A Study on Information Seeking Behaviour of the Users of District Central Libraries in Southern Tamil Nadu, India

V. Murugapandi
Librarian
TIPS College of Arts and Science,
361/1A, Karuvalur Road,
Coimbatore - 641 107. Tamilnadu, India

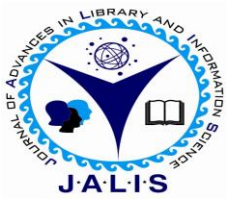
Abstract

The public library, rightly called "People's University", is collecting, organizing and disseminating information to 'one and all'. The dream is yet to be realized in many developing countries of the world in general and in India, in particular. The modern public library is not merely a storehouse of Knowledge but is also a centre of information, engaged in the activity of dissemination of right information to all its users according to their needs. This paper exposed the Information Access Pattern by the Users of District Central Libraries in Southern Tamilnadu, India. The study found that more than one fifth of respondents visit the library twice a week. 27% of the respondents visit the library to read newspapers. 30.5% of the respondents' purpose of information search is preparation for examination. 36.1% respondents agree that the extension activities increase the utilization of resources of the library. 35.9% respondents are satisfied with the visit to the library.

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Keywords
Public Library; District Central Library; Use of Information

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INTRODUCTION

The public library is expected to serve all the people irrespective of caste, creed, sex, religion, nationality and even the levels of educational attainment of the user and "The significance of the public library to its users will generally be demonstrated by the facilities which it offers to them. It will be judged by the extent to which it fulfils what the readers demand of it, by the extent to which it meets the general and any special requirements of adults and children" [1]. The source material of such centers naturally needs to be in the form of books, periodicals, magazines, the recorded cassettes, video-cassettes of educational and informative films which can effectively pass on the information required by the adults and children, literate and the illiterate.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following are the main objectives of the study:

- To study the demographic characteristics of District Central Libraries (Public) users in Southern Tamilnadu.
- To study users' frequency of visit to the District Central Libraries of Southern Tamilnadu.
- To know the purpose of visiting the public library by the users.
- To get the opinion from the users regarding the various types of information sources.
- To get the opinion from the users regarding the extension activities rendered by the District Central Libraries of Southern Tamilnadu.
- To get the opinion from the library users regarding the sources and services rendered by the District Central Libraries of southern Tamilnadu.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is a descriptive method. The questionnaires are used to collect the primary data. For this study, convenience Random sampling method was adopted for collecting Primary data. A sample including library users was selected from all the 9 District Central Libraries in Southern Tamilnadu. Seventy-five users are selected for a research sample from 9 District Central Libraries; hence, the sample size is 675. Primary data have been collected from December 2021 to July 2022.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The topic of the research study is "A Study on Information access pattern by the users of the District Central Libraries in Southern Tamilnadu, India". The target group of this study includes library users of the nine District Central Libraries in Southern Tamilnadu. A detailed study on 9 District Central Libraries of Tamilnadu such as: 1. The District Central Library, Dindigul 2. The District Central Library, Kanniyakumari 3. The District Central Library, Madurai 4. The District Central Library, Ramanathapuram 5. The District Central Library, Sivagangai 6. The District Central Library, Theni 7. The District Central Library, Thirunelveli 8. The District Central Library, Thoothukudi and 9. The District Central Library, Virudhunagar, have been taken up and analyzed. The geographical area of this study is confined only to Dindigul, Kanniyakumari, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Sivagangai, Theni, Thirunelveli, Thoothukudi, and Virudhunagar district only.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

AjithaKumari and Francis (2015)[2] conducted a study on "Public Library System in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala: An investigation". Public libraries provide a wide range of information products and services to benefit its user community. A public library is considered as the gateway to Knowledge, freedom, prosperity and the development of the society. The individuals in a society must have fundamental human values as per the UNESCO declaration.. An attempt was made to evaluate the use of A-Grade public libraries in Thiruvananthapuram District by the users, purpose of using libraries, and present an overview of public libraries. This study suggests ways of reorienting the public libraries with IT enabled sources and services for the better development of the community as a whole.

