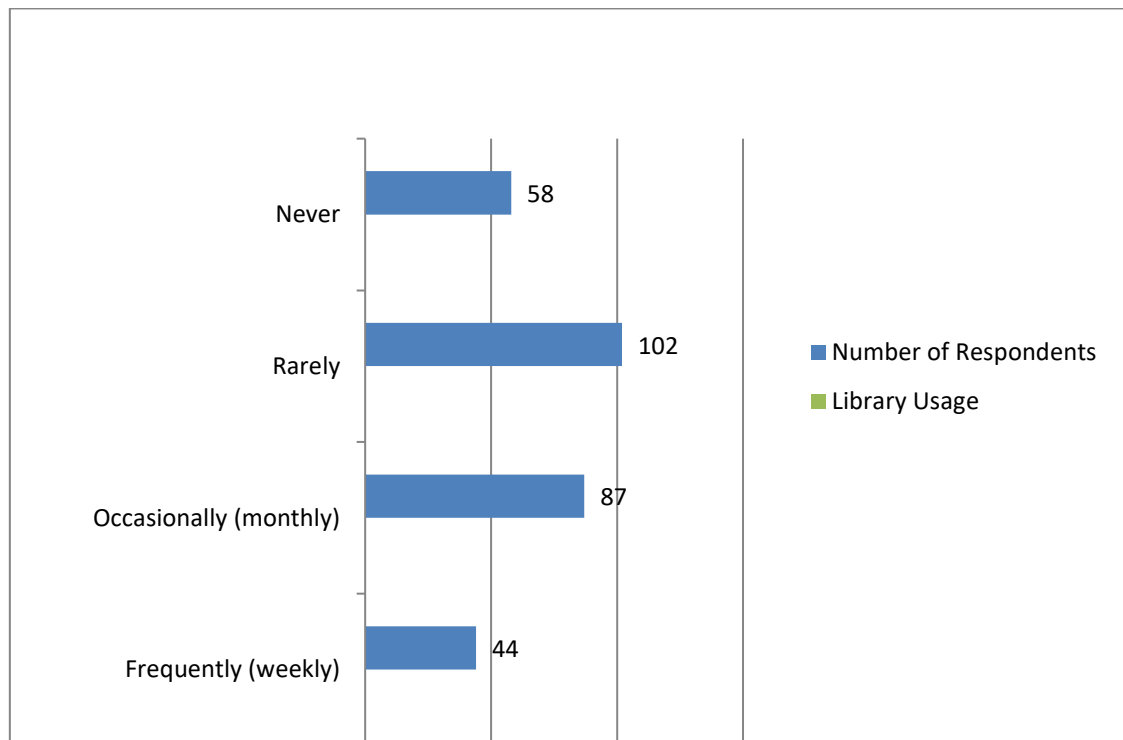


The library remains the most common source of fiction books, but students are increasingly utilizing bookstores and digital formats. This highlights the importance of expanding the library's digital collection to meet student preferences.

TABLE – 7 LIBRARY USAGES FOR FICTION BOOKS

FREQUENCY OF LIBRARY USAGE	PERCENTAGE	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS
Frequently (weekly)	15%	44
Occasionally (monthly)	30%	87
Rarely	35%	102
Never	20%	58

LIBRARY USAGES FOR FICTION BOOKS



A significant portion of students (55% combining rarely and never categories) do not frequently borrow fiction books from the library. This suggests potential issues such as limited book availability, lack of awareness, or preference for other reading sources. Increasing promotional activities and diversifying the fiction collection may encourage more students to use library resources.

TABLE – 8 CHALLENGES FACED IN USING THE LIBRARY

CHALLENGE FACED	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
Limited collection	97	33.4%
Lack of latest releases	49	16.9%
Books are always issued to someone else	22	7.6%
Difficult to find fiction books	60	20.7%
Other	62	21.4%

Major challenge visible here is the limited collection (33.4%), thereby its suggest the need for improved acquisition policies. And second major problem is difficulty in finding fiction books (20.7%) in library vast collection and lack of latest release (16.9%) highlight a gap in contemporary and categorized resources. Also other category (21.4%) likely include issues such as lack of awareness, inconvenient timing, or infrastructure problems. Some users (7.6%) report that popular or required books are already issued so its shows adding more number of copies in collection.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive research offers valuable insights into the fiction reading habits of students at AIMS College, shedding light on the evolving role of academic libraries in nurturing a reading culture. It explores how the presence and accessibility of a well-curate fiction collection within the academic

library significantly influence students' engagement with reading. The findings emphasize that, despite the rapid rise of AI technologies and digital reading platforms, physical books continue to hold a prominent place among students. This enduring preference highlights the tangible value of print materials in fostering deep reading experiences and meaningful connections with literature.

The study also reveals that key motivations for fiction reading are strongly tied to personal development, such as improving language skills, gaining new perspectives, and managing academic or personal stress. These intrinsic motivators underscore the potential of fiction as a tool for both educational and emotional growth. However, the research identifies a concerning trend of underutilization of library resources, with more than half of the students rarely or never borrowing fiction books. This gap is attributed to various barriers, including a limited and outdated fiction collection, lack of awareness about available resources, and insufficient promotion of library services related to recreational reading.

To address these challenges, the study suggests that academic libraries need to adopt proactive strategies—such as expanding and updating their fiction collections (in both print and digital formats), organizing reading clubs, conducting regular awareness campaigns, and leveraging social media to engage students. By doing so, libraries can transform into vibrant reading hubs that not only support academic pursuits but also nurture a lifelong love for reading among students.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Expand the fiction collection with diverse and contemporary titles.

Promote reading initiatives such as book clubs, storytelling sessions, and reading challenges.

Enhance visibility of fiction resources through signage, social media, and library orientation sessions.

Improve accessibility by offering better categorization, digital lending platforms, and multiple copies of popular books.

By addressing these areas, the AIMS College Library can foster a more vibrant reading culture and enhance its role in student development.

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