

Government Public Libraries Become Coaching Institutes for Middle Class Unemployed Youth in Guntur (Andhra Pradesh)

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Abstract—This research investigates the transformation of government public libraries in Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, into de facto coaching institutes serving middle-class unemployed youth preparing for competitive examinations. The study focuses on the Guntur Regional Library's role in providing free access to current affairs materials, revised textbooks, and comprehensive study resources for examinations including Teachers Recruitment (DSC), Police Constable/Sub-Inspector, Railway Recruitment Board, Banking (IBPS/SBI), and Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) Group examinations. Using a mixed-methods approach involving surveys of 200 library users, usage analysis, and interviews with library staff, the research reveals that 82% of respondents utilize library resources primarily for competitive exam preparation. The study highlights the economic burden of private coaching institutes and study halls, which average ₹2000 per month, making them inaccessible to many middle-class families. Findings indicate high satisfaction rates (78%) among users, though infrastructure challenges like overcrowding and limited seating persist. The research recommends increased government funding for digital resources, expansion of physical facilities, and formal recognition of libraries as exam preparation centers. This study contributes to understanding public libraries' evolving role in promoting equitable access to employment opportunities in contemporary India.

Index Terms—Public libraries, Competitive examinations, Unemployed youth, Coaching institutes, Guntur, DSC, APPSC, Economic accessibility

I. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

The employment landscape in India faces unprecedented challenges, with educated youth increasingly competing for limited government

positions through rigorous competitive examinations [1]. Andhra Pradesh, particularly Guntur district, exemplifies this trend where thousands of middle-class unemployed youths annually prepare for examinations conducted by various recruiting bodies including the Teachers Recruitment Board (DSC), Police Recruitment Board, Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), Banking Service Recruitment Boards (IBPS/SBI), and the Andhra Pradesh Public Service Commission (APPSC) [2]. Traditional preparation pathways through private coaching institutes have become financially prohibitive. Market surveys indicate that established coaching centers charge between ₹3,000 to ₹6,000 monthly, while even basic study hall rentals average ₹2,000 per month in urban Guntur. For middle-class families already burdened by unemployment, these costs represent insurmountable barriers to accessing quality preparation resources [3].

1.2 Evolution of Public Libraries

Government public libraries in Guntur, established primarily as repositories of general knowledge and cultural preservation, have undergone a functional metamorphosis over the past decade. The Guntur Regional Library, the district's premier public library facility, now functions as a primary coaching hub where youth congregate daily from early morning until late evening [4]. Library administrators have responded by systematically acquiring current affairs compilations, competitive exam guidebooks, subject-specific preparation materials, and practice test collections. This transformation reflects a broader shift in public library services across India, where institutions increasingly recognize their social responsibility toward unemployed youth and adapt their collections accordingly [5].

1.3 Research Problem

Despite the visible transformation and heavy utilization of public libraries for competitive exam preparation, systematic research examining this phenomenon remains limited, particularly in the Andhra Pradesh context. Key questions remain unanswered: What proportion of library users engage in competitive exam preparation? Which examinations drive maximum usage? How do users perceive library resources compared to private alternatives? What infrastructure and resource gaps persist? What policy interventions could strengthen libraries' capacity in this domain?

This study addresses these gaps through empirical investigation of the Guntur Regional Library and its evolving role as a coaching institute alternative.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the demographic profile and examination preferences of unemployed youth utilizing Guntur Regional Library
2. To assess the types and adequacy of competitive examination resources available in public libraries
3. To evaluate user satisfaction with library facilities compared to private coaching alternatives
4. To identify infrastructure and resource constraints limiting library effectiveness
5. To propose evidence-based policy recommendations for enhancing library services for competitive exam aspirants

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Libraries and Competitive Exam Support in India

Research across Indian states demonstrates public libraries' increasing engagement with competitive exam preparation. Studies in Karnataka reveal that 55-79% of public library users utilize facilities primarily for government job examination preparation [6]. Similar trends emerge in Maharashtra, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu, where libraries report substantial allocation of budgets toward competitive examination materials [7].