Brown (2004)[3] has studied the reference service for children in the public libraries of Australia. The study revealed that 1) the reference needs of the children are primarily the requirement of information to enable them to complete a given school assignment; 2) for the successful reference transaction, the librarian needs to be conscious of children's wants and needs; 3) it is important to create an environment in which the children and their questions are taken up seriously; 4) to facilitate the delivery of quality reference and information services to children, it is important to have accepted the guidelines or standards; and 5) the need for specific evaluation methods for children's reference services will increase the quality of the reference service.

Kefas (2015)[4] surveyed the users' satisfaction with public library services in Mubi Adamawa State. The study examines the types of services rendered and the resources available. The study reveals that most of the materials are outdated though relevant, imbalanced collection which means their needs are not adequate the library is faced with the problem of information retrieval tools, the services provided by the library is not adequate. It was recommended at least 10-15% of the annual educational grant in the state should be allocated to the public library development, the library should adopt a defined classification scheme on which materials can be classified and organized systematically on the shelves. Kinya (2011)[5] reported the outcomes of a users "survey of 32 public libraries in Kenya under Kenya National Library Services (KNLS)". This research paper is intended to help public libraries librarians, managers and management decide how to integrate resources and services so that most users can understand them well enough to make productive choices. As regards the general facilities the users were not satisfied with the size of the library and display of new books. The study concluded that Public library services are weak in many localities. Due to the non-availability of adequate library resources in the concerned academic institutions, students are diverted to KNLS.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by gender and age

Particulars		**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage**
Gender	Male	439	65
	Female	236	35
Age	Below 20	175	25.9
	21-25	248	36.7
	26-30	137	20.3
	31-40	66	9.8
	41 and above	49	7.3
Total		**675**	**100**

Table 1 reveals the distribution of respondents by gender and age. In this study, 439 (65%) respondents are male while 236 (35%) respondents are female. Hence nearly two thirds of the respondents belong to the category of male. Among the overall 675 respondents, 175 (25.9%) respondents belong to the category of Age below 20, 248 (36.7%) respondents belong to between 21-25, 137 (20.3%) respondents

belong to between 26-30, 66 (9.8%) respondents belong to between 31-40 and 49 (7.3%) respondents belong to between 41 and above age group. Hence more than one third of the respondents belong to the age group of 21-25.

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification and Domicile sector

S. No	Domicile sector	Educational Qualification (%)								Total N
		S.S.L.C	H. Sc	U.G	P.G	M.Phil	Ph.D	Diploma	Others	
1	Rural	38 (15%)	67 (26.5%)	66 (26.1%)	28 (11.1%)	19 (7.5%)	8 (3.2%)	15 (5.9%)	12 (4.7%)	253
2	Urban	28 (6.6%)	79 (18.7%)	119 (28.2%)	62 (14.7%)	42 (10%)	29 (6.9%)	36 (8.5%)	27 (6.4%)	422
Total		66	146	185	90	61	37	51	39	675

It is portrayed in the table 2 that among the respondents of rural category, 38 (15%) respondents have S.S.L.C qualification, 67 (26.5%) have HSC, 66 (26.1%) have U.G, 28 (11.1%) have P.G, 19 (7.5%) have M.Phil, 8 (3.2%) have Ph.D, 15 (5.9%) have Diploma and 12 (4.7%) have other qualifications. Of the respondents of urban category, 28 (6.6%) respondents have S.S.L.C qualification, 79 (18.7%) have HSC, 119 (28.2%) have U.G, 62 (14.7%) have P.G, 42 (10%) have M.Phil, 29 (6.9%) have Ph.D, 36 (8.5%) have Diploma and 27 (6.4%) have other qualifications. It is concluded that more than one fifth of the respondents belong to the category of U.G qualification.

Table 3: Frequency of visit the library by the respondents of Gender

S. No	Gender	Frequency of visit (%)						Total N
		Daily	Twice in a week	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Rarely	
1.	Male	110 (25.1)	119 (27.1)	65 (14.8)	74 (16.9)	54 (12.3)	17 (3.9)	439
2.	Female	42 (17.8)	64 (27.1)	41 (17.4)	38 (16.1)	35 (14.8)	16 (6.8)	236
Total		152 (22.5)	183 (27.1)	106 (15.7)	112 (16.6)	89 (13.2)	33 (4.9)	675

Table 3 presents the frequency of visit the library by the respondents of gender. It is understood from the above table that among the respondents of male category, 110 (25.1%) of them visit to the library daily, 119 (27.1%) of them twice in a week, 65 (14.8%) of them weekly, 74 (16.9%) of them fortnightly, 54 (12.3%) of them monthly and 17 (3.9%) of them rarely respectively. Of the respondents of female category, 42 (17.8%) of them visit to the library daily, 64 (27.1%) of them twice in a week, 41 (17.4%) of them weekly, 38 (16.1%) of them fortnightly, 35 (14.8%) of them monthly and 16 (6.8%) of them rarely respectively. Hence most of the respondents visit the library twice in a week.

