

Institutional Readiness and NEP 2020 Alignment Among Central University Libraries in India: Evidence from a Cross-Institutional Survey

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Publication Date: 2026/09/04

Abstract: National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 places multidisciplinary learning, research, innovation, equity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning at the centre of higher-education reform in India. University libraries can support these priorities through diverse collections, research services, inclusive access, and learning-oriented programmes. This study assesses the institutional readiness of Central University libraries and examines the extent to which their services align with NEP 2020 priorities. A structured institutional survey covering 15 of the 19 Central University libraries in the defined study frame (78.9%) was analysed using a five-point Likert scale. Twelve indicators were organised into four domains: Resource Availability and Diversity, Research and Innovation Support, Accessibility and Inclusivity, and NEP 2020 Alignment. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, one-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank tests against the neutral midpoint, Holm-adjusted p-values, rank-biserial effect sizes, Friedman testing, and Spearman rank correlation were employed. The 12-item scale demonstrated high internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.931$), while the overall readiness-alignment composite was 4.23/5. NEP 2020 Alignment recorded the highest domain mean ($M = 4.40$), followed by Research and Innovation Support ($M = 4.31$), Resource Availability and Diversity ($M = 4.22$), and Accessibility and Inclusivity ($M = 4.00$). All four domain composites were significantly above the neutral reference after Holm adjustment (adjusted $p \leq 0.008$). Institutional readiness across resources, research support, and accessibility showed a very strong positive association with direct NEP 2020 alignment (Spearman $\rho = 0.965$, $p < 0.001$). The findings indicate that stronger institutional readiness and stronger NEP-oriented library support tend to co-occur across participating universities. Multilingual resources, inclusive access, and advanced research-support services emerge as important priorities for further strengthening the contribution of university libraries to NEP 2020 implementation.

Keywords: NEP 2020; Central University Libraries; Institutional Readiness; Multidisciplinary Learning; Research Support; Inclusive Access.

How to Cite: Jitendra Kumar Gautam; Dr. Brajesh Tiwari; Sunil Kumar Gautam (2026) Institutional Readiness and NEP 2020 Alignment Among Central University Libraries in India: Evidence from a Cross-Institutional Survey. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(8), 2705-2713. <https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1476>

I. INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy 2020 represents a major reorientation of Indian higher education toward holistic and multidisciplinary learning, research and innovation, flexibility, technology-enabled education, equity and lifelong

learning (Government of India, 2020). Although the policy is implemented through universities, departments and academic programmes, the supporting knowledge infrastructure is equally important. University libraries connect learners and researchers with disciplinary and interdisciplinary information, provide structured research assistance, support

information and digital literacy, preserve institutional knowledge and create physical and digital spaces for independent learning.

Recent literature on academic librarianship describes a continuing expansion of library roles beyond collection stewardship. Research support, teaching and learning, digital scholarship, scholarly communication, user experience and technology-enabled services increasingly form part of the academic library portfolio (Ducas et al., 2020). The Association of College and Research Libraries similarly identifies artificial intelligence, open scholarship, evolving collection practices and changing learning environments among the major trends shaping contemporary academic libraries (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2018). These developments are directly relevant to NEP 2020 because policy implementation requires both access to knowledge and institutional capacity to help learners use knowledge across disciplines and formats.

Indian scholarship has emphasized the expected contribution of libraries to NEP 2020 through digital literacy, multidisciplinary resources, research support, inclusive access, critical thinking and lifelong learning (Soni, 2023; Vagdal & Acharya, 2023). However, policy-oriented discussions do not by themselves establish how far university libraries have translated these expectations into institutional practice. Comparative evidence is therefore needed to evaluate whether existing resources, services and infrastructure provide a sufficiently strong base for NEP-oriented higher education and whether this readiness is reflected in direct alignment with policy priorities.

