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User Perception of Library Services in Public Libraries in Western Tamilnadu with special reference to Salem District: a Case Study

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User Perception of Library Services in Public Libraries in Western Tamilnadu with special reference to Salem District: a Case Study

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Abstract

Public libraries are always called 'People's University' as it provides education to all and to improve Information literacy, empowerment, and cultural heritage. Public libraries facilitate variety of services to the user community. This study has made an attempt to investigate the current trends of user perception in terms of library services and availability of resources in public libraries in western Tamilnadu particularly in District Central Public Library at Salem. This study tired to focus to evaluate regarding the gender and age wise distribution, Marital status and Educational qualifications, Occupation wise distribution, and Membership status, Residence wise distribution, Availability of library resources, Frequency of Library visit, and Time spent in Library, Purpose of visiting the Library, Information search pattern, Level of satisfaction about Journals / Magazines, and Level of satisfaction regarding Internet services, and Opinion about overall library services etc. For data analysis, a total number of 200 well designed questionnaires were selected and distributed to the user community who are coming to Salem district public library. Out of 200 samples, we received only 186 dully filled questionnaires were returned. Further, the data has been worked out with relevant statistical tools such as simple percentage and average and so on.

Keywords: User perception, user study, case study, Public Library, Central Library, Seeking behavior, Salem.

Introduction

After independence of India, Tamilnadu is the first state that enacted the Public Library Act and it came with effect at 1st April 1950 and the Act was erected to establish research and activity. Based on the suggestions by Dr. S.R.Ranganathan, the Madras Library Association established and the other state public libraries pass the public library acts modeled on the Madras Library Public Act. Tamilnadu is being established a number of public libraries and Connemara Public Library was opened for public in 1896 and it became the State Central Library with effect from 1st April 1950. Since then, there is a drastic growth and development in public libraries. Public libraries are to serve their users at any point at any time to do effectively and efficiently, and there must be quality information regarding the accuracy, currency and relevance which would meet and satisfy the user's needs. In this context, the most widely accepted definition of a public library was formulated by UNESCO in 1949 and revised in 1972 (UNESCO 2004). According to UNESCO manifesto, the definition of a public library is listed as: Public Library is financed for the most part out of public funds; It charges no fees from users and yet is open for full use by the public; It is intended as an auxiliary educational institution providing a means of self education which is endless and It houses educative and informative materials giving reliable information freely and without partiality.

A public library is a library that is accessible by the general public and is usually funded from public sources, such as taxes. It is operated by librarians and library paraprofessionals, who are also civil servants (Wikipedia, 2018). According to Nwokocha (2004), Public Library defines ''as being established to serve the generality of the residents of the community or town where it is located.'' Public library defined as ''a library provided wholly or partly from public funds, and the use of which is not restricted to any class of persons in the community but is freely available to all'' (Librarians Glossary). According to Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science, ''Public Library is a public institution, supported by taxation, one that opens its collections, facilities and services, with distinction to all students. It always strives to meet the informational, educational and recreational needs of the community by providing collection and services.'' According to Ronald Benge (1970), Public library consists of four elements. First, the public libraries are available for the loan of materials and for reference purposes to all citizens. Second, the public libraries are mainly supported from public funds either on a local or on a national basis. The third element is their services as far as the individual is concerned should be free and the fourth one is that all materials should be available as an integral part of right. Public libraries can tailor quality information services to meet the information needs of its users. Public libraries can attract users with careful marketing and planning strategies to attract the potential users (Nsieh, 1997). Public library can develop quality services to fulfill the needs of target market. Public library through careful planning strategies can attract the attention of potential users by encouraging them to use the library services for their needs (Change & Hsieh, 1996). Public libraries are crucial institutions for providing education. It is essential for adult education and improving literacy rate in any country (Akparobore, 2011). Public library can provide access to the peer-reviewed online journals and help the individuals of the society in obtaining quality information for improving education, research and knowledge. Librarians working in public

libraries can meet the new demands of the users by fulfilling their information needs in effective way (Haggstrom, 2004). Public library is a cultural library that aims at satisfying the customer's information needs (Zhong, 2007).

