

Attitudes of College Library Users towards Overdue Fines: A Study of College Libraries in Lakhimpur District of Assam, India.

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ABSTRACT

Collecting fine for overdue books from defaulters is a very common practice almost in all type academic libraries. The purpose of this study was to find out the reasons who have paid overdue fine, the attitude of borrowers of college libraries of the Lakhimpur District towards overdue fine, and develop an effective mechanism to minimize it. Survey revealed that college library users were in favour of overdue fine policy, since it compels user's to return borrowed library books in time. Finding also revealed that the borrower borrowed books mainly for examination preparation, supplementary reading, project or assignment and pay overdue fine because of forgetfulness, urge to keep it for more days and not finished with the book. The borrower suggested that library can minimize the overdue fine by sending overdue notice to defaulters, not allowing for renewals, refusing further book loans, publishing defaulter's name on library notice board, reporting the name of the defaulters to head of departments and withholding pass certificate. Authors also emphasis upon on library orientation to make aware about the circulation policy to new register members at the beginning of the each academic year to minimize library overdue fine specially in college level.

KEYWORDS: Overdue fine, Late fine, College Library, Borrowers.

1. INTRODUCTION

In general a college is regarded as an institution of higher learning and a college library is expected to support the objective of the college. The main aim of the college library is to support teaching programme of the college. Thus the basic function of a college library is to assist its parent body to carry out its teaching programme of the college. This means that a college library have a vital role to play to serve the needs and requirement of the teachers and students towards reading, studying and research. In order to meet the demand of information and knowledge every college library has to follow a policy to give access to its available resources to its users. Out of many housekeeping operations library circulation is one of the most important services through which library users are provided borrowing facility of books and other available resources to students and teachers to meet required information sources to each and every registered users. But it is observed that most of the users of the library don't return their borrowed books in time. It is really very unethical for a library to allow users to keep books for indefinite period and deprive other needy users. It is the duty of the user communities

to return the borrowed book in due time. On the other hand it is not possible to each library to acquire large number of multiple copies of important library books to serve individual requirement to each user coming to the library. Financial constrains and rapid change in course curriculum also does not encourage it in doing so. Therefore in order to get rid of this situation each library has to formulate a user oriented circulation policy which covers borrowing privilege, lending periods and penalty for overdue books so that each library can compel the users to return overdue library materials in time. Overdue fine is one of the most common practices in this regard. Overdue fine is imposed for overdue book on defaulting users. Overdue fine is an amount charged from the users for keeping the borrowed library books beyond the loan period. It is not aim to collect revenue, but to compel users to return borrowed items to the library on or before due date. Experience and literature search revealed that there has been a much discussion on overdue fine or late fine. But comparatively little attention has been paid to study the reasons of paying overdue fines, whether user communities are really mentally ready to pay overdue fine or not, specially in academic library system of India more particularly college system. Overdue fine is obviously a barrier in reading habits to library users. Many users might not to issue books from the library only because of overdue fine. So library should try to find out a solution to the over due fine problem. Therefore It is necessary to study the reasons for keeping library books beyond due date for which users pay overdue fine and the attitude of library users towards overdue fine in college system which significantly help libraries to know user reaction and further this will help college libraries to improve the quality of circulation services and minimize the overdue fines that are being practiced from age old.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