The present study addresses this need through a cross-institutional assessment of Central University libraries. It combines indicators of resource diversity, research and innovation support, accessibility and inclusivity with direct measures of NEP-aligned learning support. Rather than viewing readiness as a single facility or technology, the study treats it as a multidimensional institutional capability. This approach makes it possible to identify both the strongest areas of current practice and the dimensions that can be further developed to deepen NEP implementation.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP

NEP 2020 conceptualises higher education as an interconnected system of multidisciplinary learning, critical inquiry, technology-enabled education, equity, research, innovation, and lifelong learning (Government of India, 2020). Within this framework, university libraries constitute an important component of academic infrastructure by enabling learners and researchers to discover, access, evaluate, integrate, and use knowledge across disciplines and formats. Their role increasingly extends beyond traditional collection management to include research support, digital and information literacy, inclusive access, scholarly communication, and technology-enabled learning services. Accordingly, the contribution of university libraries to NEP 2020 should be examined not only in terms of resource

availability but also through their institutional capacity to support multidisciplinary education, research, inclusion, and learner-centred academic practices.

Recent Indian scholarship increasingly presents libraries as active contributors to NEP 2020 implementation rather than as conventional repositories of information. Singh and Chaurasia (2025) reviewed the role of libraries in realising the objectives of NEP 2020 across academic, school, and public-library contexts. Their study highlighted equity, inclusiveness, multidisciplinary education, digital learning, lifelong learning, digital literacy, multilingualism, knowledge generation, and community engagement as important areas of library contribution. These dimensions demonstrate that library support under NEP 2020 extends beyond access to collections and increasingly involves enabling broader educational participation and knowledge engagement.

Naik and Mandrekar (2025) further examined the transformative role of libraries in implementing NEP 2020, emphasising technology, digital resources, digitisation, holistic learning, and lifelong learning. Their study positions academic libraries as important institutional actors in policy implementation and reflects the broader transition from traditional collection-centred models towards more dynamic, technology-enabled, and service-oriented learning environments.

The growing emphasis on digital transformation is also evident in comparative and policy-oriented research. Rathod (2025), while comparing academic-library transformation in India and the United States, examined the integration of libraries into digital learning environments in the context of NEP 2020. The study identified limited funding, insufficient librarian–faculty collaboration, and inadequate integration of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence among the challenges affecting Indian academic libraries. It consequently emphasised stronger recognition of librarians as educators, development of digital-literacy frameworks, and greater institutional support for digital transformation.

The changing educational role of academic libraries is further reflected in emerging forms of flexible and skills-oriented learning. Majumdar (2025) examined the contribution of academic libraries to microcredentials and skill-enhancement opportunities aligned with NEP 2020. The study connected library services with ICT tools, digital content management, the National Credit Framework, and the Academic Bank of Credits, thereby illustrating the movement of libraries from passive repositories towards dynamic learning facilitators capable of supporting flexible and continuing education.

Similar developments are visible in studies addressing multidisciplinary and technology-supported higher education. Das and Biswas (2024) examined the changing role and status of academic libraries following the introduction of NEP 2020 and emphasised multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary education, research-oriented curricula, online learning, and blended learning. Their findings suggest that structural changes in higher education require

corresponding changes in library functions, services, and modes of academic support. Sutar (2024) likewise identified several areas in which libraries can contribute to NEP 2020 and stressed the continuing transformation of library services in response to changing educational and technological conditions.

Equity and access constitute another important strand of the literature. Walde and Borkar (2024) highlighted equal access to education and the importance of libraries across school, college, and university systems, reinforcing the position of libraries as educational services that can contribute to the implementation of NEP 2020. Chakravarthy (2024) similarly emphasised technology integration, e-books, e-journals, digital resources, digital libraries, online educational programmes, and access to information, while also drawing attention to local and indigenous knowledge and the need to address the digital divide. Soni (2023) likewise associated libraries with digital resources, lifelong learning, and improved access to local and indigenous knowledge.

The need for diversified collections and stronger research-oriented services is also reflected in the literature. Vagdal and Acharya (2023) emphasised diverse resources, research facilitation, collaboration, and digital-literacy support as major contributions of academic libraries to NEP implementation. These areas are especially relevant to multidisciplinary and research-intensive higher education because they position the library as a facilitator of both knowledge access and scholarly activity.

