

Information Seeking Behaviour of Users at Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts Public Libraries of Tamilnadu : A Case Study

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Abstract : Public libraries are the standing testimonies of democracies. They are the social transformers and cultural saviours. They are the storehouses of intellectual heredity of our forefathers. They are the lighthouses fostering creative leisure activities. This study was conducted with the help of structured questionnaires to analyze the information seeking behavior randomly selected 120 users at Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts Public Library, Tamilnadu in 2018. The data was entered and analyzed in SPSS using simple average and percentage methods and presented using various chart options available therein. The major findings of the study are : A majority of respondents use the branch library at Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts for preparing themselves for various competitive exams.

IndexTerms - Public libraries, library, information seeking behavior, purpose of library visits, constraints, internet services.

I. INTRODUCTION

In a broader sense, public libraries are those service agencies which serve the general public as a whole irrespective of their age, gender, profession and social- economic background. In Tamilnadu, the libraries being run under Department of Higher Education, Tamilnadu at different district headquarters known as District Libraries, libraries under Municipal committees, municipal corporations, village panchayats, rural youth clubs or under any other social organization all come under the purview of public libraries.

UNESCO defines Public Library as "the local gateway to knowledge, provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of the individual and social groups".

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC), of India which was constituted in June 2005 described libraries as gateways of knowledge and continued that a "Library is not a building stacked with books - it is a repository and source of information and ideas, a place for learning and enquiry, and for the generation of thought and the creation of new knowledge. Public libraries in particular have the potential to bridge the gap between the 'information poor' and the 'information rich' by ensuring that people from all sectors and settings of society and the community across India have easy access to knowledge seeking".

Services of the public library: Reference service, Lending services, Home delivery, Open Access and Other services like Text Book Wing; Periodicals and News Papers; Video ; Xerox; Compilation of Bibliography; I.A.S Study Centre etc.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The public library due to its nature is charged with the responsibility of catering for the diverse and ever-changing information needs of the entire members of its community in which it is situated. However, it is generally believed that public libraries suffer the most neglect in terms of funding. Meanwhile, provision of needed information at the right time and format to its users is central to its existence. This study, however, intends to find out the information needs and characteristics of users of district libraries of Thanjavur and Thiruvarur. It is against this backdrop, therefore, that this study investigates information needs and characteristics of users of district libraries of Tamilnadu, what constitutes the information needs of the library users, what services and resources are available in public libraries for meeting these needs, how do the users meet such needs and what constraints are they faced with? These are the questions to which this study intends to answer.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To identify the categories of users by sex.
- To study about visiting frequency the respondents.
- To study the purposes of visiting library. iv. To study the mode of searching information.
- To study the satisfaction level of respondents about the library services.

- To know the sources used maximum by the respondents.
- To find out the constraints faced by the respondents in using the library.
- To find out the quality of information retrieved by the respondents from the journals and magazines.
- To elicit the opinion of the respondents on the quality of internet services offered and
- To trace out the kind of resources used by the respondents to get relevant information.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Sampling and Data Collection: The type of sampling adopted in the investigation is a random sampling. The samples for the study (120 in numbers) were selected from the users visiting the library. Questionnaire method was used to collect primary data from the respondents.

4.2 Analysis of data: At the outset, the data was recorded on data sheets and the typed into the computer personally. Then, the data has been worked out with statistical tools like percentage and average etc. The collected data was represented in the form of tables.

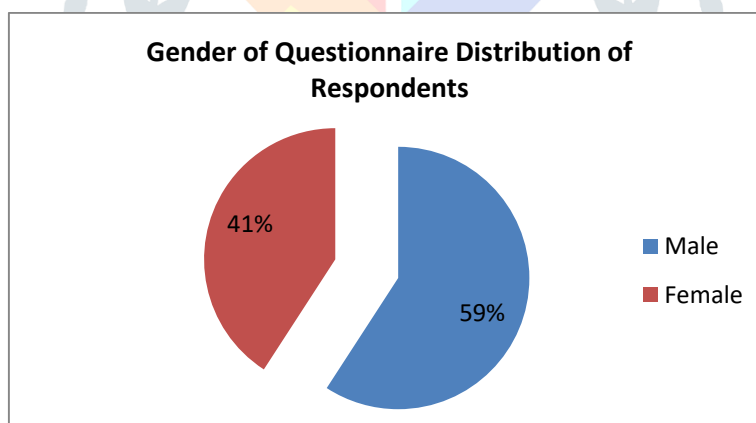
4.3 Limitations of the Study: The study includes users belonging only to the Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts public library; but not to the branch libraries. Period of study was from April 2019 to May 2019.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Gender of respondents: Out of the respondents taken for the study, male respondents are 71 in numbers with 57.17% and the female respondents are 49 in numbers with 40.83% of the total.