Testing of Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis

There is no association between the respondents' gender and their frequency of visiting to the library.

Chi-Square Test			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	7.688[a]	5	.174
Likelihood Ratio	7.688	5	.174
Linear-by-Linear Association	5.087	1	.024
N of Valid Cases	675		
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.54.			

The above output gives the frequency of visit to the library by gender-wise respondents. Pearson's χ^2 is 7.688 for 5 degrees of freedom, i.e., [(r-1) (c-1)]=[(2-1) (6-1)]. The p-value 0.174 is greater than 0.05. The difference is considered not significant. Hence the Null hypothesis is accepted and therefore, there is no association between the respondents' gender and their frequency of visiting to the library.

Table 4: Purpose of visit the libraries by the respondents of marital status N-675

S. No	Marital Status	Options (%)								
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**
1.	Married N=264	67 (25.4)	69 (26.1)	60 (22.7)	29 (11)	49 (18.6)	33 (12.5)	51 (19.3)	38 (14.4)	16 (6.1)
2.	Unmarried N=411	115 (28)	91 (22.1)	76 (18.5)	41 (10)	81 (19.7)	56 (13.6)	44 (10.7)	19 (4.6)	18 (4.4)

1- Reading Newspaper, **2**-General Knowledge, **3**-To borrow/return books, **4**-Research purpose **5**- For academic improvement, **6**- Entertainment, **7**- To Prepare for the Competitive Examinations, **8**- E-resources, **9**- Other purposes

Table 4 discusses the purpose of visit the libraries by the respondents of marital status. The following information has been derived from the respondents of married category, 67 (25.4%) of them visit the library to read newspaper, 69 respondents (26.1%) general Knowledge, 60 respondents (22.7%) to borrow or return books, 29 respondents (11%) research purpose, 49 respondents (18.6%) academic improvement, 33 respondents (12.5%) entertainment, 51 respondents (19.3%) to prepare for the competitive examinations, 38 respondents (14.4%) e-resources and 16 respondents (6.1%) for other purposes. Of the respondents of unmarried category, 115 (28%) of them visit the library to read newspaper, 91 respondents (22.1%) general Knowledge, 76 respondents (18.5%) to borrow or to return books, 41 respondents (10%) research purpose, 81 respondents (19.7%) academic improvement, 56 respondents (13.6%) entertainment, 44 respondents (10.7%) to prepare for the competitive examinations, 19 respondents (4.6%) e-resources and 18 respondents (4.4%) for other purposes.

Table 5: Purpose of information search

S. No	Options	No. of Responses	% of valid respondents (N=675)	% of overall esponses (N=1281)	Rank
1.	Writing an article or a book	157	23.3	12.3	5
2.	Undertaking research	124	18.4	9.7	7
3.	Research Guidance	138	20.4	10.8	6
4.	Classroom teaching	194	28.7	15.1	2
5.	Public speaking	171	25.3	13.3	4
6.	Updating of Knowledge	172	25.5	13.4	3
7.	Preparation for examination	206	30.5	16.1	1
8.	Any other purpose	119	17.6	9.3	8
Total		1281	189.7	100	

Table 5 presents the opinion on the purpose of the information search. It is inferred from the above study, 23.3% of the respondents search information for writing an article or a book and it has got the fifth rank, 18.4% respondents undertaking research and it has got the seventh rank, 20.4% respondents research guidance and it has got the sixth rank, 28.7% respondents classroom teaching and it has got the second rank, 25.3% respondents public speaking and it has got the fourth rank, 25.5% respondents updating of Knowledge and it has got the third rank, 30.5% respondents preparation for the examination and it has got the first rank and 17.6% respondents others purpose and it has got the eighth rank. Hence most of the respondents search the information for preparation of examination.

