

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)

Libraries at University of Nebraska-Lincoln

12-2-2021

An Assessment of Reading Habits and Use of Public Library Resources by Rural Women of Sivasagar District: A Survey

Parishmita Hazarika

North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, parishmitah8@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac>



Part of the [Scholarly Communication Commons](#)

Hazarika, Parishmita, "An Assessment of Reading Habits and Use of Public Library Resources by Rural Women of Sivasagar District: A Survey" (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6884. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6884>

An Assessment of Reading Habits and Use of Public Library Resources by Rural Women
of Sivasagar District: A Survey

Parishmita Hazarika

PhD Research Scholar

Department of Library and Information Science

North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong

Email: parishmitah8@gmail.com

Abstract

The public library is a local information hub that makes all types of knowledge and information freely available to its users. Its doors are open to all members of the community for full and unrestricted access to its resources and services, regardless of caste, sex, or religion. Public libraries today play an important role in the life of the community. The purpose of this study is to evaluate rural women's reading habits and use of public library resources and services. The study focused on, the purpose of library visits, the frequency of library visits by public library users, the amount of time spent in the library, and the level of satisfaction with the available resources and services. For this purpose, the researcher designed a well-structured questionnaire as a data collection tool. The results reveal that the library is valuable; the services are satisfactory for the majority of users which allowing them to stay current and improve their information searching skills in both their professional and leisure time. The study's findings will aid library and information science professionals working in public libraries to better understand the reading habits of rural women. The study's findings will have significant implications for public library infrastructure, reading materials, and the establishment of women-oriented services.

Keywords: Public libraries, Reading habits, User Perceptions, Rural Women

1. Introduction

Reading is the process of deciphering printed and written text. It is an individual and comprehensive strategic process. According to many educators, authors, and leaders reading is an important instrument for knowledge transfer. In this sense, reading has evolved into an intellectual activity that improves an individual's reading abilities. Reading is a vital component for the development of individuals' personalities and mental capacities. Reading provides access to social, economic, and civic life in addition to personal and mental development. The habit of reading is one of the most powerful and long-lasting influences on one's own development and social progress. Reading's fundamental goal in the information age is to develop individuals who can imagine, articulate it appropriately, criticise, inquire, understand, put the information into practise, and transmit it on to others. Reading lubricates the mind, enriches the intellect, expands the mind, enhances experiences, elevates morals, stimulates emotions, and, most importantly, provides manners. Reading habit of the library users has been an active area of interest for librarians and information scientists in the context of knowing utilization of resources and services of the library.

1.1.The Role of Public Libraries in Promoting Reading Habits

The public library as the community's gateway to knowledge, serves as a foundation for long-term learning, independent decision-making, and cultural development for individuals and communities. A public library is a community-based organisation that is developed, funded, and founded by the community, whether through the local, regional, or national government or another community-based group. Public libraries have a long history as social institutions that deal with the development, organisation, preservation, and management of reading materials as well as providing information services to users in order to fulfil their different information demands.

To build the reading habits among citizen is one of the primary functions of the public library. The public library is free and open to the public, making it a perfect place for people from all walks of life to read. The community is served by this social institution. Its responsibility to the people is to function as a custodian of knowledge and to transfer it on to the next generation. The public library is a local information centre that makes all types of knowledge and information readily available to its users. The public library supports

people from all backgrounds of life, regardless of their religion, race, ethnicity, age, educational background, or other factors. As a result, it is assumed that the public library is inextricably related to people's reading habits.

2. Literature Review

Kasimani and Rajendran (2019) investigated user satisfaction in Tamil Nadu district central library. They stated that a developing society's backbone is the public library. According to the findings, the borrow and return of books is the most popular activity among library visitors, accounting for 62 (24.80%).

Mahipal (2017) conducted a study to explore reading habit of public library users of Bastar Reason Chhattisgarh. The study found that most users regularly use the public library to update their knowledge and 30% of the library users visit library once a week. Respondents present a dismal outlook of the libraries. Library services were rated as 'average' by users. Financial deficit and lack of computers, infrastructure and personnel have stagnated the development of the libraries of Bastar Reason.

