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READING HABITS AMONG CHILDREN IN DISTRICT CENTRAL LIBRARIES IN SOUTHERN TAMIL NADU: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

The information seeking behaviour of Library users among children was studied based on the objectives of study a questionnaire was set and imparted among randomly selected children respondents. The study was limited to only five districts of Southern Tamil Nadu. The Study areas of five districts were selected based on the bilateral study from earlier research work done. Since, so far, no such study has been conducted on the reading habits among children in Southern districts of Tamil Nadu, the present study has been chosen by the researcher for her research work.

Keywords: Reading habits, information, children, Questionnaire, Public Library.

Introduction

The term information can be understood as the data and the value that helps in any type of tasks that require planning, decision making, executing and evaluating. So the data needs to be resourceful so as to answer the query generated by the information seekers. Books, journals, magazines, reports and other documents provide information in print and digital modes. When focusing on the term information seeking behaviour, the concept has been taken in a general perspective as it is a set of actions applied in identifying information needs, in seeking the required information to satisfy the needs, to select the right information among the mass of information, to evaluate the selected information and finally use the information in the context for which the information is required.

There are four concepts derived;

❖ Information Behaviour
❖ Information Seeking Behaviour
Information Search Behaviour

Information Use Behaviour

Information Behaviour

‘Information Behaviour’ can be described as behaviour of human to sources and channels of information. This behaviour includes both active and passive information seeking, that is to say, an active face to face discussion as well as information received through television that indicates a source of passive information.

Information Seeking Behaviour

Information seeking behaviour is a purposeful attempt to seek for information and to satisfy the needs that arise out of a necessity to achieve an objective. In this process, the user consults books or journals or newspapers or any other manual resource or internet by applying information seeking attitudes in a broader sense.

Information Searching Behaviour

The strategies followed and attitudes applied in attempting in an in-depth manner to seek for information are known as information searching behaviour. The micro level search patterns include activities from human computer interaction to physical and mental activities in searching for information. The activities include, using a mouse, clicking a web link, approaching a library shelves, evaluation and determining a data to identify its relevance, etc.

Information Use Behaviour

The behaviours which are involved as to how the information sought is put to use are termed as Information Use Behaviour. These behaviours deal with marking the information, adding it to the context to which it is sought, saving for further use, etc. These activities involve physical as well as mental acts.

Scope

The study has been designed to identify the information acquisition and retrieval habits of children utilizing district central libraries in Southern Tamil Nadu. The need of the information sources, Information Seeking Behaviour, Infrastructure development, online and digital resources motivation and difficulty of the children were identified using different variables and their opinion were analysed. The study also elucidates the infrastructure of the public libraries under study especially in children sections.
Review of Literature

**Tury et al.** (2015) surveyed Information Seeking Behaviour of Distance Learners, the main survey gained responses from 649 students, in 81 countries and following diverse study program, study being most significant. Ease and speed of access and familiarity of sources were predominant factors. An extension of Wilson's information behaviour model is proposed to cater for the specific features of the distance learning context.

**Kim and Yeon** (2014) studied research trends in teens; the health information behavior of teens has been examined more frequently since the mid-2000s. Its interdisciplinary nature was evidently shown from various disciplines that there should be efforts to reflect new technology tools, apply mixed methods and increase the engagement level of collaboration to evolve this research domain.

**Sahu, Hemant and Nath** (2013) studied the information seeking behavior and information needs of Indian astronomy / astrophysics academics, including the relationship between various variables such as academic, rank-wise statuses, age-wise of characteristics, and methods for keeping their knowledge up-to-date. To continue accessing specialized needs to find innovative solutions. There are challenges and opportunities for exciting new initiatives.

**Constance and Ina** (2012) investigated information-seeking behavior of geography teachers for information service patterns of secondary level geography teachers in Lesotho to guide the design and implementation for these teachers. Data were collected from in-service teachers through focus group discussions, prospective teachers with a questionnaire, and key actors in Lesotho’s secondary geography education context through individual interviews. The work environment of in-service geography teachers is revealed including their work roles, associated tasks, information needs and information-seeking patterns. An information service model for Lesotho secondary level geography teachers is proposed to fulfill their work related roles and tasks that might be addressed through an information service.

**Shakeel and Farzana** (2011) studied on the information needs and information-seeking behavior of college faculty at Bahawalpur. The study was analyzed from the data collected through questionnaires from Principals, Vice Principals and teachers of the Government colleges’ selected in Bahawalpur. It was revealed that information technology had affected
their users’ information seeking behavior and made their requirements be satisfied in an easier way.

**Objectives**

The objectives of the study are the following:

- To identify the District Central libraries in Southern Tamil Nadu.
- To identify the frequency based on Level Of Education.
- To know the frequency of visit by children in District Central library.
- To identify the preference pattern of Languages.
- To elucidate opinion and suggestions to improve Children’s Section in District Central Library services.