Profile of Salem District Public Library

The Western Tamilnadu consists of eight districts include Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Erode, Krishnagiri, Namakkal, Nilgiris, Salem and Thiruppur. For the present study, researchers have taken only one district central library to know current trend in terms of various kinds of library resources and services. The District Public Library of Salem was established during the year 1915 which is a century year old. It has a vast collection of books, including text, reference, fiction, novels, e-resources and also it has internet access facilities. It is a knowledge hub for their patrons. The Salem District Library was started on 06.08.1953. The new building was followed the newly constructed two-storey building near the Art Gallery in the year 1981. The district center is located in the center of Salem City. Total books in this library are 140156. The most ancient texts are located in the district center. 64 branch libraries, 33 village libraries and one mobile library are located in the Salem district as per the official website of Tamilnadu public libraries (http://tnpublic libraries.gov.in).

Literature Review

A number of studies have been carried out regarding the public libraries and its sources and services by the researchers and eminent scholars and few of the recent studies have been taken into account for the present study. Velmurugan (2018) carried out a study to understand and aware about the electronic information resources among students from the department of the school of Social Sciences at Periyar University. This study was conducted to identify the information use pattern of online information resources among the student category who were doing post graduate. The findings of the study revealed that huge number of respondents (53.85%) was female. more than 51 percent of the respondents found at the age group of 21-25, and nearly 50 percent of the respondents visited the University Library every day. The majority of 48.46% of the users access the electronic resources for their study and reference purpose daily. It found that 43.84% of the users used University websites to access the relevant information and followed by 'OPAC' with 30.01%. The study analyzed the level of satisfaction and found 46.15% of the respondents were fully satisfied. One more study was investigated by Antony Arokiavathy and Baladhandayutham (2017) under the title of 'Users' Perceptions of the Role of Public Libraries in Kanniyakumari District, Tamil Nadu, India' to observe the users' perceptions regarding the role of Public Libraries in Kanniyakumari District. The other objectives were to find out the frequency of visit and know about the public library renders the 'Education' related information and to examine public library satisfies the users' needs etc. To analyze, 450 questionnaires distributed to users group and 400 filled questionnaires were returned from researchers. The results revealed that more than fifty six percent of the respondents were male and 27 percent of the users belong to the age between 21 and 30 years. It was found 54% of the users were unmarred who were participated in this study and 80% of the respondents came from rural areas. It was also noted that the frequency of library visit and found nearly 28% of the users visit the library weekly and 31.7% of the respondents availed public library services by self-interest. It is examined that 45.5% of the respondents agree that public

library renders the 'Education' related information for the user society and half of the users satisfy with library services and sources which are provided by the Kanniyakumari District Public Libraries during the study period. Similar study was conducted by Bhatti, Marwat and Khan (2015) at central public library to identify the users' perception of services quality of the central public library at Bahawalpur. This study was taken convenient sampling study of 50 respondents owing to shortage of library users in the central public library at Bahawalpur during the research period. For data analysis, quantitative research method and descriptive statistics were chosen and applied to evaluate the degree of responses and to find out the relevant results. the findings of the research showed that majority of 68% of the library users were male and the remaining were female (32%). it noticed 40 percent of the respondents use the library for their general readings and only 10% of them used for career development. respondents were asked through research group regarding the level of satisfaction with the library services as this the main goal of any library and found they were not fully satisfied.

