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Social identity of College Library Professionals in Odisha: an Empirical Study

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Bulu Maharana²

Abstract

This study is a systematic observation into the dynamics of social identity of college library professionals in Odisha. The survey was carried out administering structured questionnaire both in online and print format for collection of qualitative data from these professionals. A total of 233 responses were collected from 150 colleges in the state, and the study found that majority of library professionals (51.50%) are treated as technical staff not as academic or administrative staff. In the opinion of the respondents, they didn't enjoy the same social prestige (76.39%) and career promotion (50.21%) as other professionals in the society such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, and teachers. A majority of them (57.08%) felt themselves inferior as compared to other professionals in the society. The college librarians (68.67%) believe that librarianship as a profession in the colleges of Odisha have not given equitable status and social identity in compared to same profession elsewhere in the country and abroad. The vital reason of low professional and social identity is non-observance of the policies and guidelines of the central agencies such as UGC and AICTE. The qualification, remuneration, career promotions, etc. are far below than the scale of pay prescribed in the central guidelines for such positions. The situation has forced the library professionals to repent to have taken up a career of Librarianship in Odisha.

Keywords: Social identity, Professional status, LIS Profession, Odisha

1. Introduction

Social Identity is an individual's identity on the basis of his/her membership with a group which can be a social class, a family, a professional category such as doctors, engineers, lawyers etc. The social prestige, pride and self-esteem of a person is determined by the social world the individual belong to. It is well established that some people are more respected in the society as compared to the other only because they are members of a particular professional group. Henri Tajfel (1979) has enunciated three mental processes involved in the social identity theory,

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categorization, social identification and social comparison. From the ancient times to the present twenty first century, the social identity of individuals has remained as one of the integral aspect of our social structure. There are a number of professional categories in the society such as physicians, engineers, lawyers, teachers, and so and so forth. Librarianship has been recognized as one of the professional categories from the ancient times as well. However, the profession has undergone radical changes under the influence of various internal and external factors. Libraries as social institutions have significant contributions in the process of development by means of information acquisition, process, store and dissemination.

But, in reality, the social identity of the library professionals particularly those who work in the colleges in Odisha is not the same as expected. The present study, intends to discuss the social identity of college library professionals in the state of Odisha.