International academic-library research provides a broader institutional perspective on these changing roles. Ducas et al. (2020) demonstrated the expansion of academic-library research support into areas such as systematic reviews, bibliometrics, data management, and scholarly communication. This evidence suggests that advanced research support increasingly forms part of the contemporary academic-library portfolio rather than remaining limited to traditional reference or document-delivery services. Deja et al. (2021) further showed that information and digital literacy can contribute to institutional readiness for digital transformation, highlighting the importance of user capability alongside technological infrastructure.

The changing academic-library environment is also shaped by organisational and resource-related challenges. Ashiq et al. (2021) identified financial pressures, human-resource constraints, technological change, and evolving user expectations as important issues affecting academic libraries. When considered together with the Indian NEP-oriented literature, these findings suggest that institutional readiness should be assessed across multiple dimensions, including resources, professional and research-support capability, inclusive access, and alignment with teaching and learning priorities, rather than through collection size or technological provision alone.

At the broader policy level, UNESCO (2021) emphasised equitable education, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, cultural preservation, knowledge sharing, and

research collaboration. These principles closely correspond with the emerging educational role of university libraries and reinforce the importance of inclusive and sustainable access to knowledge. The ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee (2018) similarly identified artificial intelligence, learning analytics, research-data services, and digital scholarship among important trends affecting academic libraries. The IFLA Trend Report (2018) placed digital transformation, open access, big data, lifelong learning, digital inclusion, information ethics, and knowledge democratisation within the broader future of libraries. Collectively, these international perspectives reinforce the need to view library readiness as a multidimensional institutional capability encompassing collections, research support, digital services, inclusion, and professional expertise.

Despite growing scholarly attention to the role of libraries in NEP 2020, three important gaps remain. First, much of the available literature is conceptual, narrative, review-based, or policy-oriented, with relatively limited comparative empirical evidence concerning the actual institutional readiness of university libraries. Second, few studies have examined multiple Central University libraries through a common multidimensional framework incorporating resource diversity, research and innovation support, accessibility and inclusivity, and direct NEP-oriented learning support. Third, limited empirical evidence is available on whether underlying institutional readiness is systematically associated with the strength of direct NEP 2020 alignment. The present study addresses these gaps through a cross-institutional assessment of 15 participating Central University libraries using a common measurement framework and appropriate descriptive and non-parametric statistical procedures.

➤ *Objectives and Research Questions*

• *Objectives*

- ✓ To assess the current state of university libraries by evaluating resources, services and infrastructure relevant to NEP 2020
- ✓ To examine the alignment between library services and NEP 2020 priorities, including multidisciplinary education, research, innovation and equitable access.

• *Accordingly, the study has three research questions:*

- ✓ RQ1. What is the current level of institutional readiness across resource diversity, research support and inclusive access?
- ✓ RQ2. To what extent are library services aligned with direct NEP 2020 learning priorities?
- ✓ RQ3. Is institutional readiness associated with the strength of direct NEP 2020 alignment?

III. METHODOLOGY

➤ Study Design and Analytical Sample

A cross-sectional institutional survey design was employed. The defined study population comprised 19 Central Universities established under the Central Universities Act, 2009. Institutional responses were obtained from 15 university libraries, representing 78.9% of the defined study population. Responses were provided by university librarians, deputy librarians, or other library

professionals holding administrative responsibility within their respective institutions.

Among the 15 respondents, 12 (80.0%) reported at least 10 years of experience in their current position, indicating substantial professional and administrative experience among the participating respondents. The participating university libraries represented institutions established between 1946 and 2019, with 2009 as the median establishment year.

