

Perception and Use of Library Resources Among Undergraduate English Majors Students

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Abstract: This study investigated the perceptions and utilization of library resources among undergraduate English major students at Kabul University's English Department. Academic libraries play a critical role in supporting higher education; however, little is known about how students in under-resourced university settings perceive and engage with these services. The study employed a quantitative survey design to address this research gap, collecting data from 159 students using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used to analyze patterns in students' experiences. The results revealed that while many students valued the library's range of resources and its contribution to academic success, substantial challenges existed. Students reported difficulties accessing digital and print materials, indicating problems with organization, usability, and availability problems. Although the perceived quality of resources was moderate, many expressed concerns about outdated collections and limited relevance to current coursework. Additionally, the study found that library services had a positive impact on research and writing skills. However, this impact was constrained by insufficient user training, limited staff support for digital tools, and underdeveloped online services. Students appreciated the physical facilities and support from staff but also emphasized the need for more responsive services. Recommendations included improving digital infrastructure, updating materials, and expanding information literacy training.

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INTRODUCTION

Libraries are vital pillars of higher education, playing a transformative role in students' academic, intellectual, and personal development. As centers for learning, research, and knowledge dissemination, libraries contribute significantly to the academic success of Kabul University students by offering curated access to scholarly materials, research support services, and opportunities for independent inquiry (Lance & Schwarz, 2012). Through their

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extensive resources and services, libraries foster information literacy, enhance critical thinking, and cultivate skills necessary for navigating complex academic landscapes (Hafsyah et al., 2023).

In modern academic settings, libraries have evolved beyond book repositories to an interactive and dynamic learning environment. Studies have repeatedly affirmed the positive relationship between student use of library resources and academic performance (Noori, 2024; Sami, 2020; and Scott, 2019). Students who actively engage with library services tend to exhibit improved academic outcomes, including more substantial research and writing skills, better comprehension of subject matter, and deeper engagement with course content (Haddow & Joseph, 2010; De Groot & Scoulas, 2022). Information literacy, a skill often developed through guided library tools, has been identified as a key competency for academic and lifelong success, enabling students to critically evaluate sources, synthesize information, and produce original academic work (Oakleaf, 2014).

The library's role has become particularly significant in fields such as the English language and literature. Students in English programs are expected to engage deeply with texts, conduct interpretive and analytical research, and navigate a wide range of literary genres, critical theories, and linguistic frameworks. Libraries support this endeavor by offering access to primary and secondary sources, including literary texts, linguistic studies, scholarly articles, and digital databases. Moreover, the library environment serves as a space where English majors can cultivate essential academic habits such as independent reading, annotation, scholarly writing, and critical engagement with literature (Julien et al., 2018).

Similarly, at Kabul University, the central library is designed to function as a key academic resource, especially for students in departments like English, where research- and reading-intensive curricula require consistent access to diverse materials. Despite this, faculty members and academic observers have noted a persistent underutilization of the library by English Department students (Noori, 2024). This underuse is particularly concerning, given the importance of library engagement in supporting student learning and the development of subject-specific competencies. Evidence and preliminary observations suggest that several barriers may contribute to this trend, including logistical challenges, lack of awareness, perceived irrelevance of resources, library anxiety, or inadequate support in navigating library systems (Hossain & Islam, 2019).

Research on library usage patterns indicates that student engagement is heavily influenced by the accessibility, organization, and perceived quality of library services. When students perceive that the library's holdings are outdated, poorly maintained, or irrelevant to their academic needs, they are less likely to integrate library use into their learning routines (Ekere & Omekwu, 2021). Furthermore, usability challenges—such as limited digital access, inefficient catalog systems, and lack of staff support—can create psychological and practical barriers to effective use. These factors reduce the frequency of library visits and diminish students' motivation to rely on library resources for academic tasks such as essay writing, project development, or exam preparation (Anjaline & Priskillal, 2020).

A particularly salient challenge lies in the realm of information literacy. Many students may be unfamiliar with navigating online databases, identifying peer-reviewed sources, or distinguishing between academic and non-academic content (Berzonsky & Richardson, 2008; Weber et al., 2018). Without targeted training or orientation, students may feel overwhelmed or confused by the library's structure, leading to avoidance or disinterest. This issue is especially relevant in the Afghan higher education context, where infrastructure and financial limitations have historically constrained access to quality academic resources (Noori, 2024).