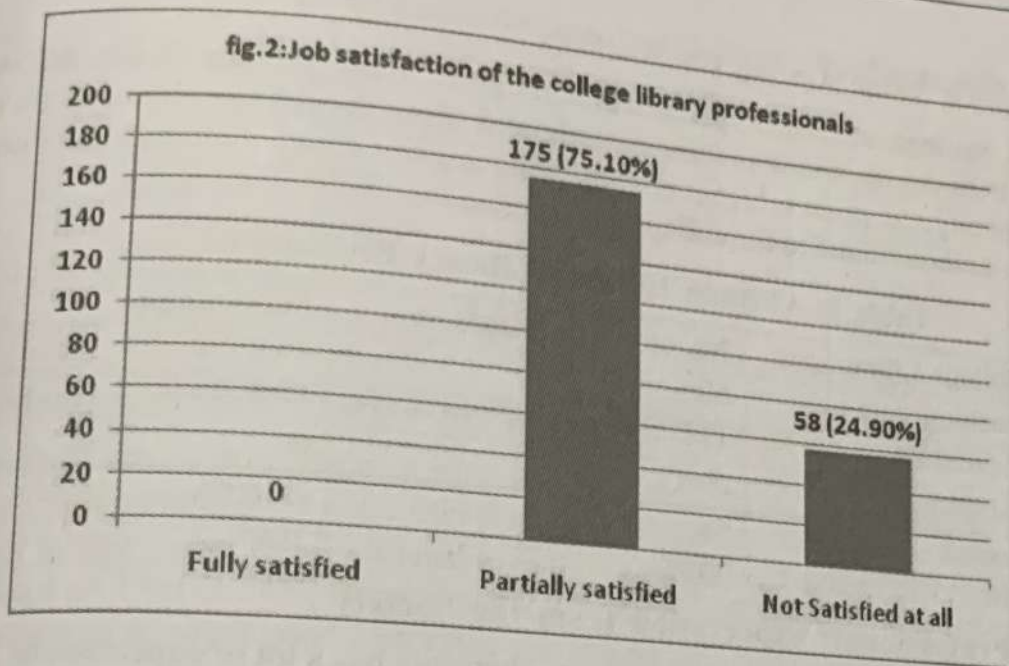
2. Aims & Objectives

The present study primarily aims to assess and thereby portrait the social identity of college library professionals in Odisha in terms various parameters designating the social status and identify. In this background the following objectives were set.

1. To understand the perception and feeling of library professionals in the colleges of the state of Odisha with regard to their professional status and social identity;
2. To find out where do the library professional stand in comparison to other professionals in the society; and
3. To identify the problem areas for the inequitable professional growth and social identity for college library professionals in Odisha.

3. Literature Review

Review of related literature is the most important aspect of any research. A systematic study and analysis of completed research would guide the researcher to set the objectives and reaching out them in the right way. The present study has a inter-disciplinary research which includes sociology, anthropology besides library and information science. Parida (1998) claimed that 80 per cent of the college library professionals preferred academic status, but not the same as the teaching faculty, since the mode of selection, career promotions and performance appraisal are different from the teachers. Downing (2008) articulated multiple ways in which librarians of all races, genders, and ages have linked their social identities to their work roles. He was of the opinion that social identity impacts academic librarians both positively and, unfortunately, sometimes negatively and therefore, greater attention must be paid to making our workplaces more respectful and welcoming to women and other underrepresented minorities of different age groups. Hicks (2014) has convincingly affirmed that social identity of the library professionals is well represented by their level of interaction with their clients and society at large. Tiwari & Borse (2015) interestingly studied the gender differences influenced social identity of the college library professionals. While the social identity of women professionals determined by the social



4.3. Social Prestige and Career Advancement

According to the Online Free Dictionary (<https://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/>), social prestige is the “significance or appeal that social consciousness ascribes to various aspects of human activity. Social prestige may result from such social roles as occupation or status in an organization. Social prestige is also related to authority, influence and respect.” This definition establishes a positive correlation between social prestige and social identity. In the present study, data reveals that 76.39% library professionals believe that they do not enjoy the same social prestige as other professionals like teachers, doctors, engineers, etc. This shows that library professionals feel that they do not get the same prestige as other professionals in the society. As regards to the career advancement opportunities, college library professionals have a mixed opinion as half of them agree and another half disagree on this point.

fig.3: Do you get the same social prestige as other professionals?

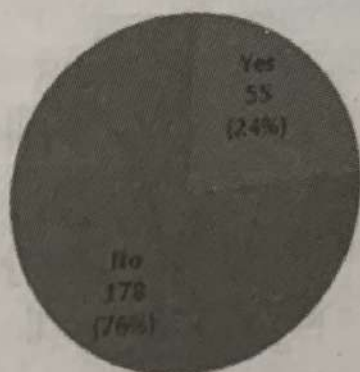
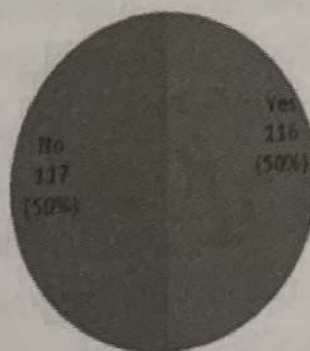


fig.4: Do you get the same career inducements as other professionals?