Joy and Idown (2014) explored a study on the utilization and user satisfaction of public library services in South –West, Nigeria in the 21at century to observe how often users patronize public libraries, and services used by the respondents and why and how the users use public library services, and to know about the satisfaction level in terms of effective public library services provided to the user community. 400 well designed questionnaires administered and 350 questionnaires were returned for analysis purpose. The study showed the results that the major portion of the library users (77.71%) visit the library to access the library for examination. On the other hand, 76.9% of the users visit the library to obtain general information to update their knowledge. It observed that 57.2% of the users not satisfied with the library services whereas only 42.8% of them were found satisfied with library services. Similar study conducted by Rehman et al (2011) to know about the users perception and satisfaction with availability of reference sources and services provided by the University Libraries at Punjab. It examined that questionnaire method was used to gather data for an analysis. A sum of 1000 questionnaires distributed and 507 filled questionnaires returned at the rate of 50.70%. The research sued five point scales with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, version 16). The result showed that male respondents were high with 55 percent. 43 percent of the users visit the library daily and it showed that good trend of library visits. The study welcomed valuable suggestions from the users and they provided regarding the reference services in terms of chat reference and it was noted that the significant findings of the study. Obinyan (2011) examined under the titled 'Use of Information Resources in Four Branches of a State Public Library in Nigeria' to study about the utilization of information resources in community public libraries in Nigeria with special reference to Edo State. This study explored and the findings showed that huge numbers of respondents were students and young people who were participated in this research. Majority of respondents whose information needs were significantly for examination oriented and to update knowledge personally. Based on the findings, it was found that most of the information resources which are available in the library are not adequate and inappropriate. Hence, overcome these challenges, numbers of suggestion were given to LIS Professionals during the study.

Another study was explored by Velmurugan and Thavamani (2013) under the titled, 'Information Use Pattern of Library Resources among Under Graduate Students of Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu: A Case Study' to know the level of information

access of library resources and their challenges among undergraduate students at Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, Chennai, Tamil Nadu. For data analysis, questionnaire method was used and sum of 150 questionnaires distributed and 120 filled questionnaires were returned. It was found that almost 98 percent of the students using the library for study purposes and nearly 66 percent of the students using the textbooks as a source. Maximum number of 95 % of the students was well aware about the search engines.

Objectives of the study

The main aim of this research is to study the various kinds of services and availability of resources in the Salem district public library and the other objectives are to investigate:

- Gender wise distribution
- Age wise distribution
- Marital status
- Educational qualifications
- Occupation wise distribution
- Membership status
- Residence wise distribution
- Availability of library resources
- Frequency of Library visit
- Time spent in Library
- Purpose of visiting the Library
- Information search pattern
- Level of satisfaction (Journals / Magazines etc)
- Level of satisfaction (Internet services)
- Opinion about overall library services
- Difficulties using library resources

Methodology

Population sample for data collection

In this present research for data collection random sampling and questionnaire method were chosen. A total number of 200 well designed questionnaires were selected and distributed to the user community who are coming to Salem district public library. Out of 200 samples, we received only 186 dully filled questionnaire were returned

Data analysis

To start data analysis, the collected data was recorded on data worksheet and then entered into the computer physically. Further, the data has been worked out with relevant statistical tools such as simple percentage and average and so on. The worked out data was presented in the form of tables and figures visually.

Scope and Limitations

The scope of the current study is to examine the user perception of district central library services and availability of resources among the people at Salem District. The present study covers only the user community belonging to the Salem district public library but not covered the other branch and villages libraries. The period of study was between July 2018 and December 2018.

Results and Discussion

1. Gender wise distribution

It is inferred from the below table 1 represents that the gender wise participation from Salem district library user community in the present research. The analysis indicates that the highest numbers of 121 users (65.05%) were male and the remaining 34.95 percent of the users were female. Based on the results, the male respondents are willing to participate to do this research questionnaire whereas the female uses whether they were not interested or they were not well aware about the library usage and its resources and services.

Table 1: Gender wise distribution

S. No	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	121	65.05
2	Female	65	34.95
	Total	186	100

2. Age wise distribution

Table 2 represents the analysis of age wise respondents who were participated in this research conducted at District Central Public Library in Salem. The range of age was between below 25 and above 50. The results indicate that major portion of the respondents 52 (27.96%) were under the age group between 26 and 30 and followed by 20.44 percent of the respondents were between 31 and 35 age. it is found the small amount of 4.84% (09) of the respondents were under the age group of above 50. The findings showed that almost 50% of the users were under the age group between 26 and 35 who were younger generation and they were willingly participated.