In addition to structural and informational challenges, student perceptions of the library's value also play a critical role in determining engagement. Some students may view the library as outdated or irrelevant in an era dominated by the internet and digital search engines. Others may lack awareness of the full range of services available, including research consultations, interlibrary loans, or access to scholarly databases. Negative perceptions may be shaped by previous unsatisfactory experiences, inadequate support from staff, or a lack of integration of library resources into classroom instruction (Kim & Yang, 2016). These unaddressed perceptions can lead to long-term disengagement and missed educational opportunities.

The implications of low library usage are particularly significant for English Department students, whose academic development depends on frequent engagement with diverse texts and scholarly commentary. The absence of sustained library use may hinder students' ability to conduct meaningful research, critically analyze texts, or build well-supported arguments in their academic writing. It may also limit their exposure to canonical works, interdisciplinary perspectives, and global literature, which are crucial for developing a comprehensive understanding of English studies (Fister, 2015). Moreover, students who do not utilize library services may struggle with independent learning, a core expectation at the university level. Without adequate engagement, students may not fully realize the academic support libraries are designed to offer—impacting their academic confidence, grades, and overall satisfaction with the learning environment.

Additionally, the study explores how students' use of library services translates into perceived academic benefits, such as improved writing skills, a deeper understanding of course material, and greater confidence in independent learning. Student satisfaction and long-term engagement with library services are also assessed to provide a holistic view of library effectiveness.

Understanding the factors that shape students' library usage behavior is necessary to address these concerns. This includes exploring their perceptions, attitudes, experiences, and challenges related to library engagement. By identifying the root causes of underutilization, stakeholders can design more responsive, student-centered services that align with learners' needs and academic goals (Chu & Du, 2013). Such improvements could involve revising the library's cataloging system, expanding digital access, updating collections, or providing workshops on research skills and database navigation.

This study is situated within this broader effort to optimize library services and promote equitable access to academic resources. Its primary aim is to investigate the perceptions and barriers that influence English Department students' utilization of library resources at Kabul University. By analyzing how students view the accessibility, quality, and relevance of library holdings, the research seeks to uncover the underlying dynamics that either facilitate or hinder engagement. The study also explores how students perceive the academic impact of library use and their overall satisfaction with library services.

The following research questions guide the investigation:

1. To what extent do English Department students perceive library resources as accessible, available, and easy to use in print and digital formats?
2. To what extent do students perceive the library's academic resources as current, reliable, comprehensive, and aligned with their coursework and academic needs?
3. To what extent do English Department students utilize library resources for academic purposes, and how does this utilization correlate with their academic performance and satisfaction?

The findings are expected to inform policy recommendations for enhancing the role of the university library in supporting English Department students. Furthermore, the implications of this study extend beyond Kabul University. Many higher education institutions in similar contexts face comparable challenges regarding resource access, information literacy, and student engagement. The research contributes to the broader discourse on academic equity, resource utilization, and student-centered learning in developing educational systems by shedding light on these issues.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study employed a quantitative descriptive survey design, using a structured questionnaire to collect data for statistical analysis of patterns and relationships. This approach ensures objectivity and supports the generalizability of findings within the study context (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Babbie, 2020).

For this study, "utilization" refers to how frequently students access the library, the duration of their visits, and the types of resources they use, including digital databases, print materials, study spaces, and support services. "Perception" encompasses students' evaluations of the accessibility, availability, quality, and relevance of library resources and their experiences with staff assistance, ease of use, and overall satisfaction. These dimensions were operationalized through Likert-scale items, following established practices in academic library research (Hossain & Islam, 2019).

Population and Sampling

The target population includes all 231 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Department at Kabul University, encompassing first-year to fourth-year students. A sample

size of 144 subjects is required for a population of 231 subjects adjusted for a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error, ensuring sufficient statistical power (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). To account for potential non-responses, questionnaires were distributed to 163 students. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to achieve representativeness, with strata based on academic year to account for library use variations across different study stages. This method ensures that the sample reflects the diversity of the population, capturing potential differences in resource needs and familiarity with library services (Fowler, 2014; Saunders, 2015).

Data Collection

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed in person during class sessions over four weeks to maximize response rates, a strategy effective in educational settings (Dillman et al., 2014). The researchers provided clear instructions and explained the study's purpose to minimize response bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Of the 163 questionnaires distributed, 159 were completed and returned, yielding a high response rate and ensuring a vigorous dataset for analysis.

Instrumentation and Validation

The questionnaire was adapted from validated instruments used in prior studies on library resource utilization (Ekere & Omekwu, 2021; Saunders, 2015). It was tailored to the context of Kabul University's English Department, focusing on key constructs from the findings: accessibility and availability, quality and relevance, impact on learning, and library services. The instrument included 20 items organized into five subscales, using a five-point Likert scale (strongly disagree to agree) to measure students' perceptions (Likert, 1932; DeVellis, 2017).