Table 6: Opinion about the various types of information sources

S. No	Sources	Opinion (%)			
		Highly preferred	**Partially Preferred**	**No comments**	**Less preferred**
1	Journals	360 (53.3)	173 (25.6)	90 (13.3)	52 (7.7)
2	Technical report/annual reports	169 (25)	310 (45.9)	132 (19.6)	64 (9.5)
3	Books	229 (33.9)	210 (31.1)	189 (28)	47 (7)
4	References sources (Encyclopaedias. Dictionaries etc.)	167 (24.7)	242 (35.9)	184 (27.3)	82 (12.1)
5	Other sources	204 (30.2)	153 (22.7)	222 (32.9)	96 (14.2)

Table 6 reveals the opinion about the various types of information sources. In this study, most library users highly prefer the aforesaid information sources. The computed results of mean, standard deviation and coefficient of variation of the users' opinion on various types of information sources are given below.

Table 7: Average and stability of opinion about the various types of information sources

S. No.	Sources	Mean	Standard Deviation	Coefficient of Variation
1	Journals	3.25	0.96	29.48
2	Technical report/annual reports	2.87	0.90	31.38
3	Books	2.92	0.94	32.36
4	References sources (Encyclopaedias. Dictionaries etc.)	2.73	0.97	35.40
5	Any other, please specify	2.69	1.05	39.09

Table 7 shows the average and stability of opinion about various information sources. In order to know the coefficient of variation of the users' opinion on library sources, scores of 4,3,2 and 1 are given to responses of highly preferred, partially preferred, no comments, less preferred respectively.

The coefficient of variation is higher in other sources which constituted 39.09 per cent and lower in journals which constituted 29.48 per cent. It is concluded from the above analysis, that the coefficient of variation is higher in other sources which lead to less consistent or stable and it is less in journals which leads to more consistent or stable with regard to the users' opinion about the various types of information sources.

Table 8: Opinion about the Library Extension activities increase the utilization of resources of the library by the respondents of gender

S. No.	Gender	Opinion (%)					Total N
		Strongly agree	**Agree**	**No comments**	**Disagree**	**Strongly disagree**	
1.	Male	97 (22.1)	139 (31.7)	61 (13.9)	95 (21.6)	47 (10.7)	439
2.	Female	47 (19.9)	105 (44.5)	32 (13.6)	29 (12.3)	23 (9.7)	236
Total		144	244	93	124	70	675

Table 8 discusses the opinion about the library extension activities that increase the utilization of the resources of the library by the respondents of gender. Of the respondents of the male category, 97 respondents (22.1%) strongly agree with extension activities increase the utilization of resources of the library, 139 respondents (31.7%) agree, 61 respondents (13.9%) have not expressed any comments, 95 respondents (21.6%) disagree and 47 respondents (10.7%) strongly disagree. Among the respondents of the female category, 47 respondents (19.9%) strongly agree with the extension activities that increase the utilization of resources of the library, 105 respondents (44.5%) agree, 32 respondents (13.6%) have not expressed any comments, 29 respondents (12.3%) disagree and 23 respondents (9.7%) strongly disagree.

Testing of Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis

There is no association between the respondents' the gender and their opinion about the library extension activities that increase the utilization of resources of the library.

MANN –WHITNEY Test

The following procedure for scoring was adopted for analyzing the data in Mann –whitney test.
Strongly Agree 5, Agree 4, No comments 3, Disagree 2 and Strongly Disagree 1

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Opinion	Male	43	328.9	144417.0
	Female	23	354.8	83733.0
	Total	67		

Test Statistics[a]

	Opinion
Mann-Whitney U	47837.00
Wilcoxon W	144417.00
Z	-1.69
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.08

a. Grouping Variable: gender

Since Man-Whitney's U value is 47837.000 and the exact p-value for 2 tailed is 0.089 which is > 0.05, the null hypothesis can be accepted at 0.05 level of not significant. There is enough evidence to conclude that there is no association between the respondents' the gender and their opinion about the library extension activities that increase the utilization of resources of the library.

