USERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE ROLE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN KANNIYAKUMARI DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU, INDIA

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Abstract:
The present study deals the users' perceptions regarding the role of Public Libraries in Kanniyakumari District. The study found that 27.8% of the respondents visit to the public library weekly. 31.7% respondents avail public library services by self- interest. 45.5% respondents agree that public library renders the 'Education' related information. 43.5% of the respondents agree with public library renders the information related to 'consumers problems'. 42.3% of the respondents agree that "Public library will help to reduce the crimes and social problems". 48.8% of the respondents agree that the public library satisfies the users' needs. It is inferred from the Chi-square analysis that there is an association between the respondents' residential sector and their opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs.

Key Words: Information Access Pattern, Information Use Pattern & Use of Public Library

Introduction:

A Public Library is a democratic institution which has to mean and serve the entire population of a community, with equality of access to all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language or social status. Since its inception the UNESCO paid particular attention to the promotion of public libraries. The UNESCO Public Library Manifesto was first issued in 1949. This was revised in 1972 and 1994. The revised UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (UNESCO, 1994) defines 'Public Library' as "a living force of education, culture and information and as essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women; a local gateway of knowledge which provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making and cultural development of individual and social groups."[1] India has a long history of public libraries spread over to several centuries of the past. The libraries have always been a vital part of the glorious ancient, medieval society to the present so called knowledge society. Since India became a sovereign country till now only eighteen states have enacted their Public Library Act and others are still uncovered by library legislation.

Objectives of the Study:

The following are the main objectives of the study:
- ✓ To study the users' perceptions regarding the role of Public Libraries in Kanniyakumari District
- ✓ To find out the frequency of visit to the public library
- ✓ To get the opinion on factors influencing to avail public library services
- ✓ To study the opinion about the public library renders the 'Education' related information
- ✓ To know the opinion about the public library renders the information related to 'Consumes Problems'
- ✓ To get the opinion from the library users regarding the "Public library will help to reduce the crimes and social problems"
- ✓ To study the opinion about the users regarding the "Public library satisfies the users' needs"

Research Methodology:

Research methodology is a way to systematically solve the research problem. It may be understood as a science of studying how research is done scientifically. In it we study the various steps that are generally adopted by a researcher in studying his research problem along with the logic behind them. It is necessary for the researcher to know not only the research methods/techniques but also the methodology. Researchers not only need to know how to develop certain indices or tests, how to calculate the mean, the mode, the median or the standard deviation or chi-square, how to apply particular research techniques, but they also need to know which of these methods or techniques, are relevant and which are not, and what would they mean and indicate[2]. The present study is a descriptive method. The questionnaires were used to collect the primary data. There are 450 Questionnaires were randomly distributed to the users of public libraries in Kanniyakumari District, Tamilnadu, India for collecting primary data and 400 filled questionnaires were received back by the researchers. The target group of this study includes library users of the ten libraries of Kanniyakumari district. A detailed study of ten public Libraries of Kanniyakumari district such as 1.District Central Library 2.Agastheeswaram public library 3.Aralvaimozhi public library 4.Kallukuttam public library 5.Killiyoor Public

International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education (IJSRME)
Impact Factor: 6.225, ISSN (Online): 2455 – 5630
(www.rdmodernresearch.com) Volume 2, Issue 1, 2017

library 6.Kuzhithurai public library 7.Melaperuvilai public library 8.Painkulam public library 9.Payanam public library 10.Thovalai public library. Forty library users are selected for a sample of the research from each ten Libraries and hence the sample size is 400. Hence 400 questionnaires were used for data analysis and interpretation. The primary data have been collected on April 2016.

Review of Literature:

Brown (2004)[3] has studied the reference service for children in public libraries in Australia. The study revealed that 1) the reference needs of 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 children and their questions are taken seriously; 4) to facilitate the delivery of quality reference and information services to children, it is important to have accepted guidelines or standards; and 5) the need for specific evaluation methods for children's reference services will increase the quality of the reference service.