Edewor¹ (2010) surveyed staff users and overdue fines in Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ozora and Delta State Polytechnic Library, Otefe-Oghara. Finding revealed that 60% respondent admitted that fines is a punitive measure against library defaulters and about 22% (120) respondent's revealed that it compels the users to return borrowed library books in time. Adomi² (2003) studied university library user's attitudes towards overdue fine at University of Benin and Delta State University of Nigeria. Finding revealed that attitude towards overdue fine of both the university users were positive. Respondents felt that overdue fine compelled the users to return borrowed library book in time. Even no significant difference was observed in attitude between genders. Bhatt³ (2011) discussed about students perception of library fine in Islamic College of Science & Commerce Library of Jammu & Kashmir. The finding of the study revealed that majority of the borrowers was satisfied with the borrowing privilege, lending period and fine amount. Out of 290 respondents 77.33% (215) were aware of the fact that overdue fine is a disciplinary measure intended against library defaulters. McMenemy⁴ (2010) discussed about the positive and negative aspects of a fine culture and its impact on library usage. Finding revealed that some libraries generated fund by collecting fine from overdue library books and also discussed what role it plays in encouraging effective use of the library resources. Barber⁵ (2005) surveyed SCONUL libraries to find out fine policy that are being charging

from users for overdue items. In his study he mentioned that the Southampton Solents University Library did not charge fine but used different system to enforce borrowing regulations. Since 1994, the Southampton Solent university library has been using a penalty points system that charges student points for overdue book. Of course this penalty point charges varies for different categories of users. Once 200 penalty points are accrued students are banned from borrowing items for 30 days. Thus till the date of survey no decision has been made to introduce library fine at Southampton Solent Library. Lyons⁶ (1981) surveyed 148 Academic Health Science Libraries and a selected group of major Health Science Research Libraries in 1979 to understand why a circulation policy poses so many problems. This study clearly pointed out the problematic nature of circulation policy. Many insights into the complexities of determining circulation policy have also been highlighted. Udooumah and Olkoro⁷ (2007) studied the effect of library policies on overdue materials of university libraries in the South- South Zone Nigeria. This study revealed that library policy is one of the factors that influence book overdue. 57% respondents were strongly agreed that opening hours of the library affects book overdue. 71.4% respondents were agreed that policies on penalty for defaulters affects overdue. Only 60% respondents were agreed that borrowed books were kept beyond the date due to because fine was minimal.. Shontz⁸ (1999) discussed the effects of length of checkout and overdue fine in a medical library. Author discussed how effective fine is at modifying user's behavior. Study revealed that besides many other factors, convenience of renewal and return are determining factor at work when users return materials.

3. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Lakhimpur District is situated on the North East corner of Assam. The district lies between $26^{\circ}48'$ and $27^{\circ}53'$ northern latitude and $93^{\circ}42'$ and $94^{\circ}20'$ east longitude (approx.). It is bounded on the north by Siang and Papumpare District of Arunachal Pradesh and on the east by Dhemaji District and Subansiri River. Majuli Sub Division of Jorhat District stands on the southern side and Gohpur sub division of Sonitpur District is on the West. Area The District covers an area of 2277 Sqkm out of which 2257 Sqkm is rural and 20 sqkm is urban population. The district is divided into two sub divisions viz. North Lakhimpur and Dhakuakhana. At present the Lakhimpur district has a total number of 12 deficit colleges under Dibrugarh University.

4. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- To investigate the reasons of borrowing books for which college library users pay overdue fines.
- To find out the attitude of college library users toward overdue fine.
- To discover whether overdue fine compel the user to return the library books in time.
- To find out the measures against overdue books.

5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Edewor (2010) used survey methods to study staff users and overdue fines in Nigerian Polytechnic Libraries. Bhatt (2011) used survey methods to study the student perception of library fines in Islamic College of Science and Commerce Library This study used questionnaire based survey method. 350 questionnaires were prepared and distributed among the college library users visited to the library to deposit overdue fine. For this purpose survey was conducted during academic session 2011-2012 to collect relevant data.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I: College-wise distribution of respondents:

Sl. No.	Respondents	No of questionnaires distributed	Questionnaire responded	Percentage
1	Bihpuria College	25	12	48%
2	Dhakuakhana College	25	12	48%
3	Kendriya Mahavidyalaya	35	24	69%
4	Lakhimpur Commerce College	25	17	68%
5	Lakhimpur Girls' College	25	18	72%
6	LTK College	25	14	56%
7	Madhabdev College	40	35	87.5%
8	Naoboicha College	25	12	48%
9	North Bank College	25	12	48%
10	North Lakhimpur College	40	25	62.5%
11	OPD College	25	14	56%
12	Sankardev Mahavidyalaya	35	21	60%

In order to conduct the survey 350 questionnaires were prepared and served among the college students, who were liable for overdue fine as per the circulation policy of college libraries of Lakhimpur District. Out of 350 questionnaires 61.71 %(216) respondents have responded to our questionnaires.