Table 2: Age wise distribution

S. No	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 25	32	17.20
2	26-30	52	27.96
3	31-35	38	20.44
4	36-40	26	13.98
5	41-45	18	9.67
6	46-50	11	5.91

7	Above 50	9	4.84
	Total	186	100

3. Marital status

This research analyzed the marital status of the respondents who were participated in this present study. The results show that most of the users (59.14%) were unmarried and the remaining 76 (40.86%) respondents were found married. It was noted that unmarried uses who were eagerly participated in this research.

Table 3: Marital status of the respondents

S. No	Marital status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	76	40.86
2	Unmarried	110	59.14
	Total	186	100

4. Educational qualifications

It is seen from the table 4 that shows the range of usage of library according the qualifications such as SSLC, Higher secondary, graduate, post graduate and above post graduate of user community. The findings of the study indicates that the huge number of (35.49%) respondents were qualified graduate and ranked first, and followed by post graduate respondents were 46 (24.73%) and got placed second who were participated in this study. further, Higher Secondary (16.67%), Upto SSLC (12.36%), and the small number of respondents were found above post Graduate (10.75%).

Table 4: Qualification wise respondents

S. No	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Upto SSLC	23	12.36
2	Higher Secondary	31	16.67
3	Graduate	66	35.49
4	Post Graduate	46	24.73
5	Above post Graduate	20	10.75
	Total	186	100

5. Occupation wise distribution

The respondents' occupation was identified by the researchers such as students like SSLC, HSC, undergraduate, postgraduate, research groups such as MPhil and PhD candidates, employed like government, private, self, and unemployed comes under retired persons etc. It is inferred from the table 5 that most of the respondents i.e. 66 (35.49%) employed who were participated in this research and followed by students were in the second position (52, 27.96%) in terms of occupation. 22.58 percent of the users were research scholars and the remaining 26 respondents (13.97%) unemployed who were involved in this study.

Table 5: Occupation wise distribution

S. No	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Students	52	27.96
2	Research scholars	42	22.58
3	Employed	66	35.49
4	Unemployed	26	13.97
	Total	186	100

6. Membership status

Table 6 represents that the membership status of the users who are coming to District Public Central Library during the study period. The results show that the majority of 110 (59.14%) respondents were found non-member of the library and the remaining 76 (40.86%) respondents were identified life member of the library. Based on the findings, LIS Professionals have to take initiatives to welcome user society and to become member of the library.

Table 6: Membership status

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Member	76	40.86
2	Non- member	110	59.14
	Total	186	100

7. Residence wise distribution

Table 7 represents residence wise participants who were actively involved this study. There were two types of residence were divided such as rural and urban. It is found that majority of 118 (63.44%) respondents were from rural as they are willing to learn education as well as general knowledge. it is also found the remaining were 68 (36.56%) from urban areas.

Table 7: Residence wise distribution

S. No	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Rural	118	63.44
2	Urban	68	36.56
	Total	186	100

8. Availability of library resources

Table 8 depicts that the availability of information resources at District Central Public Library in Salem. The Information sources in terms of newspapers, journals and magazines, novels, story books, text books, reference books, and online resources such as CD-ROM, Internet facility etc. It is examined and found that the huge number of 68 (36.56%) respondents prefer reading newspapers who were coming to library. 23.66 respondents who were preferred to read periodicals such as journals and magazines, 16.67% of the users willing to read novels and story

books to enjoy their leisure time. Books and Reference books read by the respondents 6.45% and 4.84% respectively. 11.82 percent of the users prefer to use online resources which are available in the central library.

Table 8: Availability of library resources

S. No	Resources availability	Frequency	Percentage
1	Newspapers	68	36.56
2	Journals/Magazines	44	23.66
3	Novels/Stories	31	16.67
4	Books	12	6.45
5	Reference books	9	4.84
6	e- resources	22	11.82
	Total	186	100

9. Frequency of Library visit

Based on the previous studies related to this research, it is noted that most of the researches show that users were visited the library daily and some them visited weekly and few of them visited rarely. In this study table 9 indicates that major proportion of 62 (33.33%) respondents visited the district central public library weekly and followed by 49 (26.34%) users visited the library for reading daily. 19.35 percent of the users visited fortnightly and 14.53 percent of the respondents visited monthly and only few (12, 6.45%) of the respondents visited occasionally to read central public library.