Kavitha and Lakshmi (2016) stated that libraries provide secure and trustworthy access to information. The study discussed the profile of public libraries, the barriers that prevent frequent visits to public libraries, the services provided by public libraries, and the users' satisfaction with them. The frequency with which respondents read newspapers and magazines is determined by their age and marital status. The availability of newspapers (533) was rated highly by respondents, followed by the availability of books (524) and magazines (492). The level of satisfaction of library users varies according to their gender and the amount of time they spend in the library. As Per the study, computerization and resource networking may aid in raising the status of public libraries to international standards.

Gilbert (2015) used a well-designed questionnaire and a random sampling method to investigate the level of user satisfaction with public library services in Mubi, Adamawa State. According to the study, state governments should allocate up to 10-15 percent of annual education funds to public library development According to the study's findings, 46.7% of respondents were satisfied with library collections, 38.67% were satisfied with library material organisation, and 33.3% were satisfied with library personnel's attitude.

The analysis reveals that the library is confronted with the issue of information retrieval tools, and the services given by the library are insufficient.

According to Mary and Dhanavandan (2014) women should be able to benefit from libraries without any barriers, and public libraries should allow equal access to men and women. The researchers discovered that 64 (29.63%) of rural women visit public libraries to read the newspaper, and 54 (25 %) of respondents stated that they visit the libraries to read books or periodicals.

3. Objectives of the Study

- To investigate about the reading habits of Sivasagar District's rural women.
- To ascertain the use pattern of various reading materials as well as the level of satisfaction among rural women of Sivasagar District.
- To identify the constraints that rural women encounter in accessing public library resources and services.
- To make recommendations to improve the resources and services available in public libraries to rural women.

4. Scope and Methodology of the Study

The study's scope is confined to reading habits and the use of public library resources, and the population is limited to rural women residing in the Sivasagar District of Assam. 170 questionnaires were randomly distributed among rural women public library patrons for this study, and over 134 questionnaires were returned, with 12 of them being incomplete. With a response rate of 72 percent, the remaining 122 questionnaires were found appropriate and the same are evaluated for the study. MS Excel was used to analyse the acquired data.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

The valid data collected from the respondents are analysed and presented in the following sections.

5.1.Socio Demographic Profile

Table 1 shows the socio demographic profile of the respondents. For the purposes of data analysis, library patrons were grouped by their age, education, and occupation.

Table 1: Socio Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (N=122)	Percentage
Age	20-30 years	30	24.6%
	31-40 years	35	28.7%
	41-50 years	24	19.7%
	51-60 years	19	15.5%
	60 and above	14	11.5%
Education	HSLC	33	27%
	HS	35	29%
	Graduate	40	33%
	Post Graduate	14	11%
Occupation	House-wives	51	43%
	Government employees	17	14%
	Self-employees	28	23%
	Private employees	26	21%

According to the findings, 30 (24.6%) respondents were between the ages of 20 – 30, 35(28.7%) were between the ages of 31 – 40, 24(19.7%) were between the ages of 41 – 50, 19(15.5 %) were between the ages of 51 – 60, and 14(11.5%) were 60 years and older. When it comes to educational attainment, it was discovered that the majority of the respondents 33% are graduates, followed by 14 (11%) have completed their post-graduation, 35 (29%) have done H.S, and 33 (27%) have passed HSLC. It can also be noted

that 51 (43%) of the 122 women are housewives, with 17 (14%) working in government institutes, 28 (23%) self-employed, and 26 (21%) working in private institutes.

5.2. Reading Habits of Rural Women

The frequency of library patrons' reading habits is shown in Table 2. Every day reading was cited by 53.27% of respondents, followed by usually (39.24%) and occasionally (11.49%). According to the results, the majority of respondents had reading habits and read every day.

Table 2: Reading Habits among the Respondents

Reading habit	No. of response	Percentage
Every day	65	53.27%
Usually	43	35.24%
Occasionally	14	11.49%
Total	122	100%

5.3. Frequency of Public Library Use

This study sought to determine the frequency of the library users in visiting the public library. The users were asked how often they visited a public library. Daily, once a week, once a month, and sometimes were the alternatives.