Table 1: Gender of Questionnaire Distribution of Respondents

S.No	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Male	71	57.17%
2.	Female	49	40.83%
	Total	120	100.00%



Marital Status: The table shows that 24 respondents, among the 120 respondents, are married people who share 20%. The unmarried respondents numbering 96 share 80%. It means that unmarried respondents use the library services more.

Table 2: Marital Status of the Respondents

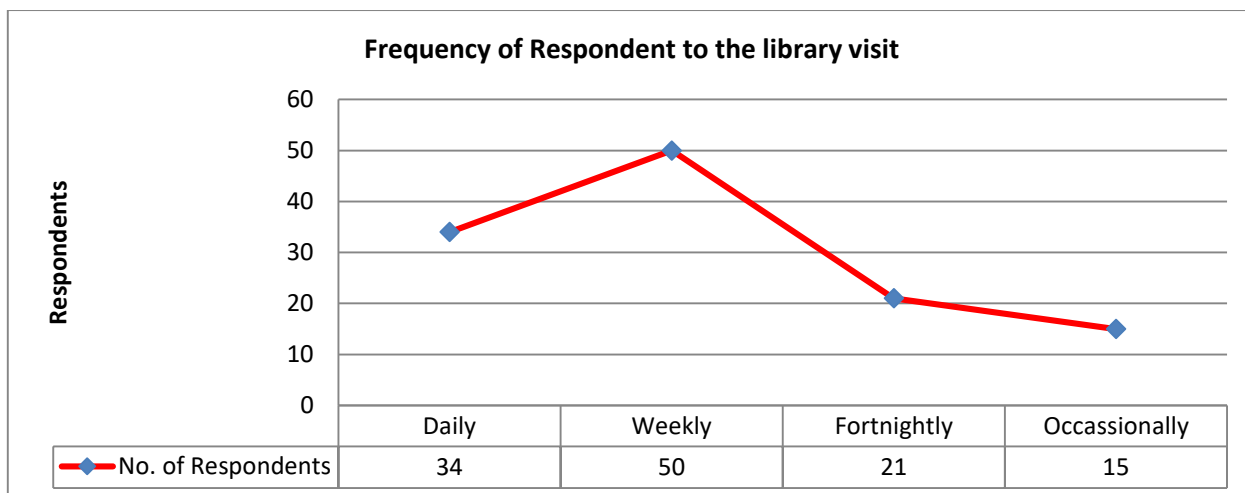
S.No	Marital Status	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Married	24	20%
2.	Single	96	80%
	Total	120	100.00%

Frequency: This Table shows that among the 120 respondents, 34(28.33%) respondents constituting use the library daily, 50(41.67%) respondents use library once a week, 21(17.5%) respondents use library once a fortnight and 15(12.5%) respondents use the library occasionally.

Table 3: Frequency of Respondent to the library visit

S.No	Frequency	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Daily	34	28.33%
2.	Weekly	50	41.67%
3.	Fortnightly	21	17.5%

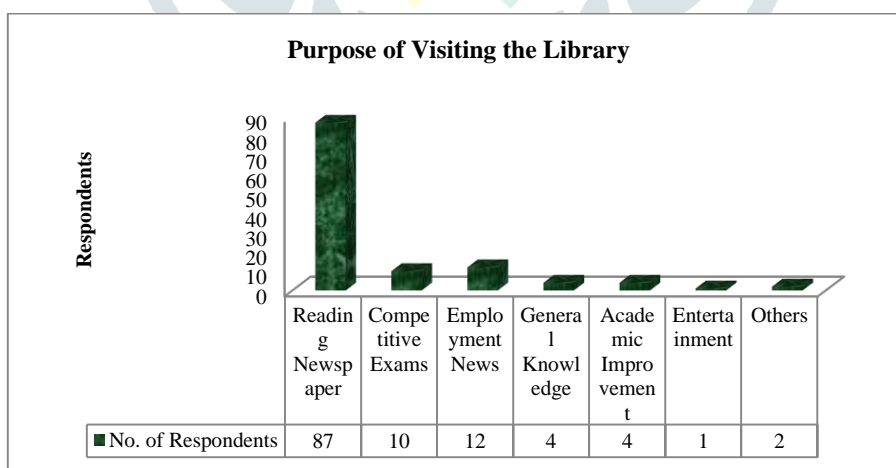
4.	Occasionally	15	12.5%
Total		120	100.00%



Purpose of visiting the library: From this Table, it is observed that among the 120 respondents, 87(72.5%) respondents visit the library for reading news, 10(8.33%) respondents visit for preparing themselves for various competitive exams, 12(10.00%) respondents for employment information, 4(3.33%) respondents for general knowledge and 04(3.33%) respondents for academic improvement. It is so concluded that majority of respondents use the branch library at Thanjavur and Thiruvavar Districts for preparing themselves for various competitive exams.