Table 1 Profile of the Institutional Survey Sample

Characteristic	Result
Defined study population	19 Central Universities established under the Central Universities Act, 2009
Participating institutions	15 university libraries
Institutional coverage	78.9%
Respondents with ≥ 10 years of experience in current position	12 of 15 (80.0%)
University establishment-year range	1946–2019
Median establishment year	2009

➤ Questionnaire Development and Content Basis

The survey instrument was developed in accordance with the objectives of the study and the higher-education priorities articulated in NEP 2020. The questionnaire included institutional-profile questions, five-point Likert statements and open-ended questions. The quantitative component used in the present paper was organised around four conceptually distinct dimensions: Resource Availability and Diversity, Research and Innovation Support, Accessibility and Inclusivity, and direct Alignment with NEP 2020 Principles. The items were selected to capture institutional capacities related to multidisciplinary learning, research facilitation, inclusive access, lifelong learning, conceptual understanding and critical thinking.

➤ Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered using Google Forms. The questionnaire was directed to library professionals holding institutional responsibility, particularly University Librarians, Deputy Librarians, and Professors-in-Charge of Libraries in the Central Universities included in the study. The recorded responses indicate that the data collection period extended from 24 March 2026 to 27 July 2026.

The defined study population comprised 19 Central Universities established under the Central Universities Act, 2009. The university library was treated as the unit of analysis, and one institutional response was considered from each participating university. To improve institutional participation and obtain responses from the identified universities, follow-up communication was undertaken through multiple channels. These included email communication, reminder emails, WhatsApp messages, and telephone contact with the concerned library professionals. These follow-up efforts were used to encourage completion of the questionnaire and to facilitate participation during the data-collection period.

Completed responses were obtained from 15 university libraries, representing 78.9% of the defined study population. The questionnaire collected institutional and professional-profile information together with five-point Likert-scale responses and open-ended information relating to resource availability and diversity, research and innovation support, accessibility and inclusivity, alignment with NEP 2020 principles, digital literacy and technology, digital library infrastructure, and institutional challenges and suggestions concerning the implementation of NEP 2020.

Responses submitted through the online questionnaire were compiled into a structured dataset for quantitative and qualitative analysis. The Likert-scale responses formed the basis of the descriptive and inferential statistical analyses, while the open-ended responses were examined to provide complementary qualitative insights into institutional resource requirements, research-support priorities, implementation challenges, and suggested measures for strengthening the contribution of university libraries to NEP 2020.

➤ Measures

The analysis used 12 five-point Likert statements. Responses were coded Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Neutral = 3, Agree = 4 and Strongly Agree = 5. Three items measured Resource Availability and Diversity, three measured Research and Innovation Support, three measured Accessibility and Inclusivity, and three measured direct Alignment with NEP 2020 Principles. A domain score was calculated for each institution as the arithmetic mean of the three items in that domain. The overall readiness-alignment composite was the mean of all 12 items. Positive responses were defined as Agree or Strongly Agree.

➤ Statistical Analysis

Item-level results are reported as mean, standard deviation and the percentage of positive responses. Internal consistency of the 12-item scale was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha. Because the analysis was conducted at the institutional level and the domain composites were derived

from ordinal Likert-scale responses, non-parametric procedures were used. One-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were applied to assess whether institution-level domain scores were significantly greater than the neutral midpoint of 3.00. The positive-rank sum (W^+) is reported as the Wilcoxon test statistic. Because four domain-level tests were conducted simultaneously, the resulting p-values were adjusted using the Holm procedure to control the family-wise error rate. Rank-biserial correlation (r_{rb}) was reported as the effect-size measure, with larger positive values indicating a stronger predominance of scores above the neutral reference. Statistical significance was evaluated at $p < 0.05$.

A Friedman test was used to examine overall differences among the four related domain composites, with Kendall's τ reported as an effect-size measure of the degree of differentiation among domains. To examine the relationship between institutional readiness and direct NEP 2020 alignment, an institutional readiness composite was calculated by averaging the Resource Availability and

Diversity, Research and Innovation Support, and Accessibility and Inclusivity domain scores for each institution. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (ρ) was then used to assess the association between this readiness composite and the direct NEP 2020 Alignment domain.

➤ *Analysis of Open-Ended Responses*

Open-ended responses were examined using thematic content analysis. Responses were read systematically to identify recurring ideas related to resource development, research support, multilingual collections, open educational resources, accessibility and emerging library services. Similar statements were grouped into common themes. Because a single response could contain more than one distinct suggestion, thematic coding was non-exclusive; consequently, one institutional response could contribute to more than one theme. The qualitative findings were used to complement and interpret the quantitative results rather than to generate separate statistical estimates.