Ghosh (2006)[4] discusses in his paper on role of Indian public libraries to increase the awareness of the community on HIV/AIDS. AIDS, the most devastating disease humankind has ever faced, has become a conflagration on the Indian subcontinent and nearly 5.134 million people in the country are estimated to be HIV-positive. There is a perceived need for public libraries to provide necessary information to make the community aware of the threat of HIV/AIDS. Today's challenge is to reinvent the public libraries to respond to community needs. This paper explores the avenues created by ICT-enabled networking processes in providing HIV/AIDS information to the unprivileged population in India. It concludes with a number of recommendations that are intended to address the core problems and thereby improve the overall situation.

Jim Killacky (1983)[5] studied on the public library is often considered a community learning centre with the ability to effectively respond to the growth of adult and continuing education has created greater needs for learning opportunities in rural area. The recent education policy reforms in Sri Lanka, which emphasizes the expansion of literacy and lifelong learning, and describes the role of the public libraries in this task and discusses the status of the Sri Lankan public libraries. It gives reasons for the unresponsiveness of public libraries to the changing educational requirements.

Khaiser Nikam and Rajashekara's (2003)[6] paper entitled, "Reading habits of public library users: A survey" is the result of a study carried out by the authors is two branches public library of Mysore city. Totally 200 readers were surveyed with the help of a structured questionnaire to know if Mysorians have the habit of reading or not."Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, writing an exact man" is a very popular quotation of the great philosopher Sir Francis Bacon. The results of this study which aimed to find out the reasons for reading books and how the electronic media like TV, CDs and the DVDs have influenced the reading habits of people has enabled us to reveal some interesting findings given in results and discussions part of this paper .The findings are worth sharing with the professionals.

Data Analysis and Interpretation:

Table 1: Gender and Age – wise distribution of respondents

Particulars		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Gender	Male	225	56.3
	Female	175	43.8
	Total	400	100
Age	Below 15 Years	51	12.8
	16 to 20Years	77	19.3
	21 to 30Years	108	27
	31 to 40 Years	68	17
	41 to 50 Years	34	8.5
	51 and above	62	15.5
	Total	400	100

Source: Primary Data

Table 1 reveals the gender and age-wise distribution of the respondents. In this study, a majority of 225 (56.3%) respondents come under the male category while 175 (43.8%) respondents are female category. The above table also indicates that among the overall 400 respondents, a majority of 108 (27%) respondents belong to age group between 21 and 30 and it is followed by 77 (19.3%) respondents between 16 and 20 age group, 68 (17%) of them between 31and 40 age group, 62 (15.5%) of them between 51 and above age group, 51 (12.8%) of them below 15 years age group and 34 (8.5%) of them between 41 to 50 age group.

Table 2: Distribution of respondents according to marital status and residing sector

Particulars		No. of Respondents	Percentage
Marital Status	Married	184	46
	Unmarried	216	54
Total		**400**	**100**

International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education (IJSRME)
Impact Factor: 6.225, ISSN (Online): 2455 – 5630
(www.rdmodernresearch.com) Volume 2, Issue 1, 2017

Residing sector	Rural	320	80
	Urban	80	20
Total		**400**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 describes the distribution of respondents according to marital status and residential sector. In this study, a majority of 216 (54%) respondents come under the unmarried category whereas 184 (46%) respondents married category. The above table also indicates that of the overall 400 respondents, a majority of 320 (80%) respondents come under the rural areas whereas 80 (20%) respondents urban areas.

Table 3: Frequency of visit to the public library by the respondents of gender

S.No	Gender	Frequency (%)					Total
		Daily	Weekly	Twice a Week	Monthly	Rarely	
1.	**Male**	63 (28)	57 (25.3)	46 (20.4)	32 (14.2)	27 (12)	225
2.	**Female**	35 (20)	54 (30.9)	30 (17.1)	25 (14.3)	31 (17.7)	175
Total		**98**	**111**	**76**	**57**	**58**	**400**

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 shows the frequency of visit to the public library by the respondents of gender. Opinion is obtained from the respondents of male category, a majority of 63 (28%) respondents visit to the library daily and it is followed by, 57 (25.3%) weekly, 46 (20.4%) twice a week, 32 (14.2%) monthly and 27 (12%) rarely respectively. Of the respondents of female category, a majority of 54 (30.9%) respondents visit to the public library weekly and it is followed by, 35 (20%) daily, 31 (17.7%) rarely 30 (17.1%) twice a week and 25 (14.3%) monthly respectively. Hence most of the respondents visit to the public library weekly. It is concluded that 27.8% of the library users visit to the library weekly.