Table 9: Level of Satisfaction of overall visit to the District Central Libraries by the respondents of various educational Qualifications

S. No	Educational qualification	Opinion (%)				Total N
		Highly satisfied	Satisfied	No comments	Not satisfied	
1.	S.S.L.C	10 (15.2)	17 (25.8)	21 (31.8)	18 (27.3)	66
2.	H.SC	13 (8.9)	56 (38.4)	36 (24.7)	41 (28.1)	146

3.	U.G	36 (19.5)	70 (37.8)	35 (18.9)	44 (23.8)	185
4.	P.G	14 (15.6)	33 (36.7)	11 (12.2)	32 (35.6)	90
5.	M.Phil	13 (21.3)	24 (39.3)	19 (31.1)	5 (8.2)	61
6.	Ph.D	7 (18.9)	15 (40.5)	8 (21.6)	7 (18.9)	37
7.	Diploma	14 (27.5)	14 (27.5)	11 (21.6)	12 (23.5)	51
8.	Others	8 (20.5)	13 (33.3)	7 (17.9)	11 (28.2)	39
Total		115	242	148	170	675

Table 9 shows the level of satisfaction of the overall visit to the District Central Libraries by the respondents of various educational qualifications. Of the respondents of the S.S.L.C category, 10 (15.2%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 17 (25.8%) of them are satisfied, 21 (31.8%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 18 (27.3%) of them are not satisfied. Among the respondents of the H.SC category, 13 (8.9%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 56 (38.4%) of them are satisfied, 36 (24.7%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 41 (28.1%) of them are not satisfied. Of the respondents of the U.G category, 36 (19.5%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 70 (37.8%) of them are satisfied, 35 (18.9%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 44 (23.8%) of them are not satisfied. Among the respondents of the P.G category, 14 (15.6%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 33 (36.7%) of them are satisfied, 11 (12.2%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 32 (35.6%) of them are not satisfied. Of the respondents of the M.Phil category, 13 (21.3%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 24 (39.3%) of them are satisfied, 19 (31.1%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 5 (8.2%) of them are not satisfied. Among the respondents of the Ph.D category, 7 (18.9%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 15 (40.5%) of them are satisfied, 8 (21.6%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 7 (18.9%) of them are not satisfied. Of the respondents of the diploma category, 14 (27.5%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 14 (27.5%) of them are satisfied, 11 (21.6%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 12 (23.5%) of them are not satisfied. Among the respondents of other categories, 8 (20.5%) of them are highly satisfied with the visit to the library, 13 (33.3%) of them are satisfied, 7 (17.9%) respondents have not expressed any comments and 11 (39%) of them are not satisfied. Hence, most respondents are satisfied with the visit to the District Central Libraries of Southern Tamilnadu.

FINDINGS

- 27.4% of the respondents have the Undergraduate qualification.
- Among the respondents of male category, more than one fifth of respondents visit the library twice a week. Among the respondents of female category, more than one fifth of respondents visit the library twice a week.
- It is inferred from Chi-Square analysis that there is no association between the respondents' gender and their frequency of visit to the library.
- Among the respondents of married category, 26.1% of the respondents visit the library to get general Knowledge. Among the respondents of unmarried category, 28% of the respondents visit the library to read newspapers.
- 30.5% of the respondents' purpose of information search is preparation for examination.
- The coefficient of variation is higher in other sources which lead to less consistent or stable and it is less in journals which lead to more consistent or stable concerning the users' opinion about the various types of information sources.
- Among the respondents of the male category, 31.7% respondents agree that the extension activities increase the utilization of resources of the library. Among the respondents of the female category, 44.5% respondents agree that the extension activities increase the utilization of resources of the library.
- It is inferred from Mann-Whitney test analysis that there is no association between the respondents' the gender and their opinion about

the library extension activities that increase the utilization of library resources.

- Of the respondents of various educational qualifications, 35.9% of the users are satisfied with visit to the District Central Libraries of southern Tamilnadu.

CONCLUSION

Users, on whom the library depends on for its survival, would visit the library, when they find it warm, comfortable, friendly, useful and an intellectually stimulating place. To achieve this, the library professionals should not only deal cordially and intelligently with the users, but also try to provide full satisfaction, making their visit worthwhile. There is an old saying that "opening of a library will lead to closing of one prison", Crimes and criminals will be reduced. Public libraries help eradicate the illiteracy of the people and promote the people's reading habits. Reading habits and information literacy will promote the people in all aspects. Hence the Government of India and the Government of Tamilnadu should take more care to enhance public libraries' sources, services and physical facilities.

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