Table 9: Frequency of Library visit

S. No	Library visit	Frequency	Percentage
1	Every day	49	26.34
2	Weekly	62	33.33
3	Fortnightly	36	19.35
4	Monthly	27	14.53
5	Occasionally	12	6.45
	Total	186	100

10. Time spent in Library

Users were asked to represent the average time spent by them on their each visit to the library. Based on the responses received by the users were analyzed and tabulated in the below table 10. Among the 186 users, as expected that the huge number (30.12%) of respondents spent their time an hour and followed by 41 (22.04%) users spent 30-60 minutes. It is also found that only 6.45% of the visitors spent their time to use the library more than two hours.

Table 10: Time spent in Library

S. No	Time duration	Frequency	Percentage
1	Less than 15 min	18	9.67

2	16-30 min	37	19.89
3	30-60 min	41	22.04
4	An hour	56	30.12
5	More than two hours	12	6.45
6	Less than two hours	22	11.83
	Total	186	100

11. Purpose of visiting the Library

Different kinds of reasons are there to visit the library as there is number of libraries are there all over the globe based on the availability of specific information resources. District libraries are providing various collections of resources such as newspapers in different languages, periodicals like journals and magazines, novels, stories, text books, reference books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, etc. therefore, visitors use the library different ways and the table 11 indicates that what purpose users are visiting the library and how they use the library effectively. Based on the analysis, majority of 37.10% of the respondents visit the library to read the newspapers and the small amount of 5.37% users visit to read for examination oriented. The same research conducted by Velmurugan and Umamaheswari (2015) and found that 75.38% of the users came to library to read books and followed by 49.23% of them were to read magazines and 41.54% for reading newspapers.

Table 11: Purpose of visiting the Library

S. No	Kinds of purposes	Frequency	Percentage
1	Study newspapers	69	37.10
2	To get general information	41	22.04
3	To borrow books	39	20.97
4	For entertainment	11	5.91
5	For research	16	8.61
6	Read for examination	10	5.37
	Total	186	100

12. Information search pattern

It is a skill that searching the right information. From the previous studies, it is found that some users depend on library staff to get information whereas some others search information their own and some users take help from their friends to find relevant information what they need. It can be seen from the table 12 that most of the respondents (102, 54.84%) take help form the LIS Professionals to get relevant information. This is good trend that users rely on LIS professionals to find good information. it is interesting that 27.42 percent of the users use OPAC to find information and 8.60% of the user community take help from their friends and 6.45% of them take help from their colleagues to search and find information resources what they required. it is seen that the same study carried out by Thanuskodi (2012) and significantly found that 11.04 percent of the respondents use the library more than three hours per day.

Table. 12. Information search pattern

S. No	Search pattern	Frequency	Percentage
1	Taking help from LIS professionals	102	54.84
2	Using OPAC	51	27.42
3	Taking help form friends	16	8.60
4	Taking help form colleagues	12	6.45
5	Any others	05	2.69
	Total	186	100

13. Level of satisfaction (Journals / Magazines etc)

Table 13 shows that the level of satisfaction in terms of periodicals such as journals and magazines which are provided to the user community. It is found that most of the users (96, 51.61%) felt satisfied with all types of journals and magazines and followed by 27.42% of the respondents felt highly satisfied. fourteen respondents did not say any comments and nine users felt dissatisfied with subscription of journals and magazines services.

Table.13. Level of satisfaction (Journals / Magazines etc)

S. No	Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
1	Highly satisfied	51	27.42
2	Satisfied	96	51.61
3	Less satisfied	16	8.60
4	Dissatisfied	9	4.84
5	No opinion	14	7.53
	Total	186	100

14. Level of satisfaction (Internet services)

In the electronic world, we could not live without internet as the Internet is one of the basic needs. Therefore, the Internet service has been taken into account and the satisfaction level has been treated for evaluation. Table 14 indicates the level of satisfaction regarding the Internet services provided by LIS professionals from central public library at Salem. It is noted that the majority of 74 (39.78%) users showed that fairly satisfied, 25.27 percent of the participants felt good and 16.13% of the users moderately satisfied. some of the respondents (12.37%) felt poor and few of them (6.45%) had no comments about internet services.

