

Contribution of Government recognised Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Libraries to improve Users' Engagement practices in Aizawl City, Mizoram: A Study

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Abstract

The present paper discussed about the user engagement practices by the government recognised Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) libraries of Aizawl city. It is a survey-based research and questionnaire method was used and distributed among 105 NGO libraries and 94 were responded. The findings of the study discovered that the majority of them lack a librarian, rarely conduct feedback surveys and do not provide staff training for user interaction. Among the various ways users have contributed to the enhancement of library services, orientation programs rank top among the categories. The study suggests that all the libraries should receive consistent funding, recruit professional librarians or library staff and more training sessions and conclude that there needs to be more development in different aspects for more engaged users.

Keywords – *User engagement, community engagement, User engagement practices, public library, Non-Governmental Organization libraries*

1. Introduction

The emotional, cognitive, and behavioural bond that exists between users and resources and shapes how they respond to services is known as user engagement. Since increased interaction denotes higher product value, it is correlated with profitability. Because library patrons are precious resources, information providers should do more than just display content; they should also offer engaging experiences. When there is no user involvement in a choice environment, no resources are used and no information is transmitted, which makes people look for alternatives. Despite the existence of libraries, there have been significant changes in the way people look for information over time. The people who work in these libraries are essential to setting

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a clear goal for increasing patronage. Resources may occasionally be limited, but it is crucial to investigate ways to maximize the use of the resources that are already accessible. To keep patrons, library staff must quickly prove the value of the service.

2. Public Libraries in Mizoram: An Overview

Public libraries are social entities that provide free information access to the general public in India. The public library gives individuals access to a wide range of knowledge, opinions, and ideas, which greatly aids in the development and maintenance of a democracy. Aizawl is the capital of the state of Mizoram, which is situated in northeastern India. On January 6, 1993, the Mizoram Public Libraries Bill was approved. The Government of Mizoram has not yet been able to put the Mizoram Public Libraries Act, 1993 into effect due to a lack of funding and other problems.

In Mizoram, public libraries are divided into three categories: state, district, and village. State and district libraries are run by the state government, while village libraries are run by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). The present study focusses on the village libraries under which 512 NGO libraries have been recognized under the state government in Mizoram and among these NGO libraries an association known as Young Mizo Association (YMA) runs majority of the library till date. In the Aizawl City, there are 105 NGO libraries which have been selected for the study.

3. Review of Literature

AV & Mahjeet (2025) evaluated the communities' involvement in the community engagement program and services provided by Kannur, Kerala's public libraries among the various reader groups, including the Balavedhi, Yuvajanavedhi, Vanithavedhi, and Vayojanavedhi communities. Data was gathered from library patrons using a well-designed questionnaire and from librarians through interviews. To compare the difficulties encountered by users in various community groups, the Chi-Square test was used. The study found out that the majority of patrons utilize the community services offered by public libraries and suggest that they also need extra services like free Wi-Fi, access to ICT, and more e-governance tools.

Bhanu & Dhanyasree (2025) concentrate on the civic engagement programs implemented by the State Library Council in Kerala, India whether modern public libraries and how these establishments support community participation. In Kerala, the council has established a number of community forums that target particular groups of people who participate in the library's programming according to their needs. By distributing questionnaire to 111 public librarians, librarian interviews and in-person

library observations were conducted. The results demonstrate that when village libraries create and manage community forums that meet the various requirements of their customers, they play a significant role in planning civic engagement programs.

Haider et.al. (2025) identify how users perceive digital technology and the behaviours that go along with it by combining the technological acceptance model, digital engagement, and service value in Pakistan public libraries. Users of public libraries in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province made up the study sample, which was selected using a cross-sectional survey technique. In order to test the suggested hypotheses, the confirmatory factor analysis of the gathered data was conducted using Smart PLS-4. The results demonstrated how crucial personnel civility, resource accessibility and availability, and collection quality are in determining service value.

Mutuma et. al. (2024) investigated the difficulties in attracting users to the libraries of Kenya Methodist University and Meru University. The results of a descriptive study revealed that public catalogues and online databases were used effectively, but that e-journals and institutional repositories presented challenges because of their poor digital quality and usability. According to the study's findings, user engagement necessitates enhancements to digital platforms' eminence and serviceability.

Sharma (2024) examined library programs, looked into user motivations, and offered evidence-based tactics to increase user involvement. By meeting user needs and fostering a thriving community around them, it seeks to prepare libraries to thrive in the digital age and continue to be significant hubs for connection, education, and discovery. The study's findings provide valuable information that libraries may use to develop friendly environments, take use of contemporary abilities, and adapt to changing user behaviours.