Table II: Gender wise distribution of respondents:

Sl. No	Gender	Respondents	Percentage
1	Male	89	41.20
2	Female	127	58.80

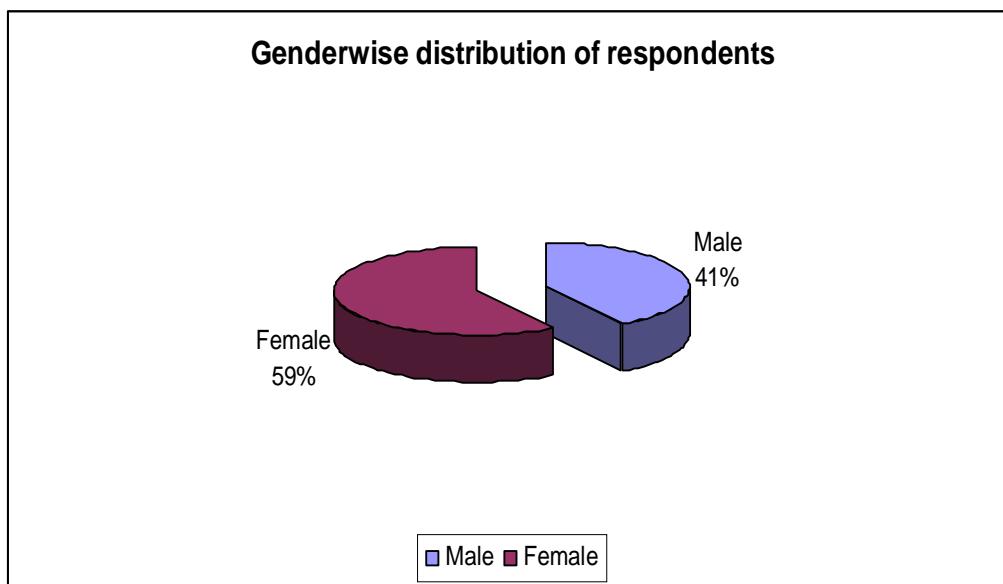
**Figure: I** Gender wise distribution of respondents.

Table II shows gender wise distribution of respondents. The number of female respondents was about 58.80 % (127) than the male counterpart with 41.20% (89) respondents.

Table III: Status of surveyed Colleges of Lakhimpur district of Assam:

SL No.	Name of the college	Year of establishment	Collection	Users
1	Bihpuria College	1973	8,700	650
2	Dhakuakhana College	1966	14,000	620
3	Kendriya Mahavidyalaya	1992	8,545	850
4	Lakhimpur Commerce College	1972	18,000	1045
5	Lakhimpur Girls' College	1972	33,400	1550
6	LTK College	1977	10,500	667
7	Madhabdev College	1964	24,255	1615
8	Naoboicha College	1985	9,950	525
9	North Bank College	1961	6,000	476
10	North Lakhimpur College	1952	38,000	2178
11	OPD College	1984	10,500	623
12	Sankardev Mahavidyalaya	1982	11,000	843

Table IV: Attitude of library users towards overdue fine:

Sl.No.	Attitude	Yes	No	Undecided	Total
1	Fine is a measure imposed against library defaulter	123 (56.94%)	90 (41.67%)	03 (1.39%)	100%
2	The lending periods of 15 days after which the fine is due is adequate	125 (57.87%)	81 (37.50%)	10 (4.63%)	100%
3	The number of books that library allows me to borrow is adequate	99 (45.83%)	109 (50.46%)	08 (3.71%)	100%
4	Library fines compel me to return borrowed books on time	117 (54.17%)	99 (45.83%)	0	100%
5	Library should reduce fine when fine is very high	124 (57.41%)	89 (41.20%)	03 (1.39%)	100%
6	Library fines should be scrapped.	139 (64.35%)	66 (30.55%)	11 (5.10%)	100%
7	I prefer to keep useful book beyond due date & to pay fine	112 (51.85%)	99 (45.83%)	05 (2.32%)	100%

The attitude of college library users towards overdue fine as shown in the Table IV revealed that 56.94 %(123) respondents were aware of the fact that overdue fine is a measure imposed against library defaulters 45.83 %(99) respondents were satisfied with the number of books that library allows to borrow. 57.87% (125) respondents felt that lending period 15 day after which the fine is due is adequate. Of course 37.50 %(81) respondents felt otherwise and 4.63 %(10) respondents didn't put any opinion in this regard. It is also revealed that 54.17 %(117) respondents felt that overdue fine compel users to return the borrowed book on time. It is also observed that 51.85 %(112) respondents prefer to keep important books beyond due date & pay fine. On the other hand 45.83 %(99) indicated that they didn't like to keep important book beyond date and pay fine. Data of Table IV also revealed that 64.35 % (139) respondents felt that library overdue fine should be scrapped. Only 30.55 %(66) respondents felt that it should be continue in order to compel library user to return the borrowed books in time. It is worthy to note that 57.41 %(124 respondents viewed that amount to library should reduced fine when overdue fine is high. On the contrary 41.20 %(89) respondents felt that reduction of overdue fine encourage the borrower to keep beyond due date. During survey period some college library users mentioned that they sometime request librarian in written to reduce the fine when overdue fine is high citing reasons like holiday, strike, ill health, project work. In fact librarian exempts the fine if borrowers cited genuine ground for the same.

Table V: Reasons of borrowing books for which library users pay overdue fines:

Sl. No.	Reasons	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Examination preparation	181 (83.80%)	35 (16.20%)	0
2	Supplementary reading(i.e. follow up to lecture reading)	138 (63.89%)	67 (31.02%)	11 (5.09%)
3	For general reading	164 (75.93%)	48 (22.22%)	04 (1.85%)
4	Project or Assignment	78 (36.11%)	129 (59.72%)	9 (4.17%)