Table 4: Opinion on factors influencing to avail public library services

S.No	Options	No. of Overall Responses	% of valid Respondents N= 400	% of overall Responses N= 487	Rank
1.	Self- interest	127	31.7	26.1	**1**
2.	By friends	85	21.2	17.5	**2**
3.	Reading habits	67	16.7	13.7	**4**
4.	Awareness on latest news	58	14.5	11.9	**5**
5.	Awareness on political information	43	10.7	8.8	**6**
6.	Research interest	37	9.3	7.6	**7**
7.	Awareness of Employment news	70	17.5	14.4	**3**
Total		**487**	**121.6**	**100**	

Source: Primary Data

It is clear from table 4 that 31.7% respondents' influencing to avail public library services is self-interest and it has got the first rank. It is followed by, 21.2% of the respondents' opinion is by friends and it has got the second rank, 17.5% respondents awareness of employment news and it has got the third rank, 16.7% reading habits and it has got the fourth rank, 14.5% awareness on latest news and it has got the fifth rank, 10.8 % awareness on political information and it has got the sixth rank while 9.3% research interest and it has got the seventh rank respectively.

Table 5: Opinion about the public library renders the 'EDUCATION' related information by the respondents of residential sector

S.No	Residential Sector	Opinion (%)					Total N
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	Rural	96 (30)	142 (44.4)	67 (20.9)	11 (3.4)	4 (1.3)	**320**
2.	Urban	21 (26.3)	40 (50)	13 (16.3)	2 (2.5)	4 (5)	**80**
Total		**117**	**182**	**80**	**13**	**8**	**400**

Source: Primary Data

International Journal of Scientific Research and Modern Education (IJSRME)
Impact Factor: 6.225, ISSN (Online): 2455 – 5630
(www.rdmodernresearch.com) Volume 2, Issue 1, 2017

Data presented in table 5 discuss the opinion about the public library renders the 'Education' related information by the respondents of residential sector. Of the respondents of rural areas, 142 (44.4%) respondents agree that public library renders the 'Education' related information, 96 (30%) of them strongly agree, 67 (20.9%) respondents have not expressed any opinion, 11 (3.4%) disagree and 4 (1.3%) strongly disagree respectively. Opinion is obtained from the urban areas, 40 (50%) respondents agree that the public library renders the 'Education' related information, 21 (26.3%) of them strongly agree, 13 (16.3%) respondents have not expressed any opinion, 4 (5%) strongly disagree and 2 (2.5%) disagree respectively. it is concluded that 45.5% of the library users agree that public library renders the 'Education' related information.

Table 6: Opinion about the public library renders the information related to 'Consumers Problems' by the respondents of Marital Status

S.No	Marital Status	Opinion (%)					Total N
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	Married	33 (17.9)	83 (45.1)	53 (28.8)	4 (2.2)	11 (6)	184
2.	Unmarried	37 (17.1)	91 (42.1)	54 (25)	17 (7.9)	17 (7.9)	216
Total		70	174	107	21	28	400

Source: Primary Data

Table 6 reveals the opinion about the public library renders the information related to 'consumers problems' by the respondents of marital status. Among the respondents of the married category, a majority of 83 (45.1%) respondents agree with public library renders the information related to 'consumers problems' and it is followed by 53 (28.8%) respondents have not expressed any comments, 33 (17.9%) strongly agree, 11 (6%) strongly disagree and 4 (2.2%) disagree respectively. Among the respondents of the unmarried category, a majority of 91 (42.1%) respondents agree with public library renders the information related to 'consumers problems' and it is followed by 54 (25%) respondents have not expressed any comments, 37 (17.1%) strongly agree and 17 (7.9%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively.