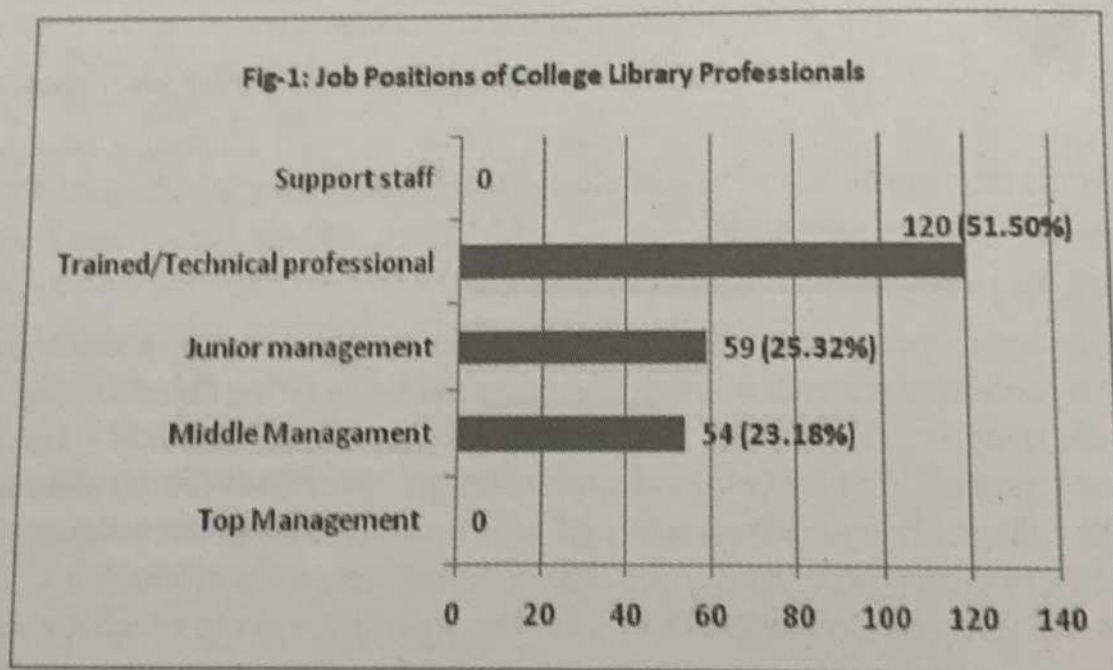
status of their parents or spouse, the social identity of male professionals is represented by their own professional status.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Library Professionals currently working in different general college libraries of Odisha constitute the sample for the study. Out of 542 general (both government and private) colleges in Odisha, 150 colleges participated in the survey. A total of 233 responses were collected from library professionals of these participating general colleges. In Odisha majority of colleges are private (491) and a few colleges are Government (51) of which responses were received from 130 (87%) private colleges and 20 (13%) government colleges.

4.1. Job Positions of the College Library Professionals

The Figure 1 shows the position of library professionals in their Colleges. A majority of (51.50%) library professionals treated as trained/technical professional, 25.32% as Junior Management and 23.18% Middle Management in their respective colleges. As evident from the study, the library professionals are not considered as top level management in any of the colleges, they are mostly clerical or technical assistant levels.



4.2. Job Satisfaction of College Librarians

Many studies have found a strong social identity is associated with increased job satisfaction. The following figure 2 indicates that no library college library professionals in Odisha are fully satisfied with their job. A number of 75.10% of them are only partially satisfied and 24.90% are not at all satisfied with their job. These views of the respondents give a very gloomy picture of the job conditions for library professionals in the colleges of Odisha.

4.4. Interpersonal Value Among Co-Workers

In the colleges, the highest value as professionals is given to the teaching faculty and most of them (50.2%) treat the librarians as their subordinates. Even though the librarians are highly skilled academically and possess higher post graduate degrees, many of them (24.8%) consider as non-technical clerical staff in the college.

Table 1: Attitude Towards Library Professional

Position of College Librarians	No. of Respondents	Percentage
As equal to teaching staff	58	24.89%
As subordinate to them	117	50.22%
As a Technical staff	00	00
As a Clerical staff	58	24.89%
Total	233	100%

4.5. Library Professionals expectation from the Society

Every professional as a social being deserves and therefore has a lot of expectations from the society. Table 2 indicates that a majority of college librarians 110 (47.21%) expected social respect followed by 75 (32.19% expect society's support with adequate financial and human resources to serve better. Professional autonomy 30 (12.88%) and trust 18 (7.72%) are also expected by the librarians from the society.