Table 3: Frequency of Public Library Use

Frequency of Visits	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Every Day	30	24.6
Once in a week	46	37.70
Once in a month	20	16.39
Occasionally	26	21.31
Total	122	100%

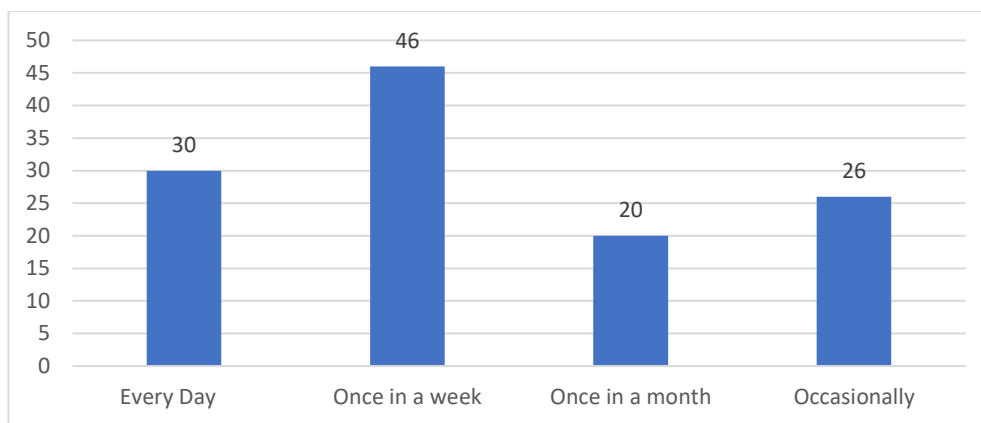


Figure number. 1: Frequency of Public Library Use

Table 3 and Figure No. 1 indicate the respondents' frequency of library visits. The result shows that the majority of users 46(37.70%) visit the library once a week, followed by 30(24.6%) every day, and users who prefer to visit once a month are 20(16.39%) and occasionally 26(21.31%). It indicates that a considerable number of people visit the library at least once a week.

5.4. Purpose of Visit to the Public Library

Table 4 and Figure no. 2 illustrate the data on the purpose of visits to the public library. It is revealed that the majority of respondents 43 (35%) use the library to read newspapers and magazines, followed by 34 (28 %) who use the library to borrow books, and 28 (23%) who read to search for required information. The library is used by a very small percentage of respondents to refer to rare materials 10 (8.20%) and to spend leisure time 7(5.8%). According to the findings, the majority of respondents visit the public library to borrow books and read newspapers and magazines.

Table 4: Purpose of Visit to the Public Library

Purposes	No. of Respondents	Percentage
To borrow books	34	28%
To read newspapers/magazines	43	35%
To seek information	28	23%
To refer rare materials	10	8.20%
To spend leisure time	7	5.8%
Total	122	100%

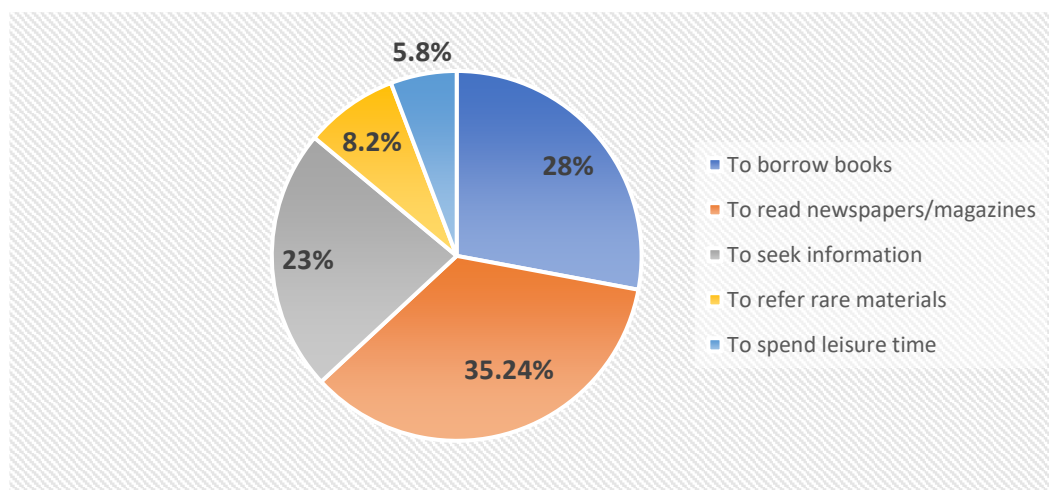


Figure number. 2: Purpose of Use of Public Library

5.5. Amount of Time Spent in the Library

Table 5 and figure no. 3 illustrate the amount of time spent by the respondents for reading at the public library. The statistics shows that the majority of respondents, 36 (29.50%) spend an hour in the library, while 30 (24.7%) are unsure. The figure clearly shows that just a small percentage of respondents 16(13%) use the public library for half an hour, with 22(18%) using it for two hours, and 18 (14.8%) using it for three hours or more.