IV. RESULTS

➤ *Item-Level Institutional Readiness and Alignment*

Table 2 Item-Level Readiness and NEP-Alignment Results. Positive = Agree + Strongly Agree.

Indicator	Mean	SD	Positive (%)
Regional-language collections	4.00	1.20	80.0
Open Educational Resources (OERs)	4.07	0.70	80.0
Diverse multidisciplinary e-resources	4.60	0.63	93.3
Systematic/literature-review resources	4.13	0.83	86.7
Faculty/student research-project support	4.53	0.64	93.3
Innovation and intellectual exchange	4.27	0.70	86.7
Bridging the digital divide	3.80	1.15	73.3
Accessibility for students with disabilities	3.87	1.36	66.7
Diverse cultures and perspectives	4.33	1.11	86.7
Conceptual clarity and application-based learning	4.40	0.63	93.3
Lifelong learning	4.67	0.49	100.0
Critical thinking and problem-solving	4.13	0.74	80.0

Table 2 shows that the most strongly established feature is support for lifelong learning ($M = 4.67$), for which every participating institution selected a positive response. Access to diverse multidisciplinary e-resources is also highly developed ($M = 4.60$; 93.3% positive), followed by support for faculty and student research projects ($M = 4.53$; 93.3% positive). These indicators are closely connected to the NEP expectation that higher education should be multidisciplinary, inquiry-oriented and capable of supporting continuing learning beyond a single programme or discipline.

The resource domain also reveals a useful distinction between digital breadth and linguistic or open-resource breadth. Multidisciplinary e-resources are very strong, while regional-language collections ($M = 4.00$) and OER availability ($M = 4.07$) are somewhat lower. The pattern suggests that participating libraries have already developed broad electronic access, while collection strategies can continue to deepen multilingual, regional and openly licensed content. Open-ended responses reinforce this interpretation:

institutions repeatedly requested multidisciplinary databases, regional-language material, open textbooks, research datasets, multimedia learning resources and indigenous or tribal knowledge resources.

Research and innovation support is another pronounced strength. Faculty/student project support records $M = 4.53$, while systematic-review and literature-review resources record $M = 4.13$. Open-ended responses indicate that the next stage of research support extends beyond database access toward bibliometrics, research-data management, systematic-review methodology, research impact, scholarly communication, patent and intellectual-property awareness, grant discovery, plagiarism support and open-access publishing guidance. This shift is consistent with the wider evolution of academic librarianship toward embedded and specialized research services.

Accessibility and inclusivity show positive overall performance but also the widest dispersion across institutions.

Collections representing diverse cultures and perspectives score 4.33, whereas digital-divide support ($M = 3.80$) and disability accessibility ($M = 3.87$) are lower and more variable. The result does not indicate an absence of inclusive practice; rather, it identifies equity-related infrastructure and

service consistency as the clearest area in which additional institutional investment can produce further gains.

➤ Domain-Level Results and Statistical Validation

Table 3 Domain-Level Descriptive and Inferential Results. Wilcoxon Tests Compare Institutional Domain Scores with the Neutral Midpoint Of 3.00.

Domain	Mean	SD	Positive (%)	Wilcoxon W+	Holm p	r _{rb}
Resource Availability & Diversity	4.22	0.65	84.4	118.5	0.0013	0.975
Research & Innovation Support	4.31	0.66	88.9	118.5	0.0013	0.975
Accessibility & Inclusivity	4.00	1.12	75.6	91.0	0.0076	0.733
NEP 2020 Alignment	4.40	0.51	91.1	120.0	0.0012	1.000

The overall 12-item composite is 4.23 ($SD = 0.67$), and the scale demonstrates high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.931$). Direct NEP 2020 Alignment is the highest domain at 4.40, followed by Research and Innovation Support at 4.31, Resource Availability and Diversity at 4.22, and Accessibility and Inclusivity at 4.00. Across all 180 item responses used in the four-domain analysis, positive responses predominate.