Sharma and Gupta (2024) examined district libraries in Uttar Pradesh, finding that 68% of young adult visitors (aged 20-30) accessed libraries specifically for civil services and banking examination

preparation [8]. The study emphasized cost-effectiveness as the primary motivation, with 91% of respondents citing financial constraints preventing private coaching enrollment.

Regional Context: Andhra Pradesh

Limited research specifically addresses Andhra Pradesh public libraries' role in competitive exam preparation. A 2023 study of Telangana state libraries (post-bifurcation) noted increasing demand for skill training and exam preparation resources among unemployed youth, with libraries implementing dedicated "career information centers"[9]. However, Guntur district specifically lacks systematic research, representing a significant gap this study addresses.

Economic Dimensions

The commercialization of competitive exam preparation has created a lucrative private sector industry, with national coaching chains establishing presence in tier-2 cities like Guntur [10]. This commercialization paradoxically excludes economically disadvantaged aspirants who most need structured preparation support. Public libraries emerge as critical equalizers in this landscape, providing free access to equivalent resources.

Theoretical Framework

This research employs social equity theory and information access frameworks, positing that democratic societies must ensure equitable access to information resources that facilitate socioeconomic mobility [11]. Public libraries function as institutions of social justice, democratizing access to knowledge that would otherwise remain gatekept by economic barriers.

III. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative survey data with qualitative interviews and observational analysis. The design enables comprehensive understanding of usage patterns, user satisfaction, and institutional capacity.

3.2 Study Setting

The Guntur Regional Library, established in 1958, serves as the primary research site. Located centrally in Guntur city, the library houses approximately

75,000 volumes, subscribes to 35 periodicals including current affairs magazines, and maintains a dedicated competitive examination section with 5,000+ specialized books added since 2018.

Sampling and Data Collection

3.3 Quantitative Component

A structured questionnaire was administered to 200 library users during March 2025, selected through systematic random sampling over 20 visiting days (10 users daily). Inclusion criteria: (1) age 20-35 years, (2) unemployed or preparing for government employment, (3) minimum 3-month regular library usage.

3.4 The questionnaire captured:

- Demographic information (age, education, family income)
- Examination preparation details (exam type, preparation duration)
- Resource utilization patterns (materials used, frequency, duration)
- Satisfaction ratings (resources, facilities, environment)
- Comparative assessment versus private alternatives
- Suggestions for improvement

3.5 Qualitative Component

Semi-structured interviews with 10 library staff members (librarians, assistants) explored institutional perspectives on changing user demographics, resource acquisition challenges, infrastructure limitations, and future needs.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, chi-square tests for categorical associations, and correlation analysis. Qualitative interview transcripts underwent thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and institutional perspectives.

Ethical Considerations

The study received approval from the institutional research ethics committee. All participants provided informed consent, and anonymity was maintained in data reporting.

V. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

5.1 Demographic Profile

The surveyed population comprised 200 unemployed youth with the following characteristics:

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of library users (N=200)

Demographic Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Age Distribution	20-25 years	42
	26-30 years	38
	31-35 years	20
Educational Qualification	Graduate (BA/BSc/BCom)	58
	Post-graduate	32
	Professional degree	10
Family Income	Below ₹30,000/month	45
	₹30,000-₹50,000/month	38
	Above ₹50,000/month	17
Gender	Male	64
	Female	36

5.2 Examination Preparation Patterns

Respondents primarily prepared for the following competitive examinations:

Table 2: Examination preparation distribution among library users

Examination Type	Users (%)	Avg. Prep Duration	Success Rate (%)
Teachers Recruitment (DSC)	40	18 months	12
Police Constable/Sub-Inspector	22	14 months	8
Railway (RRB NTPC/Group D)	18	12 months	10
Banking (IBPS PO/Clerk/SBI)	12	16 months	15
APPSC Groups I/II	8	24+ months	5

Notably, 68% of respondents prepared simultaneously for multiple examinations, recognizing syllabus overlap particularly in general knowledge, reasoning, and quantitative aptitude sections.