Table 2: Social Expectations of Library Professionals

Expectations from society	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Social respect	110	47.21%
Autonomy	30	12.88%
Support	75	32.19%
Trust	18	7.72%
Total	233	100%

4.6. Society's Expectations from Library Professionals

Table 3 depicts that library professionals 85 (36.49%) believe that the society expects quality services which can be achieved by proactively reaching out to cater more and more clients both with in and outside the college. Most of them 70 (30.04%) also think competency is also expected from the library professionals. As perceived by 69 (29.61)% respondents, the society looks ahead the librarians to be accountable for the investments made in the library in terms of money, material and manpower. There are still a few 9 (3.86%) who thought creation of value in terms of information products and services is expected from the librarians.

Table 3: Social Expectations from Library Professionals

Expectations	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Quality services	85	36.49%
Competency	70	30.04%
Accountability	69	29.61%
Value creation	09	3.86%
Total	233	100%

4.7. State of College Librarianship in Odisha

A majority of library professionals think that the condition of LIS profession in Odisha is very negligible who presume the condition is not so noteworthy. Many of the library professionals regret for taking up college librarianship as their profession, because this profession is having low status with 176 (75.54%) respondents and monetary remuneration by 57 (24.46%) responses. The absence of any feel good factor has challenged the level of motivation.

Table 4: State of College Librarianship in Odisha

Regret for Low Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low Social Status	176	75.54%
Low Monetary remuneration	57	24.46%

4.8. Reason for Underdeveloped State of College Librarianship in Odisha

All library professionals felt that librarianship profession has not yet developed in Odisha as compared to other professions because the policy makers and the administrators lack interest and will power for its development. Most of the respondents 189 (81.12%) attributed that due to apathy of the government machineries such a situation prevails and lack of proper initiatives towards library facilities in the colleges have contributed to their low status.

Table 5: Reason of Underdevelopment of Librarianship

Reasons	No. of Respondents	Percentage
The profession of LIS itself	00	00
The LIS professionals	00	00
Apathy of the Government of Odisha	189	81.12%
Institutions/Authorities related to LIS	44	18.88%
Any Other (Please specify)	-	-
Total	233	100%

4.9. Library professionals Versus Other Professionals

In comparison to other professionals, a majority 139 (57.08%) library professionals indicated that they feel inferior to other professionals in the society because they are getting very low salary and have no social status in the society. There are still some librarians (42.91%) who believe themselves at par with others in many respects.

Table 6: Status of Librarians

Status of Librarians	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Inferior	133	57.08%
Superior	00	00
At par	100	42.91%
Total	233	100%

4.10. College Librarianship Disliked in Odisha

As understood from the survey, most of the college library professionals are not satisfied with their job, the main reason being the government apathy 119 (51.07%), lower income (50.21%), nature of job (26.6%) which is primarily as a general duty assistant or a clerk. Poor infrastructure (24.89%) and low promotion prospects (25.32%) are the other important causes why college librarianship is disliked in Odisha.

Reasons for Dislike	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Low Salary	117	50.21%
No Promotion	59	25.32%
Poor infrastructure & work environment	58	24.89%
Govt. Apathy	119	51.07%
Involves more of Clerical work	62	26.60%
Low social reputation	-	-
Lower social influence	58	24.89%
Any other	-	-

5. Conclusion

In Odisha majority of academic colleges are private colleges and a very few colleges managed by the state government. The non-implementation of prescribed guidelines and policies with regard to the qualification, selection, induction, salary, career promotion and other service conditions as per the UGC has resulted a very low status of college libraries in Odisha. The libraries in the colleges have never received due attention and importance, as a result of which the college education also have suffered a lot. In order to improve the higher education, the colleges

in the state need to be equipped with infrastructure, learning resources and trained manpower as per the national standards and guidelines. The social identity of the college librarians will be elevated only by giving due importance to library facilities and acknowledging the services in a proper manner.

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