A multi-step process was implemented to ensure the reliability and validity of the research instrument. A pilot study involving 30 students from the target population was conducted to evaluate item clarity and detect response inconsistencies. Based on feedback, minor modifications were made to improve comprehension and alignment with the study's focus. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.85—indicating a high level of reliability and exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Content validity was established through expert review by a panel of two faculty members from the English Department and one specialist in library science, who evaluated the questionnaire for relevance, comprehensiveness, and alignment with the research objectives. To accommodate linguistic diversity and ensure cultural appropriateness, the questionnaire was translated into Dari and Pashto, followed by a rigorous back-translation process to verify accuracy and equivalence across languages (Beaton et al., 2000).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS (version 27) with descriptive statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) summarized students' perceptions across the five subscales, providing a clear overview of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the Academic Council of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, adhering to international guidelines for human subject's research (World Medical Association, 2013). Informed consent was secured from all participants, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, voluntary nature, and confidentiality measures (Sieber & Tolich, 2013). Responses were anonymized, and data were stored securely on password-protected devices to protect privacy (British Psychological Society, 2014). No incentives were offered to avoid coercion, ensuring voluntary participation (Resnik, 2018).

FINDINGS

The findings of the study are organized into five key areas: accessibility and availability, quality and relevance of resources, impact on learning and academic performance, library services and support, and overall satisfaction.

Accessibility and Availability of Resources

Table 1 presents the responses to items assessing the accessibility and availability of library resources. The results revealed that most students (85, 52.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that the library offers a wide range of resources relevant to their English major, with 59 (36.2%) somewhat agreeing. However, 15 (9.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting gaps in resource diversity. For coursework accessibility, 78 students (47.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources were easily accessible, while 36 (22.1%) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Table 1: *Accessibility and Availability of Resources*

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	The library has a wide range of resources relevant to my English major.	4 (2.5%)	11 (6.7%)	59 (36.2%)	64 (39.3%)	21 (12.9%)
2	The resources I need for my coursework are easily accessible in the library.	4 (2.5%)	32 (19.6%)	45 (26.8%)	65 (39.9%)	13 (8.0%)
3	The library's online resources (e.g., databases and e-books) are user-friendly and convenient.	6 (3.7%)	43 (26.4%)	42 (25.8%)	55 (34.1%)	13 (8.0%)
4	The library's print resources (e.g., books and journals) are well-organized and easily located.	9 (4.7%)	36 (22.1%)	44 (27.0%)	53 (32.5%)	17 (10.4%)

Perceptions of online resources were split, with 67 (41.1%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were user-friendly, but 49 (30.1%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Similarly, 70 students (42.9%) agreed or strongly agreed that print resources were well-organized, whereas

47 (28.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results indicate moderate satisfaction with accessibility but highlight challenges in online usability and print resource organization.

Quality and Relevance of Resources

Table 2 summarizes responses regarding the quality and relevance of library resources. Perceptions of resource quality and relevance were varied. Only 48 students (29.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources were up-to-date, while 65 (39.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating concerns about timeliness. In contrast, 85 students (52.2%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources were reliable, with only 18 (11.0%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 2: *Quality and Relevance of Resources*

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	The library resources are up-to-date and cover the latest developments in my field.	18 (10.7%)	46 (28.2%)	47 (28.8%)	36 (22.1%)	12 (7.4%)
6	The library resources are reliable and come from reputable sources.	2 (1.2%)	16 (9.8%)	56 (34.4%)	66 (40.5%)	19 (11.7%)
7	The library resources are comprehensive and cover various English literature, language, and linguistics topics.	6 (3.7%)	24 (14.0%)	40 (24.5%)	62 (38.0%)	27 (16.6%)
8	The library resources are relevant to my academic needs and support my learning objectives.	7 (4.3%)	19 (10.9%)	46 (28.2%)	58 (35.6%)	29 (17.8%)

For comprehensiveness, 89 students (54.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources covered a wide range of topics, but 32 (19.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 87 students (53.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources were relevant to their academic needs, while 28 (17.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings suggest strengths in reliability but notable gaps in currency and scope.