Table.14. Level of satisfaction (Internet services)

S. No	Level of satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	47	25.27
2	Fair	74	39.78
3	Moderate	30	16.13
4	Poor	23	12.37

5	No comments	12	6.45
	Total	186	100

15. Opinion about overall library services

Table 15 represents about the overall library services provided by the central library. the services such as circulation, book issue and return, reference service, bibliographic service, online services, reprography service, OPAC, and many more. Based on the analysis, it is examined that the huge number of 76 (40.86%) user society opinioned very good regarding the overall library services. Fifty eight (31.18%) respondents felt good and 16.67% of them felt satisfied with overall services and 6.45% of the users had no comments in terms of library services.

Table.15. Opinion about overall services

S. No	Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	58	31.18
2	Very good	76	40.86
3	Satisfactory	31	16.67
4	Poor	9	4.84
5	No comments	12	6.45
	Total	186	100

16. Difficulties using library resources

Table 16 depicts that various factors user's dissatisfaction in terms of less materials or lack of resources, lack of collection arrangements, lack of staff members, and space problem etc. The results showed that 17.21% of the users felt lack of library professionals to help the users in time and provide appropriate information. 15.59% of the users felt there was no suitable resources and lack of collection arrangements by 18 respondents. It is found that the maximum number of 98 (52.69%) users had felt none of difficulties regarding the library resources and services provided by the central public library during the research.

Table.16. Difficulties using library resources

S. No	Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of sources	29	15.59
2	lack of LIS Professionals	32	17.21
3	Lack of collection arrangements	18	9.67
4	Space problem	9	4.84
5	None	98	52.69
	Total	186	100

Major Findings

Based on the results, the selected major findings are listed below.

➢ The highest numbers of 121 users (65.05%) were male and major portion of the respondents 52 (27.96%) were under the age group between 26 and 30.

➢ The huge number of (35.49%) respondents was qualified graduate and ranked first.

➢ Most of the respondents i.e. 66 (35.49%) employed who were participated in this research and majority of 118 (63.44%) respondents were from rural.

➢ Huge number of 68 (36.56%) respondents preferred reading newspapers that were coming to library.

➢ Major proportion of 62 (33.33%) respondents visited the district central public library weekly and followed by 49 (26.34%) users visited the library for reading daily.

➢ The huge number (30.12%) of respondents spent their time an hour and majority of 37.10% of the respondents visit the library to read the newspapers.

➢ Most of the respondents (102, 54.84%) had taken help form the LIS Professionals to get relevant information.

➢ It is found that most of the users (96, 51.61%) felt satisfied with all types of journals and magazines.

➢ Majority of 74 (39.78%) users showed that fairly satisfied regarding Internet services and the huge number of 76 (40.86%) user society opinioned very good regarding the overall library services.

➢ It is noted that 17.21% of the users felt lack of library professionals to help the users and it is also found that the maximum number of 98 (52.69%) users had felt no difficulties regarding the library resources and services.

Conclusion

We all well have known that India has made significant growth and development in almost not only the establishment of public libraries but also in all fields. Due to the tremendous change of Information and Communication Technology, the present government focuses on the contemporary technology to serve the public. Therefore, the future of libraries is bright and fruitful for the young generation. Any district central library is the very good place to gather knowledge and to spend their precious time for the patrons. The Salem District Central Public Library deserves kudos for their relevant services disseminating appropriate information among the people who live Salem Town. It is seen that lack of awareness for users and organizing need based orientation and training programmes at national level will help to use the information

resources effectively. This research survey has been examined carefully and it is identified that good number of users spent not more than one hour to make its services improve and create a center of attention of the user community, it is also suggested that more relevant resources in different formats are to be purchased and subscribed to meet the needs of the users. Well qualified and sufficient LIS Professionals must be made and the sufficient space and strong infrastructure should be provided for Internet services. This present research can be further taken up for future research in the following areas such as Awareness about Information and Communication Technology services by the users in Salem District Public Library; User perception about the special collections in Salem District Public Library.

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