The Wilcoxon results show that all four domain distributions are significantly above the neutral reference after multiple-testing correction. The rank-biserial effect sizes are large and positive, ranging from 0.733 for Accessibility

and Inclusivity to 1.000 for direct NEP Alignment. Thus, the observed domain means are not being driven by isolated high-scoring institutions; the overall direction of institutional responses is consistently positive. The Friedman test did not detect a statistically significant overall difference among the four domain distributions ($\chi^2 = 6.04$, $df = 3$, $p = 0.110$; Kendall's $W = 0.134$). Therefore, the observed descriptive differences among domain means should be interpreted cautiously. Taken together with the generally high scores across all four dimensions, the findings indicate that positive NEP-supportive assessments are evident across multiple dimensions of library readiness rather than being confined to a single service area.

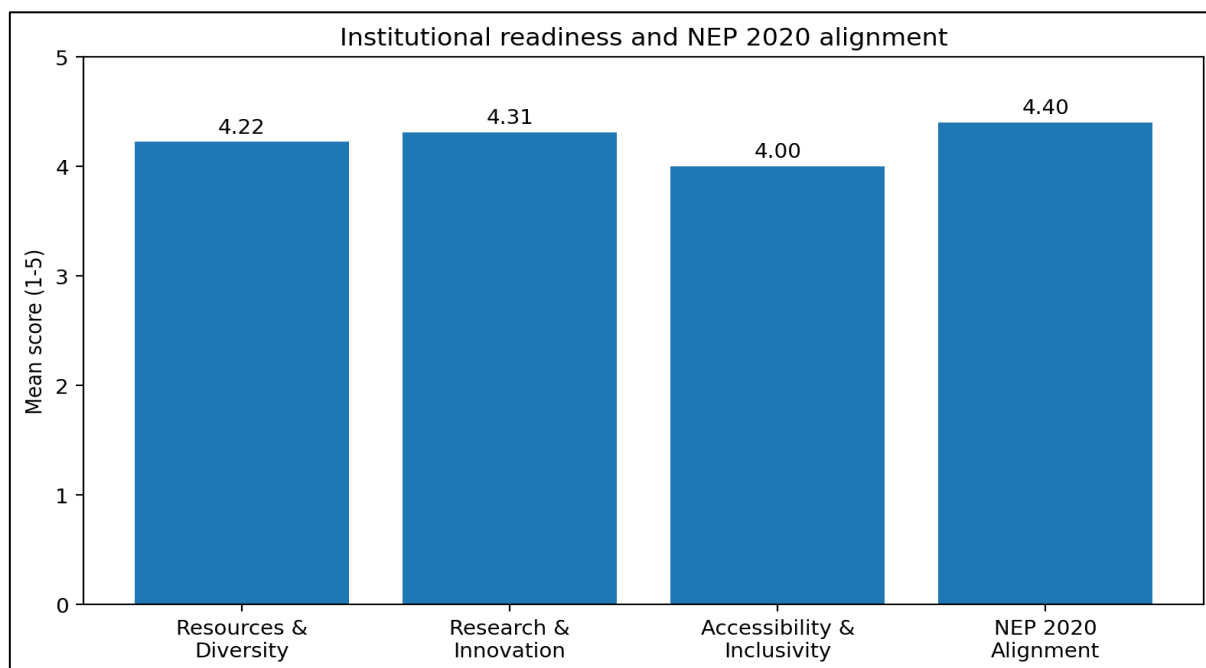


Fig 1 Mean Scores for the Four Institutional Readiness and NEP-Alignment Domains.

➤ Relationship Between Institutional Readiness and NEP Alignment

To examine whether policy alignment is connected with institutional capacity, the three readiness domains—resources, research support, and accessibility—were averaged for each university and correlated with direct NEP Alignment. The Spearman coefficient was $\rho = 0.965$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating a very strong positive association. Institutions reporting stronger underlying resource, research,

and inclusion capacity also tend to report stronger support for conceptual learning, lifelong learning, and critical thinking.