**Methodology**

Totally 32 districts are there in Tamil Nadu and the districts are classified under the four zones viz. Central Zone, West Zone, North Zone and South Zone. Among the 32 districts, south zone comprises of 9 districts but the study was limited to 5 districts namely Theni, Tirunelveli, Tutikudi, Kanyakumari and Virudhunagar. Each district 100 questionnaire was randomly used to conduct the schedule interview. From 05 districts totally 421 interview schedules were collected fully answered.

**The following methods have been adopted in the data collection:**

**Review of Literature**

The literature on information acquisition and retrieval habits of children utilizing district central libraries in Southern Tamil Nadu have been studied and reviewed, which facilitated the construction of questionnaire.

**Construction of Questionnaire**

An interview schedule was constructed based on the review of literature. The opinions were obtained in five point scale wherever applicable; in order to elicit the information acquisition and retrieval habits of children utilizing districts central libraries in Southern Tamil Nadu.

**Criteria for Selection of District Central Libraries**

The District Central Libraries were considered for the study. The reasons for selection of the Children are in District Central Libraries to know the acquisition and retrieval habits of information.
Administration of Questionnaire

The interview schedules were administered among the selected children who visited District Central Libraries. Totally 500 interview schedules were collected from 05 districts. In each district 100 questionnaire were randomly distributed to conduct the interview schedules. Based on the study and results, the interview schedule was further modified and developed to suit the stated objectives. Accordingly the revised version of the questionnaire was developed and administered.

Data Analysis

Data thus collected through questionnaire, have been tabulated and analyzed. The data was tabulated and analyzed applying Statistical tools and techniques such as Averages, Percentage, Chi-Square test are interpreted in order to test the hypotheses.

Analysis and Interpretation

Opinion about the services of the District Central Library- children section Gender - Wise

The study has been further extended to the category of gender for the Opinion about the services of the District Central Library- children section among the respondents. The percentage for their opinion has been calculated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No.</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>53.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>421</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Educational level

The study has been further extended based on the level of education attained. The percentage for their opinion has been calculated. Middle level had high respondents numbering 165 in comparison to primary and high level.
Table 2. Based on Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>No. of respondents</th>
<th>Average Total</th>
<th>Percentage of Total (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>32.3 %</td>
<td>32.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>39.2 %</td>
<td>39.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>28.5 %</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Figure 1 - Based on Educational Level (1 represents Primary Level, 2 represents Middle Level, 3 represents Higher Level)

Based on Library Visit

This study has been further carried out on the basis of Library visit. The percentage for their opinion has been calculated. Frequency of respondents visiting the Library is high on daily basis (43.2%) in comparison to lowest percentage for respondents who rarely visit (3.6%) the Library. However, it recorded a good percentage of children visiting the Library on a weekly basis (24.2%).
Table 3. Frequency of Library visit among Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No.</th>
<th>Frequency of Reading</th>
<th>Total Children</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Daily</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Once a week</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Twice a week</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Monthly</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>19.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data

Based on Preference of Languages

This study has been further carried out the basis of Library visit. The percentage for their opinion has been calculated. Frequency of respondents visiting the Library is high for Tamil language both female and male (47.7%) in comparison to lowest percentage for other languages both female and male (7.2%). However, English Language occupied the second place in language preference.

Table 4. Based on Language Preference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SL. No.</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>English</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Other Languages</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>421</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: primary data
Findings of the Study

Sample Size

The south zone comprises of 9 districts but 5 districts were identified for study. A sample of 500 questionnaires was distributed. Among the 500 questionnaires distributed. Response from 421 (84.2%) were received from South Zone. From the total of 421, 225 (53.4%) response were received from the female respondents and 196 (46.6%) responses were received from the male respondents.

Suggestions

➢ The Suggestions to improve the Children’s Section in District Central Library services among the respondents with their category of the Gender were received.
➢ The Suggestions were categorized as follows: Maintain high quality of print collections, providing training in use of web/library resources, Increase Library Hours, Positive change of library staff and changes of attitude to users, improve the level of internet connectivity.
➢ Library materials should be well organized for easy retrieval and System should be more functional.
➢ Provide improved spacing on terms of gender basis.
➢ Improved conditions for ventilation should be available to make the Library more spacious.
➢ Improvement on infrastructural facilities should be kept in mind.
➢ Separate cycle parking facilities should be provided for children.
➢ There should be separate ramp facilities for physically disabled children and availability of headphones for audio-video access of resources.
➢ Maps, globes, charts should be hung on the walls for better pictorial representations pertaining to children.

Conclusion

Presently public library plays a vital role in the social and literacy development. The application of information and communication technology in public libraries has greatly influenced the general public and student community to get access to information resources and services. The information and communication technology literacy skills, necessary for children in the emerging knowledge driven society. Despite the high dissemination rate of ICT and exponential growth of Internet.
The user satisfaction is important in measuring the quantitative and qualitative strategy to each and every library e-resources and e-services. The public libraries are providing resources and services using technologies and tools to maximize the user satisfaction. In these circumstances, the library professionals must extract the e-resources and e-services among children and also to improve the general awareness among the children users.

References


