

Information Gathering Pattern of Users of a Public Library: A Survey

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Abstract

This study has made an attempt at examining the present day trends of users' perception of library services and availability of resources in public libraries in one of the western states of Tamil Nadu, the District Central Public Library at Erode. This study highlighted numerous elements, which include the sex-wise distribution of respondents; marital status; education; profession; library resources; frequency of visit; and satisfaction status regarding library offerings and assets. A total number of 200 questionnaires were distributed to the respondents who visit the Erode district public library. Out of the 200 samples, we received only 177 duly filled questionnaires. Further, all the valued data were tabulated and interpreted; the testing of hypothesis with relevant statistical tools, such as chi-square test using the current version of SPSS was carried out for better results. The major findings are the huge proportion of users (62.71%) was male and the largest numbers of respondents (64, 36.16%) were graduates, It is noted that more number of users (61, 34.47%) were employed participating in this research and it is also found that a large number of users (119, 67.23%) were from the rural area.

Keywords: User Perception, User Study, Survey, Public Library, District Central Library, Gathering Pattern, Erode

Introduction

A public library is a library for public which is generally funded from public assets, inclusive of taxes. It is operated by librarians and library paraprofessionals, who are also civil servants. The public library is a public institution which supports learning by way of book collections such as general books, reference books, journals and magazines for users like public people, students, and

faculty members etc. The District Central Public Library of Erode covers Coimbatore, Dharmapuri, Erode, Karur, Krishnagiri, Namakkal, Nilgiris, Salem, and Tiruppur. For the present study, researchers have chosen one best district library, i.e., Erode District Central Public Library to investigate contemporary trend in diverse styles of library assets and services. The district principal public library was hooked up in 1958 at Veera Pathira Street, Karungkalpalayam in Erode. The district primary library has a wealthy number of resources (1,42,384), which includes textbooks, reference books, subject books, story books, general information books, children's books, and competitive exam collections; it also has subscriptions to 20 newspapers and 103 magazines. There are ten library staff members, six individual technical group of workers, and 20,789 library members, since 2018. In the beginning, there were only 82 users; however, now the library has 135 consumers.

Literature Review

Numerous research has been carried out by scholars and researchers in connection with the public libraries and its sources and services. A few of the recent studies have been chosen for the current research. Antony Arokiavathy and Baladhandayutham (2017) pointed out through examination that more than 56% of the users were male and 27% of the users are between 21 and 30 years old. Around 54% of the users were unmarried; 80% were from rural areas; and 31.7% availed public library services because of self-interest. Velmurugan and Thavamani (2013) examined the undergraduate students at Rajalakshmi Institute of Technology, and the results revealed that about 98% of the students use the library

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for study purposes and 95% of the students were well aware of the search engines. Fahmi et al. (2013) studied to identify the attitude towards rural library services among youngsters in Malaysia. This research used the questionnaire method and found a total of 400 respondents among rural youths from 16 selected rural libraries in four states of Peninsular Malaysia. The study found that rural youths have a positive attitude towards and a positive relationship with rural library services.

Baskaran (2011) carried out a study to find out the profile of the library users in academic institutions in the southern districts of Tamil Nadu, to identify the users' perception and their attributes, and to determine the types of information sources and services required by the users. For data analysis, 145 questionnaires were distributed to the users in arts, paramedical, and engineering and technology college libraries; received 120 questionnaires were received. The results showed that the faculty of science respondents were in the majority, due to their keen searching and obtaining of information from scientific journals and electronic publications. The maximum number of users who visited the library did so for preparing for seminars, conferences, and assignments. Rehman et al. (2011) studied the users' satisfaction of the services and collections offered by the university libraries in Punjab. The results showed that male respondents were more and 43% of the users visited the library daily; the results showed a good trend in library visits. Obinyan (2011) conducted a study to observe the awareness and use of library resources in public libraries in Nigeria. The results showed that for a large number of users information was needed for examination purposes; it was also found that most of the resources were not adequate.