Table 5: Time Spent in the Library

Time spent in the library	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Half an hour	16	13%
An hour	36	29.50%
Two hours	22	18%
Three hours and above	18	14.8%
Not sure	30	24.7%
Total	122	100%

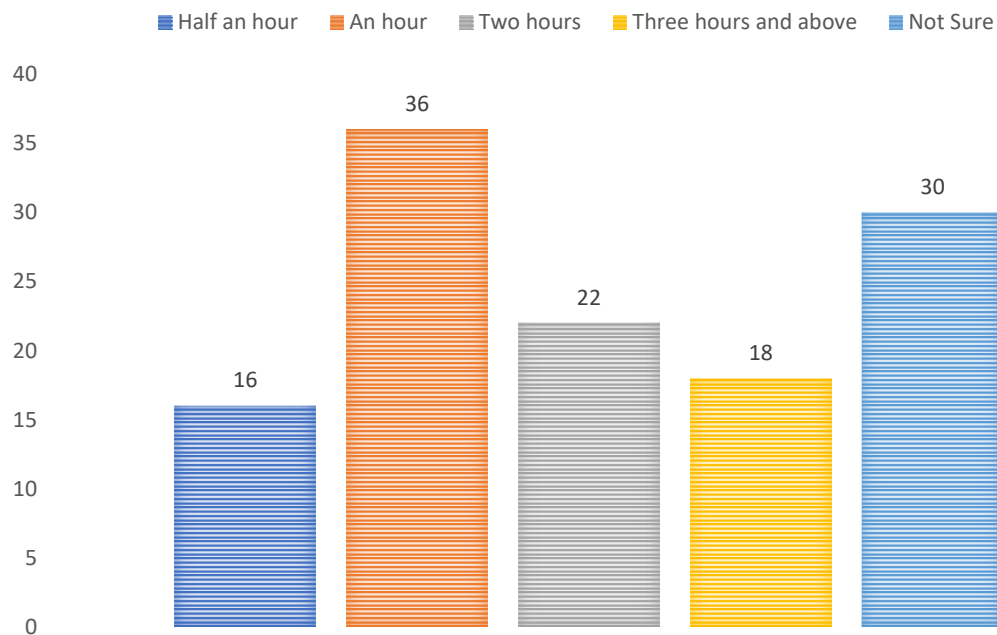


Figure number. 3: Time Spent in the Library

5.6. Barriers to Library Use

The constraints faced by the respondents in using the public library are shown in Table 6 and Figure no. 4. The data shows that 55 (45.07%) of the respondents are unable to access the library on a daily basis due to a lack of time. However, 32% of respondents said that distance is the most significant barrier to frequent library use. Furthermore, 11% of them said they couldn't find relevant resources, and another 4% stated they were dissatisfied with the quality of library services.

Table 6: Problems in Making Use of the Public Library

Problems	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Lack of time to visit the library	55	45.07%
Library is located far away	39	32%
Inadequate reading materials	14	11.47%
Lack of user education	10	8.19%
Unsatisfied with the quality of library services	4	3.27%
Total	122	100%