Students' Perceived Impact of Library Use on Learning & Academic Performance

Table 3 below illustrates students' perceived impact of library use on learning and academic performance. The library's impact was perceived positively by some but not all students. A total of 76 students (46.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that library resources improved their understanding of course materials, while 32 (19.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. For research and writing skills, 85 students (52.1%) agreed or strongly agreed that the library contributed positively, but 42 (25.8%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Similarly, 82 students (50.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources helped achieve better grades, with 46 (28.2%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 3: Impact on Learning and Academic Performance

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9	Utilizing library resources has improved my understanding of course materials.	8 (4.5%)	20 (11.1%)	55 (33.7%)	52 (31.9%)	24 (14.7%)
10	Accessing library resources has enhanced my research and writing skills.	6 (3.7%)	34 (20.1%)	34 (20.9%)	60 (36.8%)	25 (15.3%)
11	The library resources have helped me achieve better grades and academic performance.	13 (8.0%)	33 (20.2%)	31 (19.0%)	56 (34.4%)	26 (16.0%)
12	The library resources have broadened my knowledge and perspectives on English-related topics.	6 (3.3%)	18 (10.7%)	67 (41.1%)	51 (31.3%)	17 (10.4%)

Lastly, 68 students (41.7%) agreed or strongly agreed that resources broadened their knowledge, while 26 (16.0%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results highlight the library's potential to enhance learning but indicate barriers limiting its impact on some students.

Library Services and Support

Table 4 presents responses concerning library services and support. Responses to library services and support were mixed. A total of 79 students (48.4%) agreed or strongly agreed that staff were helpful, while 47 (28.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. For training and guidance, 57 students (35.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that these were adequate, but 54 (33.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Study spaces were deemed conducive by 74 students (45.4%), with 45 (27.6%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 4: Library Services and Support

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	The library staff is knowledgeable, friendly, and helpful in assisting with research inquiries.	11 (6.4%)	35 (21.5%)	34 (20.9%)	62 (38.0%)	17 (10.4%)
14	The library offers adequate training and guidance on how to use its resources effectively.	13 (8.0%)	40 (24.2%)	49 (30.1%)	45 (27.6%)	12 (7.4%)
15	The library's study spaces and facilities (e.g., computer labs and group study rooms) are conducive to learning.	8 (4.9%)	37 (22.7%)	40 (24.5%)	48 (29.4%)	26 (16.0%)
16	The library's online support services (e.g., chat, email) are responsive and address my concerns promptly.	11 (6.4%)	40 (24.5%)	53 (32.5%)	38 (23.3%)	17 (10.4%)

Online support services were viewed positively by 55 students (33.7%), but 52 (31.9%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. These findings suggest moderate approval of services but highlight deficiencies in training and online support.

Overall Satisfaction

Table 5 summarizes responses related to overall satisfaction with the library. Overall satisfaction was moderate, with 70 students (42.9%) agreeing or strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with the library's resources and services, while 33 (20.2%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. A majority (89, 54.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that the library supports their academic endeavors, with 30 (18.4%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

Table 5: Overall Satisfaction

Item	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
17	Overall, I am satisfied with the library's resources and services.	9 (5.1%)	20 (11.1%)	60 (36.8%)	53 (32.5%)	17 (10.4%)
18	The library is vital in supporting my academic endeavors as an English major student.	2 (1.2%)	27 (16.2%)	41 (25.2%)	59 (36.2%)	30 (18.4%)
19	I would recommend the library's resources and services to other students.	2 (1.2%)	15 (8.4%)	41 (25.2%)	59 (36.2%)	42 (25.8%)
20	I intend to continue utilizing the library's resources throughout my academic journey.	1 (0.6%)	18 (10.3%)	43 (26.4%)	67 (41.1%)	30 (18.4%)

Additionally, 101 students (62.0%) agreed or strongly agreed that they would recommend the library to peers, while 19 (11.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, 97 students (59.5%) agreed or strongly agreed that they intend to continue using the library, with 21 (12.9%) disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. These results reflect the library's valued role but underscore areas needing enhancement to boost user satisfaction.

DISCUSSION

This study explored the perceptions and utilization of library resources by undergraduate English major students at Kabul University's English Department, revealing strengths and areas for improvement in library services. The findings indicate that while many students perceive the library as valuable, significant gaps in accessibility, resource quality, and support services hinder its full potential. These results align with the broader literature on academic libraries, providing insights into how libraries can better support student success in resource-constrained settings.

One key finding is the mixed perceptions of resource accessibility and availability. While most students appreciated the library's diverse collections, a notable minority expressed dissatisfaction with the ease of accessing resources, particularly online databases and print materials. This suggests that while the library offers a range of relevant materials, organizational and technological barriers may limit its usability (Hossain & Islam, 2019).