The association is substantively important because it demonstrates that stronger NEP alignment tends to occur alongside stronger underlying library capability. Institutions reporting stronger multidisciplinary resources, research services, and inclusive access also tend to report stronger support for conceptual learning, lifelong learning, and critical

thinking. The findings therefore suggest that NEP-oriented library support is closely connected with a broader institutional service environment in which resources, research

assistance, and inclusive access operate together. Because the study is cross-sectional, this relationship should be interpreted as an association rather than a causal effect.

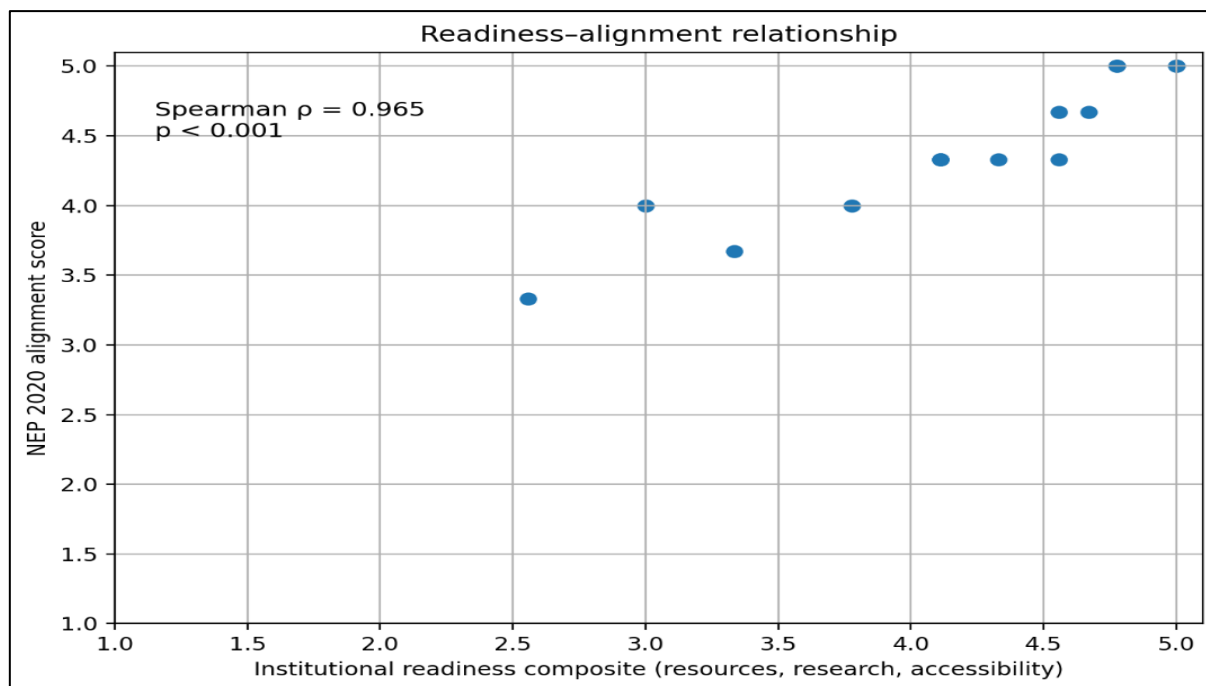


Fig 2 Relationship Between Institutional Readiness Composite and Direct NEP 2020 Alignment.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings provide empirical support for the argument that university libraries can function as active infrastructure for NEP 2020 rather than as passive repositories. The highest domain, direct NEP Alignment, indicates strong institutional emphasis on lifelong learning, application-oriented understanding and critical thinking. This pattern is consistent with Indian NEP-library literature that positions libraries as learning, research and inclusion hubs (Soni, 2023). Importantly, the strong correlation between readiness and alignment shows that these educational functions are associated with the operational foundations of the library.