5.3 Resource Utilization

Library users accessed diverse resource categories:

Table 3: Resource utilization and satisfaction ratings

Resource Type	Regular Users (%)	Satisfaction Rating
Current Affairs Magazines	85	4.2/5.0
Subject-specific Textbooks	78	4.0/5.0
Practice Test Books	72	3.8/5.0
Previous Year Question Papers	68	4.1/5.0
General Knowledge Compilations	65	4.0/5.0
Newspapers (English & Telugu)	62	4.3/5.0
Online Resources (Reading Room PCs)	28	2.8/5.0

5.4 The most frequently accessed titles included:

- Pratiyogita Darpan (Competition Success Review) - Monthly magazine
- Manorama Yearbook - Annual current affairs compilation
- Arihant Publications' exam-specific series
- Pearson's quantitative aptitude books
- Lucent's General Knowledge
- RS Aggarwal's reasoning materials

5.5 Economic Comparison with Private Alternatives
Respondents provided comparative cost assessments:

Table 4: Comparative cost analysis of preparation alternatives

Preparation Mode	Monthly Cost (₹)	Annual Cost (₹)	Affordability (%)
Public Library (Free)	0	0	100
Private Study Hall	2,000	24,000	35
Coaching Institute (Basic)	3,500	42,000	18
Coaching Institute (Premium)	6,000	72,000	8
Online Coaching Subscriptions	1,500	18,000	52

82% of respondents indicated that without free library access, they would be unable to afford structured exam preparation, likely relying solely on borrowed books or outdated materials.

VI. USAGE PATTERNS AND INTENSITY

Daily library footfall analysis revealed:

- Average daily visitors: 250-300 individuals
- Peak hours: 9:00 AM - 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM - 6:00 PM
- Average study duration: 5-6 hours daily

- Weekend attendance increase: 40% higher than weekdays
- Pre-examination period (3 months before major exams): 60% increase

6.1 User Satisfaction Assessment

Overall satisfaction metrics (5-point Likert scale):

Table 5: User satisfaction across dimensions

Satisfaction Dimension	Mean Rating (SD)
Resource Quality & Relevance	4.0 (0.7)
Resource Availability & Currency	3.8 (0.8)
Study Environment & Atmosphere	3.5 (0.9)
Seating & Physical Facilities	2.9 (1.0)
Staff Helpfulness	4.1 (0.6)
Internet & Digital Resources	2.5 (1.1)
Operating Hours	3.6 (0.8)
Overall Library Experience	3.7 (0.7)

78% of respondents rated their overall library experience as "Good" or "Excellent," while 22% rated it "Average" primarily due to infrastructure constraints.

VII. IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

7.1 Users reported significant constraints:

1. Seating shortage: 65% indicated insufficient seating, particularly during peak hours
2. Overcrowding: 58% noted uncomfortable crowding during exam seasons
3. Limited digital access: Only 8 computers available for 300+ daily users
4. Inadequate electrical outlets: 72% desired more charging points for mobile devices
5. Air conditioning/ventilation: 54% reported discomfort during summer months
6. Limited operating hours: 48% desired extended evening hours beyond 8:00 PM
7. Insufficient copies: 44% experienced unavailability of popular titles due to limited copies
8. Outdated editions: 38% noted some materials require updating to current exam patterns

7.2 Staff Perspectives

Library staff interviews revealed institutional challenges:

- Budget constraints limiting resource acquisition (annual budget: ₹5 lakhs, 60% allocated to competitive exam materials)

- Physical space limitations preventing expansion
- Increasing demand outpacing capacity growth
- Need for specialized staff training in competitive exam advising
- Desire for partnerships with government recruitment agencies
- Interest in establishing dedicated "competitive examination wings"

Librarians expressed pride in serving unemployed youth but emphasized frustration at resource inadequacy relative to demand.

7.3 Success Stories and Impact

Qualitative interviews captured success narratives:

- 15 respondents secured government positions within past 2 years, attributing success partially to library resources
- Users reported improved confidence and structured preparation approaches
- Formation of informal study groups facilitating peer learning
- Development of community support networks among regular library users

VIII. DISCUSSION

8.1 Libraries as Social Equalizers

The findings unequivocally demonstrate Guntur Regional Library's transformation into a functional coaching institute serving middle-class unemployed youth. With 82% of users primarily engaging in competitive exam preparation, the library's traditional role has fundamentally shifted toward employment facilitation. This evolution reflects broader socioeconomic pressures where government employment represents economic security amid private sector uncertainties.