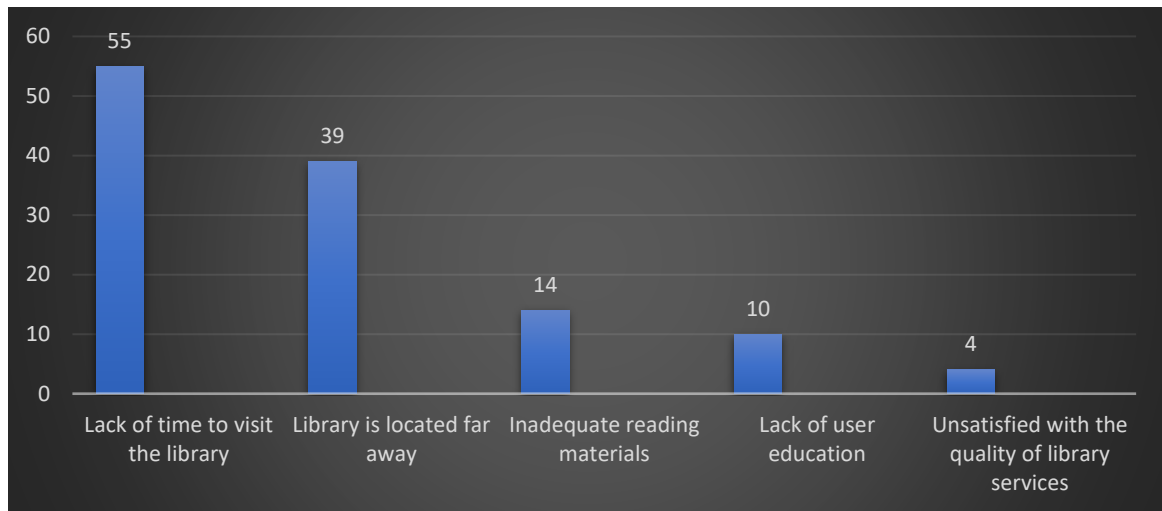


Figure number. 4: Problems in making use of the public library

5.7. Level of Satisfaction with Available Resources and Services

Table 7 displays the respondent's level of satisfaction with the available information resources and services of public libraries. The majority of users 56 (45.92%) are fully satisfied with the available resources and services, 33 (27.04%) being satisfied, 25 (20.49%) being partially satisfied, and some users 08 (6.55%) are dissatisfied with the available resources and services. It demonstrates that the majority of library users consider library services to be average.

Table 7: Level of Satisfaction with Available Resources and Services

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Fully Satisfied	56	45.92
Partially Satisfied	25	20.49
Satisfied	33	27.04
Not Satisfied	08	6.55
Total	122	100%

Conclusion

According to the findings of the study, women in rural areas in Sivasagar district have a positive attitude toward reading. They find enjoyment in reading and gain benefit from it. The vast majority of respondents strongly agreed that they read to keep their personal knowledge up to date. They improve their reading habits in order to be successful in both

their professional and personal lives. Providing effective services through learning programmes, diverse collections, local partnerships, and worldwide collaborations is now one of public libraries' most important responsibilities. As a result, public libraries as educational, cultural, and social institutions should reconfigure their priorities to address policies and services aimed at improving women's reading habits in the future.

The ambiance of a public library should be able to attract users and book enthusiasts. They should make an attempt to provide service through an automated library procedure, which will be more beneficial to users. For a more user-friendly library, distinct sections and amenities for women, children, and older citizens should be maintained. Aside from the approaches outlined above, public libraries can engage in a variety of different activities to encourage people to read. These activities could include holding talks or conversations about recent novels and theme-based books with children, students, and youth participating in a thought-provoking conversation. Users reading habits will undoubtedly be enhanced and improved as a result of these activities.

References

- Aslam, Rabia. & Seher, Naveed E. (2018). User Satisfaction Survey of Public Library: A Study of Liaquat Memorial Library, Karachi, Pakistan. *International Journal of Library Science*, 7(1), 8-14.
- Aslam, R., & Seher, N. E. (2018). User satisfaction survey of public library: A study of Liaquat Memorial Library, Karachi, Pakistan. *International Journal of Library Science*, 7(1), 8–14. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.library.20180701.02>
- Gilbert, K. (2015). A survey of users satisfaction with public library services in Mubi, Adamawa State. *IOSR Journal Of Humanities And Social Science*, 20(08), 52–57. <https://doi.org/10.9790/0837-20835257>

- Isabella Mary, A. & Dhanavandan, S. (2014). AI usage and awareness of public library services: An exclusive study on rural women. *International Journal of Digital Library Services*, 4(3), 1–10.
- Joy, I., & Iwari, A. (2014). Utilization and user satisfaction of public library services in South-West, Nigeria in the 21st century: A survey. *International Journal of Library Science*, 3(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.5923/j.library.20140301.01>
- Kasimani, C., & Rajendran, N. (2019). User's satisfaction with public libraries: A special reference to district central library, Thiruvallur (Tamil Nadu). *Library Philosophy and Practice*, 1–17.
- Lakshmi, N & Kavitha, T. (2016). Users satisfaction towards public libraries: a study with special reference to Udumalpet. International Conference on "Research avenues in Social Science" Organize by SNGC, Coimbatore, 1(3), 356- 361.
- Mahipal, D. S. (2017). Reading habits of district public library users: A survey (Special reference to Bastar Reason Chhattisgarh). *International Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 7(4), 272-276.