Objectives of the Study

The main purpose of this research is to:

- Identify the different kinds of services and availability of resources in the Erode District Central Library.
- Examine sex- and marital-wise distribution.
- Identify the users' education and occupation.
- Know about the availability of library resources and the frequency of visit.
- Observe the level of satisfaction and opinion about overall library services, and the difficulties faced.

Research Methodology

To congregate the above objectives, random sampling technique and questionnaire method were chosen. A total of 200 fine, structured questionnaires were distributed among the users who visit the Erode District Central Public Library. Out of the 200 samples, we received only 177 duly filled questionnaires. Further, all the valued responses are tabulated, analysed, and interpreted in the following tables and figures to retrieve good results. The scope of the current study is to observe the user perception of the district central library services and resources among the users in the Erode District. The present study covers only the user community belonging to the Erode District Central Library, and not the other branch and village libraries. The period of study was between January 2019 and March 2019.

Results and Discussion

Gender-Wise Distribution

Table 1 (Fig. 1) indicates the gender-wise distribution of respondents who participated in the present research of the Erode District Central Library. From the results it was identified that the greatest number of users (111, 62.71%) were male and only 66 (37.29%) were female.

Table 1: Gender-Wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	111	62.71
2	Female	66	37.29
Total		177	100

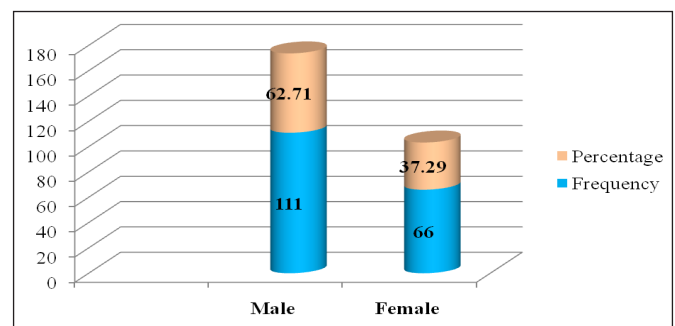


Fig. 1: Gender-Wise Distribution

Age-Wise Distribution

Table 2 represents the age-wise distribution; the age range was from below 25 to above 50. The findings of the study show that a huge number of users (59, 33.34%) were between 26 and 30. Around 34 (19.21%) were between 31 and 35. The least number of respondents (9, 5.08%) were above fifty. The results show that more than 60% of the user community who voluntarily participated in the present study were between 26 and 40.

Table 2: Age-Wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Age	Frequency	Percentage
1	Below 25	27	15.25
2	26-30	59	33.34
3	31-35	34	19.21
4	36-40	24	13.56
5	41-45	11	6.21
6	46-50	13	7.35
7	Above 50	9	5.08
Total		177	100

Marital Status

This study examined the marital status of the respondents and the results show that most of the users (100, 56.50%) were unmarried, and the remaining 77 (43.50%) were married. It was noted in this research that unmarried respondents were interested in giving their opinion.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

Sr. No.	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
1	Married	77	43.50
2	Unmarried	100	56.50
Total		177	100

Educational Qualifications

Table 4 (Fig. 2) represents the educational qualifications-wise distribution; users with qualifications, such as up to SSLC, higher secondary, graduate, post-graduate, and above post-graduation have been taken for the present study. It was noted that a large number of users (64, 36.16%) were graduates, followed by post-graduate respondents (45, 25.42%). Furthermore, a few

respondents were in the category above post-graduation (19, 10.73%). The analysis indicates that a majority of the users who willingly participated in this study were graduate students.