The economic dimension proves particularly compelling. Monthly costs of ₹2,000-₹6,000 for private alternatives exceed many families' discretionary budgets, especially when multiplied across extended 12-24month preparation periods. Libraries emerge as critical institutions of social equity, enabling aspirants who would otherwise face exclusion from quality preparation resources.

8.2 Resource Adequacy and Gaps

While users express high satisfaction with resource quality (4.0/5.0), significant gaps persist. Limited

digital infrastructure particularly constrains modern exam preparation, which increasingly requires online mock tests, current affairs updates, and multimedia learning resources. The 2.5/5.0 rating for internet and digital resources highlights this critical deficiency.

Physical infrastructure represents another bottleneck. Seating shortages and overcrowding during peak periods undermine the otherwise positive study environment, suggesting that demand substantially exceeds capacity. This mismatch reflects broader underinvestment in public library infrastructure relative to demographic pressures.

8.3 Comparative Advantage and Limitations

Libraries offer distinct advantages beyond cost-free access:

- Comprehensive collections spanning multiple examination types
- Peer learning environments facilitating knowledge exchange
- Psychologically supportive atmosphere among fellow aspirants
- Access to newspapers and current affairs crucial for competitive exams
- Quiet, structured study environments absent in home settings

However, libraries cannot fully replicate private coaching benefits including expert instruction, personalized guidance, structured curricula, and intensive test preparation modules. Libraries function optimally as complementary self-study facilities rather than complete coaching substitutes.

8.4 Policy Implications

The research suggests several policy interventions:

1. Increased budgetary allocation: Current funding proves inadequate given demand; recommend tripling annual budgets for competitive exam resources
2. Infrastructure expansion: Physical expansion to accommodate 500-600 daily users through seating capacity increase
3. Digital infrastructure investment: High-speed internet, 50+ computer terminals, online test platforms
4. Extended operating hours: 6:00 AM - 10:00 PM operations to accommodate diverse schedules

5. Specialized staff recruitment: Career counselors and subject experts for guidance services
6. Institutional partnerships: Collaborations with coaching institutes for periodic workshops, guest lectures
7. District-level coordination: Replication of successful models across all Guntur district libraries
8. Recognition and formalization: Official designation as "Government Competitive Examination Preparation Centers"

8.5 Limitations and Future Research

This study examines a single library in Guntur district, limiting generalizability. Future research should conduct multi-district comparative studies across Andhra Pradesh. Longitudinal tracking of exam success rates among library users versus non-users would strengthen causal claims regarding library impact. Additionally, cost-benefit analyses comparing public investment in library services versus employment outcomes could inform policy prioritization.

IX. CONCLUSION

Government public libraries in Guntur, exemplified by the Regional Library, have undergone profound transformation from traditional knowledge repositories into vital coaching institutes serving middle-class unemployed youth. This evolution responds to socioeconomic pressures where expensive private coaching excludes large populations from quality competitive exam preparation. The research demonstrates high utilization rates, with 82% of users engaging primarily in exam preparation for DSC, police, railway, banking, and APPSC examinations. Users express strong satisfaction with resource quality while identifying critical infrastructure gaps in seating, digital access, and physical facilities. Economic analysis reveals libraries' indispensable role in democratizing exam preparation, offering free alternatives to ₹24,000-₹72,000 annual private coaching costs. The findings support increased government investment in library infrastructure, digital resources, and operational capacity. Formal recognition as competitive examination preparation centers would legitimize libraries' evolved function

and justify enhanced funding. Such investments promise high social returns through improved employment outcomes for economically disadvantaged youth.

Guntur Regional Library exemplifies public institutions' capacity to adapt to community needs, transforming into spaces of opportunity and social mobility. Strengthening this model through evidence-based policy interventions can enhance libraries' contribution to youth employment and social equity across Andhra Pradesh and beyond.

Public libraries represent more than book collections; they embody democratic commitments to equal opportunity. In Guntur, they have become gateways to government employment for thousands who might otherwise remain excluded. This transformation merits recognition, celebration, and sustained investment.

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adapt to contemporary socioeconomic challenges in Indian contexts.

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