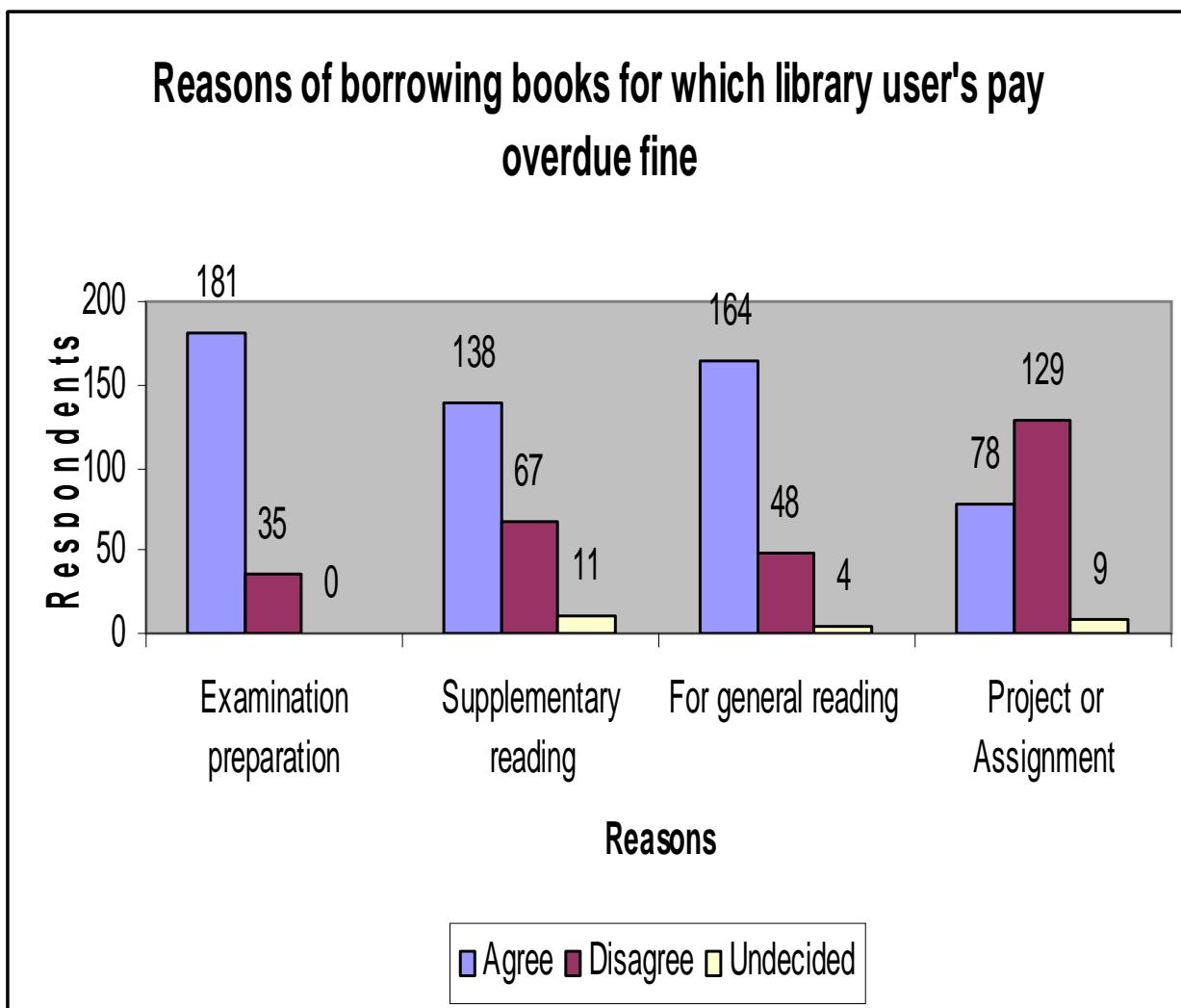
**Figure: II Reasons of borrowing books for which library users pay overdue fines.**

Table V revealed that there are many reasons of borrowing books for which library users pay overdue fines. Examination preparation, supplementary reading, general reading, and project or assignments etc. were the reasons as cited by the library users. It is interesting to note that 83.80 %(181) respondents borrow library books and preferred to keep important book beyond the due date and pay overdue fine because of examinations preparation. This is followed by 75.93 %(164) respondents general reading, 63.89 %(138) respondents for supplementary reading (i.e. follow up to lecture reading and 36.11 %(78) respondents for projects and assignments.

Table VI: Reasons for keeping library books beyond due date:

Sl.No	Reasons	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Forgetfulness	156 (72.22%)	51 (23.61%)	09 (4.17%)
2	Urge to keep it for more days	121 (56.02%)	95 (43.98%)	0
3	Not finished with the book	139 (64.35%)	65 (30.10%)	12 (5.55%)