Table 4: Purpose of Visiting the Library

S.No	Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Reading Newspaper	87	72.50%
2.	Competitive Exams	10	8.33%
3.	Employment News	12	10.00%
4.	General Knowledge	4	3.33%
5.	Academic Improvement	4	3.33%
6.	Entertainment	01	0.83%
7.	Others	02	1.67%
Total		120	100.00%



Information Sources consulted: From this Table, it is observed that among the 120 respondents, 51(42.50%) respondents use newspapers, 8(6.67%) respondents use employment newspaper, 5(4.17%) respondents use the Journals and Magazine, 8(6.67%) respondents use reference Books, 22(18.33%) respondents use the books and 6(5.00%) respondent use the e-resources to get required information.

Table 5: Information Sources Consulted

S.No	Sources	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Novels	15	12.50%
2.	Newspaper	51	42.50%

3.	Employment Newspaper	8	6.67%
4.	Journals/Magazine	5	4.17%
5.	Books	22	18.33%
6.	Reference Books	8	6.67%
7.	e-resources	6	5.00%
8.	Others	5	4.17%
	Total	120	100.00%

Search Strategy: This Table reveals that out of 120 respondents, 77(64.17%) respondents search for materials subject wise, 18(15%) respondents search for materials using authors as keywords, 11(9.17%) respondents search for materials publisher wise and 14(11.67%) respondents search for materials title-wise. Hence maximum users employ 'subject search' at branch library in Thajavur and Thiruvavur Districts.

Table 6: Search Strategy

S.No	Search Strategy	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Subject Search	77	64.17%
2.	Author Search	18	15.00%
3.	Publisher Search	11	9.17%
4.	Title Search	14	11.67%
	Total	120	100.00%

Quality of Internet services: It is observed from Table No. 7 that out of 120 respondents, 87(72.5%) respondents opine that the quality of internet service offered by the library is good, 11(9.17%) respondents each feel it is fair and 5(4.17%) respondents feel that the quality of internet services is moderate.

Table 7: Quality of Internet Services

S.No	Internet Services	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Good	87	72.5%
2.	Fair	11	9.17%
3.	No Opinion	8	6.67%
4.	Moderate	5	4.17%
5.	Poor	9	7.5%
	Total	120	100.00%

Level of the satisfaction (Journals, Magazines and Periodicals):

It is understood from the above table that out of 120 respondents, while 80(66.67%) respondents are highly satisfied with the information they access from magazines and journals, 20(16.67%) respondents are satisfied, 12(10.00%) respondents are less satisfied, only 8(6.67%) respondent is dissatisfied with the information they get from magazines and journals.

Table 8: Level of the Satisfaction (Journals, Magazines and Periodicals)

S.No	Level of Satisfaction	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Highly Satisfied	80	66.67%
2.	Satisfied	20	16.67%
3.	Less Satisfied	12	10.00%
4.	Dissatisfied	8	6.67%
	Total	120	100.00%

Opinion on Overall Library Services: Form the above table, it is inferred that out of 120 respondents, 51(42.5%) respondents opine that the quality of overall library services is good, 43(35.83%) respondents feel it is very good, 6(5.00%) respondent feels it is satisfactory and 8(6.67%) respondents rate the quality of overall library services as poor.

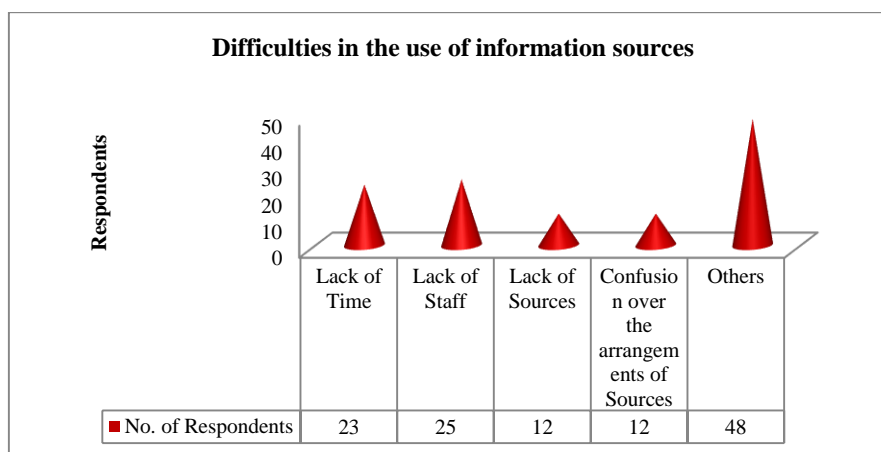
Table-9: Opinion on Overall Library Services

S.No	Library Services	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Good	51	42.5%
2.	Very Good	43	35.83%
3.	No Comments	12	10.00%
4.	Satisfactory	6	5.00%
5.	Poor	8	6.67%
	Total		100.00%

Difficulties in the use of information sources: Table 10 shows that while 23(19.17%) respondents have time constraints in using the resources, 25(20.83%) respondents opined that lack of adequate library staff is their major problem. 12(10.00%) respondents report that lack of resources is the problem in using the library. 48(40.00%) respondents report that the other problems. 12(10.00%) respondents opined that confusion over the arrangements of sources in the public libraries.