Lee (2023) investigates how public libraries may support sustainability and community resilience in times of crisis. The study creates a strong link between libraries and community resilience by means of a thorough literature review and a case study of Taiwan's Kaohsiung Public Library. The report promotes a comprehensive strategy to address community needs during crises and highlights the significance of public libraries as agents of community resilience.

T. A. et. al. (2023) searched the literature thoroughly by dividing it into different titles, conclusions, and important takeaways. The results show that integrating social media into libraries improves user engagement and has advantages. However, it was determined that the absence of policies, a lack of skilled staff, and financial limitations were the main obstacles to a successful integration. Based on these results, a conceptual framework for effectively integrating social media into libraries is put forth. It consists of four steps: study, adoption, implementation, and interaction.

These steps include determining the goals of the library, evaluating its resources, creating and implementing policies, establishing a social media strategy, and assessing its performance in order to improve user engagement.

4. Objectives

The objectives of the study are to:

- i) Understand the present usage of NGO libraries and the services they provide.
- ii) Analyse the ways in which the NGO libraries being studied engage the users.
- iii) Recognize challenges NGO libraries face and offer solutions to improve user engagement.

5. Research Methodology

A semi-structured questionnaire was used to collect data from respondents for this survey-based research. Every NGO Library in Aizawl City, Mizoram, has received a questionnaire. 94 (89.52%) of the 105 questionnaires that were distributed were answered, and the data was analysed using Microsoft Excel.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

- a) Library administration of NGO Libraries in Aizawl City

Sl. No.	Category	No. of Response (N=94)	Percentage
1	Librarian	14	14.89%
2	Library Sub-committee	76	80.85%
3	Others	4	4.26%

Table. 1 indicates that majority of the libraries i.e., 76 (80.85%) are administered by the YMA Library Sub-Committee members. This is mostly because it is considered as a voluntary work and the person on duty is detailed among the library committee members either week/month wise. 14 (14.89%) libraries have a Librarian while 4 (4.26%) libraries are run by different methods. It is clear that there is a need of proper librarian for the development of library administration.

b) Source of Finance

Table 2. Source of Finance

Sl. No.	Financial Source	No. of Response (N=94)	% within category
1	Branch YMA/Parent Organization	46	48.94%
2	Membership Fee	59	62.76%
3	Govt. Funding	3	3.19%
4	RRRLF Funding	39	41.49%
5	MP/MLA Fund	6	6.38%
6	Any other Source	0	0.00%

Table. 2 indicates that Branch YMA/parent Organization allocates funds to 46 (48.94%) libraries. Membership registration fee is collected by 59 (62.76%) libraries, Government funding is received by 3 (3.19%), RRRLF funding by 39 (41.49%) libraries and MP/MLA Fund is received by 6 (6.38%) libraries. It can be summed up that funding from Branch YMA/Parent Organization and more funding from RRRLF is a need of the hour for proper functioning and maintenance of the libraries.

c) Number of times library opens in a week

Table 3. No. of times library opens in a week

Sl. No.	No. of times	No. of Response (N=94)	Percentage
1	Once in a week	54	57.45%
2	Twice in a week	24	25.53%
3	Thrice a week	7	7.45%
4	Four times a week	2	2.13%
5	Five times a week	3	3.19%
6	Daily	0	0%
7	No Response	4	4.25%

From the Table. 3, it can be seen that 54 (57.45%) of the libraries remain opened once a week, 24 (25.53%) libraries are opened twice in a week. Moreover, 7 (7.45%) libraries are opened thrice a week, 2 (2.13%) are opened four times a week and 3 (3.19%) are opened five times a week. There is no response from 4 (4.25%) libraries. This analysis implies that libraries are opened very few within a week.

d) Library Automation

Table 4. Library automation

Sl. No.	Library automation	No. of Response (N=94)	Percentage
1	Fully Automated	4	4.25%
2	Partially Automated	10	10.64%
3	Not Automated	80	85.11%

The above table shows that only 4 (4.25%) are fully automated and 10 (10.64%) libraries are partially automated. The fact that the majority of the libraries 80 (85.11%) have not begun automation is regrettable.

e) Library services provided

Table 5. Library services provided

Sl. No.	Type of Library service	No. of Response (N=94)	% within category
1	Circulation	94	100.00%
2	Cataloguing	3	3.19%
3	Reading	36	38.30%
4	Reference	16	17.02%
5	Others	1	1.06%