Similar challenges have been noted in other studies, where inefficiencies in resource organization or outdated systems reduce user satisfaction (Saunders, 2015). The findings underscore the need for improved cataloging systems and user-friendly digital interfaces to enhance access, particularly for English majors relying on print and electronic sources for coursework (Head, 2013).

The quality and relevance of library resources also elicited varied responses. Students generally viewed the library's materials as reliable, but concerns about their timeliness and comprehensiveness indicate a need for more current and diverse collections. This aligns with research highlighting the importance of up-to-date resources for supporting academic needs in rapidly evolving fields like English literature and linguistics (Julien et al., 2018). The dissatisfaction expressed by some students may reflect gaps in acquisitions or a lack of alignment between library holdings and curriculum demands, a common issue in underfunded academic libraries (Ekere & Omekwu, 2021). Enhancing the relevance of resources could strengthen the library's role in supporting students' academic objectives.

The library's impact on learning and academic performance was another critical area of focus. Many students reported improvements in their research, writing skills, and course understanding due to library use, consistent with studies linking regular library engagement to academic success (De Groote and Scoulas, 2022). However, many students did not perceive these benefits, suggesting that barriers such as inadequate guidance or unfamiliarity with resources may limit the library's effectiveness (Connaway et al., 2017). The positive experiences of students who utilized library resources effectively highlight the potential of well-supported library services to enhance learning outcomes, particularly for English majors with complex research and writing assignments (Fister, 2015).

Library services and support, including staff assistance and study facilities, received moderate approval but also revealed areas for improvement. While some students praised the staff's helpfulness, others found support lacking, particularly in online services and training. This echoes findings from other studies, where practical staff guidance significantly enhances user satisfaction and resource utilization (Kim & Yang, 2016). The conducive study spaces were appreciated, aligning with research indicating that well-designed library environments boost student productivity and focus (Walton, 2016). However, dissatisfaction with facilities and online support suggests that investments in infrastructure and digital services are needed to meet student expectations (Chu & Du, 2013).

Overall satisfaction with the library was moderate, with many students acknowledging its role in their academic success but others expressing reluctance to continue using its services. This mixed feedback reflects the library's potential to support English majors while highlighting systemic issues undermining user confidence. Comparative studies have shown that libraries with robust support systems and responsive services achieve higher user satisfaction, suggesting that targeted interventions could elevate the library's impact at Kabul University (Tenopir et al., 2013). The findings also align with research emphasizing the importance of

aligning library services with student needs to foster engagement and academic achievement (Lance & Schwarz, 2012).

The study's results contribute to the broader discourse on academic libraries in developing contexts, where resource constraints often exacerbate challenges in service delivery (Hossain & Islam, 2019). By identifying specific barriers—such as poor online accessibility, outdated materials, and insufficient training—the study provides a roadmap for enhancing library services at Kabul University. These insights are particularly relevant for English majors whose academic success depends on access to high-quality resources and support for research-intensive tasks (Head, 2013). The findings also highlight the need for a student-centered approach to library management, ensuring that services are tailored to the unique needs of the English Department (Oakleaf, 2014).

CONCLUSION

This study offers fresh insights into how English major students at Kabul University perceive and use library resources. While the results indicate moderate satisfaction with accessibility, quality, and academic impact, they also reveal apparent gaps—particularly in digital usability, the relevance of materials, and support services. These findings highlight urgent areas for development and pave the way for practical, student-centered improvements.

To address these issues, several targeted recommendations emerge. Improving resource accessibility through intuitive digital platforms and better-organized print collections can streamline students' engagement with the library. Updating and diversifying collections in collaboration with faculty will ensure resources remain current and aligned with curricular needs. Strengthening information literacy through embedded training programs can empower students to navigate resources more effectively. Improving staff support and online services—including live chat, responsive email assistance, and continuous feedback mechanisms—can significantly boost user satisfaction. Additionally, upgrading study facilities to support various learning styles and ensuring access to modern technology will further enhance the library's role in academic life.

The study's novelty lies in its focused analysis of user experience in a developing academic setting and its integrated approach to diagnosing challenges and proposing feasible solutions. While limited to the English Department, the findings have broader relevance, underscoring the essential role of libraries in fostering academic success. Future research should extend this inquiry to other departments or institutions, employing mixed-methods designs to further validate and expand upon these results. By acting on these recommendations, Kabul University can transform its library into a more dynamic, inclusive, and empowering learning environment that supports students in reaching their full potential.

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