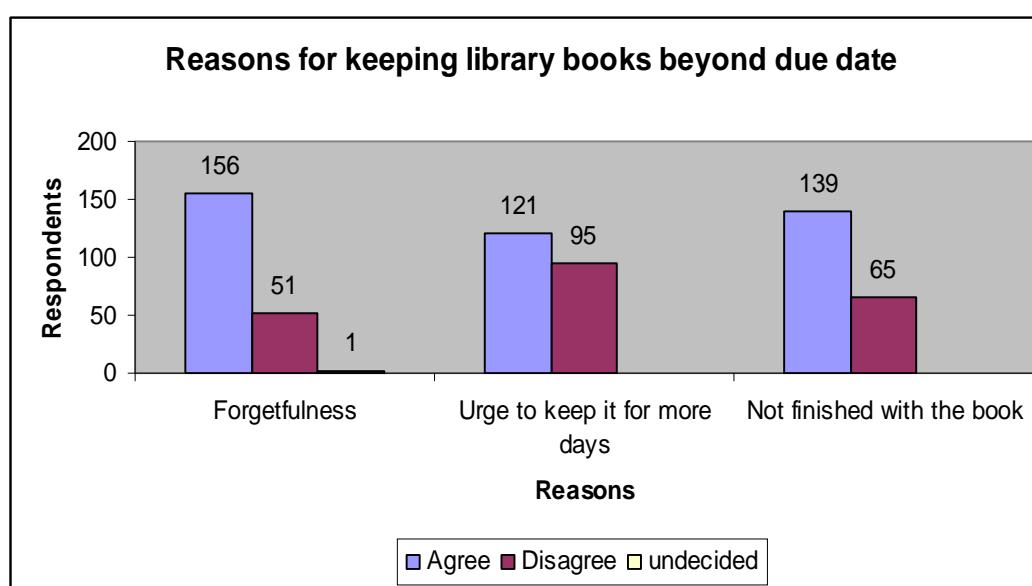


Figure: III Reasons for keeping library books beyond due date.

From Table VI, it is observed that there are many reasons for keeping library books beyond due date .Forgetfulness, urge to keep it for more days, not finished with the book were the reasons that most of the library users cited as reasons for which they keep

library books beyond due date. 72.22% (156) respondents viewed that they keep library book beyond due date due to forgetfulness 64.35% (139) respondents were ultimately agree that they used to keep library book beyond due date due to not finished with the book. However 56.02 % (121) respondents revealed that they keep library books beyond due that due to urge to keep it for more days.

Table VII: Measures against overdue books:

Sl. No.	Reasons	Agree	Disagree	Undecided
1	Sending overdue notice to defaulters	108 (50%)	97 (44.91%)	11 (5.10%)
2	Not allowing for renewals	137 (63.43%)	71 (32.87%)	8 (3.70%)
3	Charging overdue fines	121 (56.01%)	83 (38.43%)	12 (5.56%)
4	Refusing further book loans	167 (77.31%)	49 (22.69%)	0
5	Publishing defaulter's name on department or library notice board	92 (42.60%)	105 (48.60%)	19 (8.80%)
6	Reporting defaulters to head of the departments	88 (40.74%)	121 (56.02%)	07 (3.24%)
7	Withholding pass certificate	69 (31.94%)	129 (59.72%)	18 (8.34%)