Table 7: Opinion about the public library will help to reduce the crimes and social problems

S.No	Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1.	Strongly agree	90	22.5
2.	Agree	169	42.3
3.	No Comments	62	15.5
4.	Disagree	42	10.5
5.	Strongly Disagree	37	9.3
Total		**400**	**100**

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 displays the opinion about the "Public library will help to create social awareness towards the gross national happiness". Of the overall respondents, 90 (22.5%) respondents strongly agree that the statement "Public library will help to create social awareness towards the gross national happiness", 169 (42.3%) agree, 62 (15.5%) respondents have not expressed any comments 42 (10.5%) disagree and 37 (9.3%) strongly disagree respectively. Hence majority of the respondents agree that the statement "Public library will help to create social awareness towards the gross national happiness".

Table 8: Opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs by the respondents of residential sector

S.No	Residential Sector	Opinion (%)					Total N
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1.	Rural	91 (28.4)	151 (47.2)	35 (10.9)	32 (10)	11 (3.4)	320
2.	Urban	12 (15)	44 (55)	6 (7.5)	9 (11.2)	9 (11.2)	80
Total		**103**	**195**	**41**	**41**	**20**	**400**

Source: Primary Data

Table 8 presents the opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs by the respondents of residential sector. Of the respondents of rural areas, 91 (28.4%) respondents strongly agree that opinion about the public library satisfy the user's needs, 151 (47.2%) of them agree, 35 (10.9%) respondents have not expressed any comments, 32 (10%) disagree and 11 (3.4%) strongly disagree respectively. Among the respondents of rural areas, 12 (15%) respondents strongly agree that opinion about the public library satisfy the user's needs, 44 (55%) of them agree, 6 (7.5%) respondents have not expressed any comments, 9 (11.2%)

disagree and 9 (11.2%) strongly disagree respectively. Hence most of the respondents agree with opinion about the public library satisfy the user's needs.

Testing of Hypothesis:

Null Hypothesis: There is no association between the respondents' residential sector and their opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs.

Chi-Square Test:

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.937[a]	4	.007
Likelihood Ratio	13.121	4	.011
Linear-by-Linear Association	6.987	1	.008
N of Valid Cases	400		
a. 1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.00.			

The above output gives the opinion about the opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs by the respondents of residential sector. Pearson's x^2 is 13.937 for 4 degrees of freedom, i.e., [(r-1) (c-1)] = [(2-1) (5-1)]. The p-value 0.007 is less than 0.05. The difference is considered significant. Hence the Null hypothesis is rejected and therefore it is concluded that there is an association between the respondents' residential sector and their opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs.

Findings:

- ✓ 56.3% of the respondents come under the male category.
- ✓ 27% respondents belong to age group between 21 and 30 years.
- ✓ 54% respondents belong to unmarried category.
- ✓ 80% respondents come under the rural areas.
- ✓ It is found that 27.8% of the respondents visit to the public library weekly.
- ✓ It is found that 31.7% respondents avail public library services by self- interest.
- ✓ It is found that 45.5% respondents agree that public library renders the 'Education' related information.
- ✓ It is found that 43.5% of the respondents agree with public library renders the information related to 'consumers problems'.
- ✓ It is found that 42.3% of the respondents agree that "Public library will help to reduce the crimes and social problems".
- ✓ It is found that nearly half of the respondents agree that the public library satisfies the users' needs.
- ✓ It is inferred from the Chi-square analysis that there is an association between the respondents' residential sector and their opinion about the public library satisfies the users' needs.

Conclusion:

The global society is undergoing speedy changes. The growth and development of any society is based on the development of its human resources. Of the infrastructure required for human development, library and its utilisation take part in a major role. Public libraries are an integral part of the people in effective and efficient utilization of time by way of offering facilities required for intellectual and life skills development. All the three libraries showed fluctuations in the number of registered members. The total number of visits by users of all the three public libraries covered under the study shows improvement. Enrichment of knowledge and light reading were the main purpose of obtaining membership in public. Users were able to enhance knowledge due to the availability of required information resources in the public libraries and due to the enabling environment for the promotion of regular reading habits of the users. The study proves that library users responded very positively regarding the role of the public libraries of Kanniyakumari district.

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