Table 4: Qualification-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sr. No.	Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
1	Till SSLC	21	11.87
2	Higher Secondary	28	15.82
3	Graduate	64	36.16
4	Post-Graduate	45	25.42
5	Above Post-Graduation	19	10.73
Total		177	100

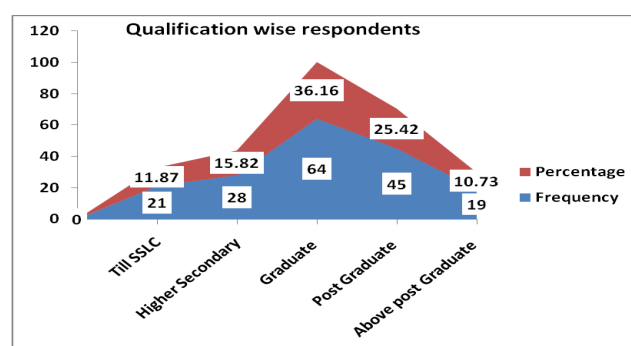


Fig. 2: Qualification-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Occupation-Wise Distribution

Table 5 shows the career-wise distribution of respondents. It is noted that a majority of the users (61, 34.47%) who were involved in the present study were employed, followed by 55 (31.07 %) respondents who were students, 34 (19.21%) who were research scholars, and 27 (15.25%) who were unemployed. The analysis indicates that people who were unemployed did not use the public library.

Table 5: Occupation-Wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
1	Students	55	31.07
2	Research Scholars	34	19.21
3	Employed	61	34.47
4	Unemployed	27	15.25
Total		177	100

Residence-Wise Distribution

Table 6 (Fig. 3) depicts the residence-wise distribution; residence was divided into two types – rural and urban. It is found that a large number of users (119, 67.23%) were from rural areas, and the remaining 58 (32.77%) were from urban areas.

Table 6: Residence-Wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Rural	119	67.23
2	Urban	58	32.77
Total		177	100

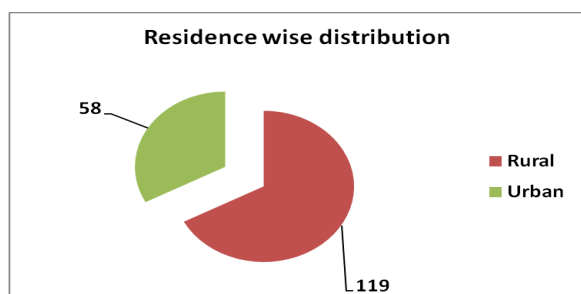


Fig. 3: Residence-Wise Distribution

Library Members

Table 7 displays the member-wise distribution. Out of the 177 respondents, a majority (102, 57.63%) were regular members of the district central library; the remaining 75 (42.37%) were non-members.

Table 7: Library Member-Wise Distribution

Sr. No.	Category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Member	102	57.63
2	Non-Member	75	42.37
Total		177	100

Purpose of Visiting the Library

Table 8 (Fig. 4) depicts the purpose of visiting the library. In this study, a majority of the respondents (67, 37.86%) visited the district central library for preparing for competitive examinations. Around 40 (22.60%) respondents used the library for enriching knowledge

to keep updated, followed by 35 (19.78%) who visited the library to read newspapers. It is found that only ten (5.65%) users visited the library for research purposes.

Table 8: Purpose of Visiting the Library

Sr. No.	Purpose of Visit	Frequency	Percentage
1	To read newspapers	35	19.78
2	For enriching knowledge	40	22.60
3	To borrow books	14	7.90
4	For entertainment	11	6.21
5	For preparing for competitive exams	67	37.86
6	For research	10	5.65
Total		177	100