It was observed after data analysis that every library offers circulation services. Reading service is provided by 36 (38.30%), 16 (17.02%) libraries offer reference services, and 3 (3.19%) libraries offer cataloguing services. Among the other type of library service provided the YMA library in Bethlehem offers documentation service which is 1.06%. It is clear that the libraries need to put more effort for improvement of the library services to engage users.

f) Use of social media for library user engagement

Table 6. Types of social media used

Sl. No.	Types of social media	No. of Response (N=94)	% within category
1	Facebook	42	44.68%
2	Instagram	8	8.51%
3	Whatsapp	67	71.28%
4	Any other	19	20.21%

From the Table 6, it can be seen that Whatsapp is used by majority i.e., 67 (71.28%), 42 (44.68%) of the libraries used Facebook, 8 (8.51%) libraries used Instagram. Other type of social media is used by 19 (20.21%) libraries.

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g) Activities or extension programme performed for user engagement

Table 7. Activities/extension programme performed

Sl. No.	Category	No. of Response (N=94)	Percentage
1	Yes	41	43.62%
2	No	53	56.38%

The above table shows that 41 (43.62%) libraries have performed activities/extension programme while 53 (56.38%) libraries do not have any activity for user engagement.

h) User Engagement training programme for library staff

Table 8. User Engagement training programme for library staff

Sl. No.	Category	No. of Response (N=94)	Percentage
1	Yes	18	19.15%
2	No	76	80.85%

Table 8 makes it evident that only few libraries 18 (19.15%) have training programme for library staff while majority of the libraries 76 (80.85%) do not have at all.

i) How users are engaged in improving the library services

Table 9. Different ways users are engaged in improving the library services

Sl. No.	Category	No. of Response (N=94)	% within category
1	Orientation Programme	24	25.53%
2	Organizing Book Exhibition	5	5.32%
3	Essay and Quiz competition	2	2.13%
4	Best Volunteer Award	2	2.13%
5	Raising funds from different sources	7	7.45%
6	Best Library User Award	4	4.25%
7	Feedback Survey	6	6.38%

The above table shows that 24 (25.53%) have conducted Orientation Programme, raising funds from different sources is done by 7 (7.45%) libraries and feedback survey is done by 6 (6.38%). Book Exhibition has been organized by 5 (5.32%) libraries and Best Library User Award is done by 4 (4.25%) libraries. Essay and Quiz competition and Best Volunteer Award by 2 (2.13%) libraries respectively.

j) Problems: NGO libraries confront a number of issues, including low funding, poor facilities and equipment, limited internet and technology access, outdated and insufficient library resources, staff training requirements, and a shortage of qualified librarians and staff.

7. Findings

Most libraries do not have a librarian, and the majority are run by a volunteer organization called the Library Sub-committee. Memberships and the majority of library services are self-funded. Although a large number of libraries receive funding from RRRLF, others do not, and they use funds from the parent organization or branch YMA as the initial balance of their accounts. The automation rate is rather low, and most libraries are only open once a week. All of the NGO libraries provide the circulation service, however the low reading service indicates that patrons are not physically visiting the libraries. More than half of the libraries utilize WhatsApp for engagement activities, making it a popular social media platform for user contact. But most libraries do not teach their employees to engage with patrons. Orientation sessions are the most popular way for patrons to get involved in enhancing library services. One major obstacle to user involvement is that most libraries hardly ever perform feedback questionnaires.

8. Suggestions & Conclusion

Based on the findings it is suggested that the state government should take steps to boost state contributions to the RRRLF matching scheme so that more libraries can benefit from it, and libraries should be regularly collecting monthly library cess from the local community for more funding. To guarantee at least one regular employee in every library and to improve administration and service, all NGO libraries should hire professional librarians or library workers at a fair salary. The frequency of training sessions for library staff and committee members should be increased.

The tactics, events, and services intended to include users in the library's programs, services, and decision-making procedures are referred to as user engagement practices in public libraries. Establishing a user-centred setting that fosters a feeling of community, encourages literacy, and supports lifelong learning is the aim. Aizawl City's NGO libraries are recognised under government each year, yet library users appear to be declining, indicating the need for more user-engagement initiatives. According to the general assessment, there is still much space for the NGO libraries in Aizawl City to develop and get better. Users of the libraries will become more interested and involved than previously if more engaging programs like book exhibitions and best library user awards are carried out more by each NGO library.

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