Table-10: Difficulties in the use of information sources

S.No.	Difficulties	No. of Respondents	Percentage(%)
1.	Lack of Time	23	19.17%
2.	Lack of Staff	25	20.83%
3.	Lack of Sources	12	10.00%
4.	Confusion over the arrangements of Sources	12	10.00%
5.	Others	48	40.00%
	Total	120	100.00%



6. FINDINGS

- i. Out of the respondents taken for the study, male respondents are 71 in numbers with 57.17 % and the female respondents are 49 in numbers with 40.83 % of the total. 24(20%) respondents are married people and 96(80%) are unmarried.
- ii. Among the 120 respondents, 87(72.50%) respondents visit the library for reading news, 10(8.33%) respondents visit for preparing themselves for various competitive exams, 12(10.00%) respondents for employment information, 4(3.33%) respondents for general knowledge and 4(3.33%) respondents for academic improvement. It is so concluded that majority of respondents use the branch library at Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts for preparing themselves for various competitive exams.
- iii. 34(28.33%) respondents constituting use the library daily, 50(41.67%) respondents use library once a week, 21(17.5%) respondents use library once a fortnight and 15(12.5%) respondents use the library occasionally.
- iv. 51(42.50%) respondents use newspapers, 8(6.67%) respondents use employment newspaper, 5(4.17%) respondents use the Journals and Magazine, 8(6.67%) respondents use reference Books, 22(18.33%) respondents use the books and 6(5.00%) respondents use the e-resources to get relevant information from the library. Thus, majority of users visit the library to read newspapers and reference books.
- v. While 23(19.17%) respondents have time constraints in using the resources, 25(20.83%) respondents opined that lack of adequate library staff is their major problem. 12(10.00%) respondents report that lack of resources is the problem in using the library.
- vi. 77(64.17%) respondents search for materials subject wise, 18(15.00%) respondents search for materials using authors as keywords, 11(9.17%) respondents search for materials publisher wise and 14(11.67%) respondents search for materials title-wise. Hence maximum users employ 'subject wise search' at branch library in Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts.
- vii. 87(72.5%) respondents opine that the quality of internet service offered by the library is good, 11(9.17%) respondents each feel it is fair and 5(4.17%) respondent feels that the quality of internet services is moderate.
- viii. While 80(66.67%) respondents are highly satisfied with the information they access from magazines and journals, 20(16.67%) respondents are satisfied, 12(10.00%) respondents are less satisfied, only 8(6.67%) respondent is dissatisfied with the information they get from magazines and journals.

- ix. 51(42.5%) respondents opine that the quality of overall library services is good, 43(35.83%) respondents feel it is very good, 6(5.00%) respondent feels it is satisfactory and 8(6.67%) respondents rate the quality of overall library services as poor.

7. AREAS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following areas can be taken up for future research.

- i. Use of Internet services by the users in Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts Public Library (UPL).
- ii. Relevance and use of Special Collections in UPL.
- iii. Modernization efforts in UPL (Library automation, library websites etc.).
- iv. Collection development and stock management in UPL.
- v. Community resources in UPL
- vi.

8. CONCLUSION

The Thanjavur and Thiruvarur Districts Public Library deserves kudos for their yeomen's service in diffusing relevant information among the residents of the study area. To make its services better and attractive, it is suggested that i. more resources in various formats are to be collected; ii. sufficient, qualified library staff should be made available; iii. library can be automated with free or open source softwares and d) infrastructure for internet services is to be made stronger.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on conclusion drawn above, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- ❖ The State Government Authorities must ensure that the minimum standard required for public libraries to provide effective and efficient services as recommended by IFLA/UNESCO, is adhered to. The recommendation cuts across staff, nature of collection, services, structure, equipment's, policy and management.
- ❖ The library must as a matter of policy periodically re-assess the information needs of their community. This is even more imperative now that the users have developed sophisticated needs which are constantly changing.
- ❖ The State and Local Governments must be committed towards public library development. Adequate and timely release of funds is essential and necessary for the libraries to be comfortable in discharging their responsibilities to the society. Adequate budgetary allocation is needed to stock library building with current and relevant materials and for staff capacity building.
- ❖ The Library Management should develop a good public relation and advocacy programmes in order to boost positive image of the library and to attract funds from sources other than government.
- ❖ The Library Management should see lobbying and pressurizing as vital tools of attracting more funds into the library.

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