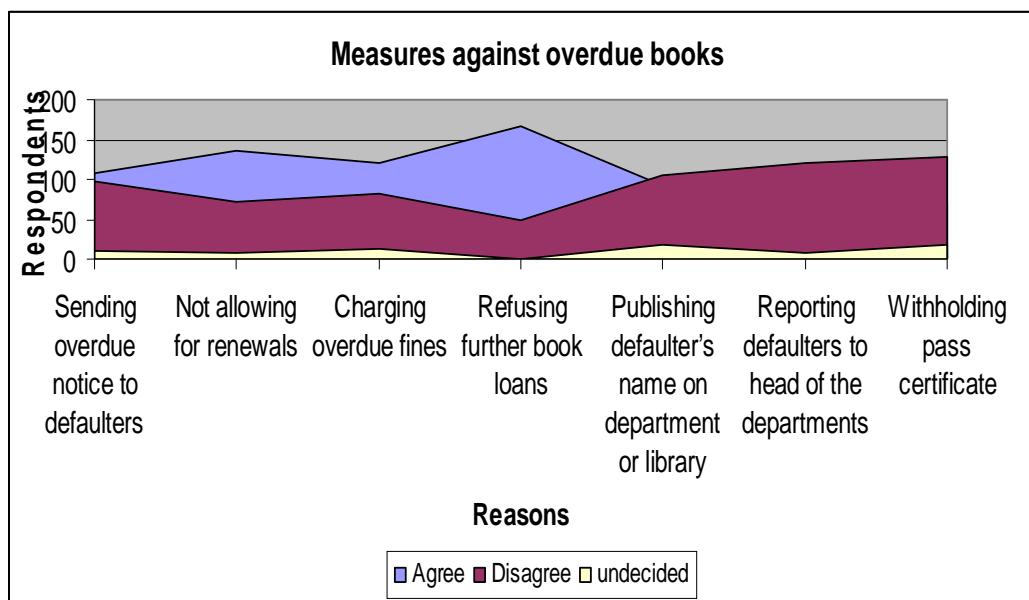


Figure: IV Measures against overdue books.

It is observed from the data that 50 %(108) respondents were agreed that keeping library books beyond the due date could be stopped by sending overdue notice. 63.43 % (137) of those respondents felt that not allowing for renewal could be a measure against overdue books. It was also observed from the data that 56.01 %(121) respondents felt that charging overdue fine for overdue book could be a measure against overdue book, because it compels users to return books in time. It is important to note that 77.31 %(167) respondents viewed that refusing further book loan may be a measure against overdue book. It is noteworthy that 48.60 %(105) respondents felt disagree, when library published defaulters name on department or library notice board. 3.24%(07) respondents did not put any comment when they were asked whether reporting defaulters name to head of the department can be a measure against overdue book. It is very interesting to note that 31.94 % (69) respondents were in favour of withholding pass certificate as a measure against overdue book.

7. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Overdue book is one of the common problems in all types of library. Different types of library have been applying different types of measures to bring back the overdue library book through out the globe. Overdue fine is one of the most widely used measures imposed against overdue borrowers to compel to return the borrowed library books. It doesn't aim to collect fine and to generate revenue. Survey conducted for this study revealed that college library users of the Lakhimpur District were in favour of it, because they felt that some of the borrowers intentionally keep books with their custody beyond due date. In order to compel these categories of user's overdue fine is an effective measure. Examination preparation, supplementary reading i.e. follow up to lecture reading, project works and assignment are the reasons of borrowing library books for which library users pay overdue fines. Finding revealed that users keep the book beyond

due date, because of forgetfulness, urge to keep it for more days and due to not finished with the book. 37.50 %(81) of the users indicated that lending periods i.e. 15 days is not sufficient to finish the borrowed book and therefore suggested to extend for one month. All above these, in order to minimize it into a certain level first of all library should make aware all registered members about the lending period, borrowing privilege, and the penalty imposed against overdue library books. This could be possible through library orientation to newly registered members in the beginning of each academic year and uploading the circulation policy in library webpage in details. Beside this privilege of online renewal provision; online reservation facilities and mobile alert also can help to a great extent to minimize overdue books. A user may not finished a borrowed book with the stimulate time. In this case provision should be made for the user's to renew the borrowed for further 15 days without visiting library through online. Provision of online reservation is also another way to minimize over due fine. These facilities provide privilege to users to reserve the borrowed library books which are used by other users. Sending mobile alert, refusing further book loans, publishing defaulter's name on department or library notice board, reporting defaulters name to the head of departments and withholding pass certificate etc. could be the measures to minimize overdue books. Besides these, library must give importance in collection development, identify the demand of the most used title and procure more copies if possible from the fine collected. The authority should authorized library to purchase multiple copies of highly demand book in order to minimize overdue fine in future. In Indian college libraries, text book level use is a predominant one. Most of the college students do not know how to make an effective use of the college library. In order to optimize the use of a college library, it would be useful to educate the users of the library at a regular interval.

8. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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