The resource findings reflect the increasing centrality of electronic and multidisciplinary information. The very high score for diverse e-resources is encouraging for flexible and multidisciplinary curricula. At the same time, the lower scores for regional-language collections and OERs identify a strategic next step. NEP 2020 emphasizes Indian languages, access and affordability; therefore, collection development under the policy should combine subscription-based breadth with open, multilingual and locally relevant knowledge resources. This approach can also reduce dependence on a limited set of commercial channels and broaden the cultural range of academic collections.

The research-support domain shows that Central University libraries are already engaged with faculty and student projects. The open-ended data, however, illustrate how research support is becoming more specialized. Requests for bibliometrics, research-data management, systematic reviews, scholarly communication, research impact, patents

and open-access publishing mirror the emerging roles identified in international academic-library research (Ducas et al., 2020). A mature NEP-supportive library therefore requires not only access to research literature but also professional services that help researchers design searches, manage evidence, evaluate outputs and navigate the scholarly communication system.

Accessibility and inclusivity deserve continued attention because they are the most variable domain. The relatively strong cultural-diversity item demonstrates an inclusive collection orientation, while digital-divide and disability-access indicators show greater institutional variation. Equity under NEP 2020 requires usable access, not only formal availability. Libraries can strengthen this dimension through accessible digital interfaces, assistive technologies, physical accessibility, extended access, inclusive user training and targeted support for learners who face technological or linguistic barriers.

The Friedman test did not identify a statistically significant overall difference among the four domain distributions. This result should not be interpreted as evidence that the domains are equivalent; rather, the descriptive findings indicate generally positive assessments across resources, research support, accessibility and direct NEP alignment. The pattern supports a multidimensional view of library readiness in which collection development, professional expertise, accessibility and learning support are considered complementary components of NEP-oriented institutional capacity.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

For university administrators, the results support sustained investment in library collections and services as part of NEP implementation planning. Budget decisions should recognise that library readiness is associated with direct educational alignment and should therefore be linked with multidisciplinary curriculum development, research strategy and institutional inclusion plans.

For library leaders, three priorities emerge. First, strengthen multilingual, regional, indigenous and open educational resources alongside disciplinary databases. Second, formalise advanced research-support services such as systematic-review guidance, bibliometrics, research-data management and scholarly communication support. Third, treat accessibility as an integrated service-design principle covering physical spaces, digital systems, assistive facilities and user training.

For policymakers and collaborative library networks, the strong relationship between readiness and alignment supports shared capacity-building models. Consortial resource access, interoperable repositories, professional training and shared specialist expertise can help institutions build advanced services without duplicating every capability locally.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings should be interpreted within the institutional scope and design of the study. Responses were obtained from 15 of the 19 Central University libraries included in the defined study frame, providing substantial institutional coverage. The analysis represents institution-level assessments provided by knowledgeable library professionals at a single point in time. Accordingly, the cross-sectional design is appropriate for identifying patterns and associations among readiness dimensions and NEP alignment but does not establish causal relationships. The institutional sample size also limits meaningful subgroup analysis. Future studies may extend the present findings through longitudinal assessment, direct surveys of students, faculty and researchers, service-usage statistics, and qualitative interviews with library professionals and academic stakeholders. Combining institutional and user-level evidence would provide a broader understanding of how library readiness translates into educational and research outcomes under NEP 2020.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This study provides cross-institutional evidence that participating Central University libraries have developed a strong service base for supporting major priorities of NEP 2020. The overall readiness-alignment composite was high, and each of the four assessed domains—resource availability and diversity, research and innovation support, accessibility and inclusivity, and direct NEP alignment—was significantly

above the neutral reference point. Direct NEP alignment recorded the highest mean, while institutional readiness showed a very strong positive association with NEP-oriented learning support. The findings position university libraries as important academic partners in multidisciplinary learning, research, equitable access and lifelong learning. Future development should focus particularly on multilingual and open educational resources, specialised research-support services, and more consistent physical and digital accessibility. Strengthening these interconnected areas can further enhance the contribution of university libraries to the implementation of NEP 2020.

- **Funding:** The authors received no specific funding for this study.
- **Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.
- **Data Availability:** The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request, subject to applicable institutional considerations.
- **Survey Instrument Availability:** The questionnaire used in this study is available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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