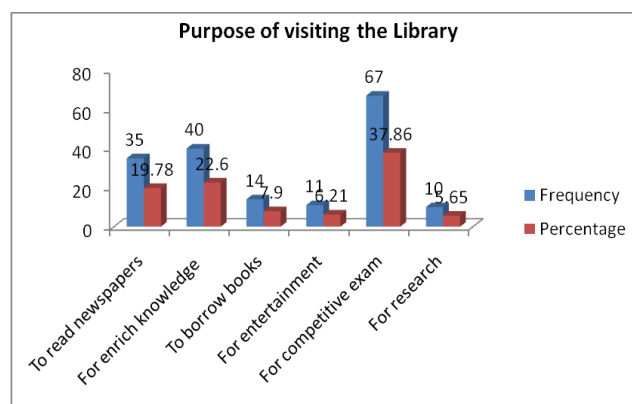


Fig. 4: Purpose of Visiting the Library

Type of Library Materials Gathered

Table 9 illustrates the library resources at the District Central Library in Erode. The analysis illustrates the availability of library resources in the District Central Library. It is found that among the 177 respondents, a majority of the users (44, 24.86%) prefer newspapers; 32 (18.07%) are willing to read competitive exam books; 30 (16.95%) read story books; 28 (15.82%) read textbooks; and only nine (5.09%) prefer reference books.

Table 9: Availability of Library Resources

Sr. No.	Resources Available	Frequency	Percentage
1	Textbooks	28	15.82
2	Periodicals	22	12.43
3	Newspapers	44	24.86

Sr. No.	Resources Available	Frequency	Percentage
4	Novels/Stories	30	16.95
5	Reference Books	9	5.09
6	Children's Books	12	6.78
7	Competitive Exam Books	32	18.07
Total		177	100

Frequency of Library Visit

Table 10 (Fig. 5) indicates that among the 177 respondents, a majority of the female users (28, 42.42%) and 41 (36.94%) of the male users visited the District Central Library daily, followed by 35 (31.53%) male and 12 (18.18%) female users who visited the library weekly. Around nine (13.63 %) female and 12 (10.81%) male users visited monthly, and only seven (10.60%) female and eight (7.21%) male users visited occasionally.

Table 10: Frequency of Library Visit

Sr. No.	Frequency	Male	Female	Mean	Variance	Total
1	Daily	41 (36.94%)	28 (42.42%)	34.5	84.5	69
2	Weekly	35 (31.53%)	12 (18.18%)	23.5	264.5	47
3	Fortnightly	15 (13.51%)	10 (15.15%)	12.5	12.5	25
4	Monthly	12 (10.81%)	9 (13.63%)	10.5	4.5	21
5	Occasionally	8 (7.21%)	7 (10.60%)	7.5	0.5	15
Total		111	66	-	-	177

Source: Primary data. Chi-square value: 0.403.

Testing of Hypothesis

H_0 : Null Hypothesis

There is no association between male and female respondents and their frequency of library visit.

H_1 : Alternative Hypothesis

There is an association between male and female respondents and their frequency of library visit.

Chi-Square Calculated Value	Degree of Freedom	Chi-Square Table Value@5%
0.403	4	9.49

The table value of χ^2 for 4 degrees of freedom at 0.05% level of significance is 9.49. The calculated value of χ^2 is lower than this table value; hence, the null hypothesis is accepted and the alternative hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no association between male and female respondents and their frequency of library visit.

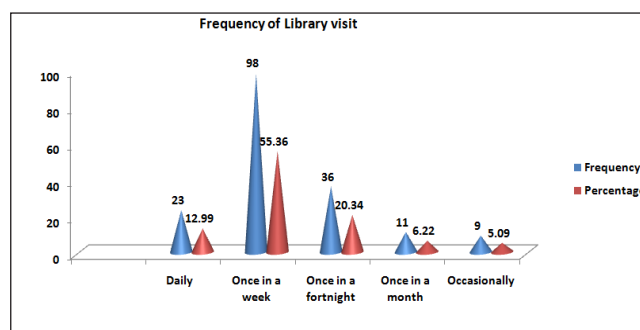


Fig. 5: Frequency of Library Visit

Time Spent

Table 11 represents that among 177 respondents, a majority of the respondents (67, 37.85%) spent one to two hours in the District Central Library, followed by 48 (27.13%) respondents who spent less than an hour. It is found that only 15 (8.47%) respondents spent above four hours in the District Central Library.

Table 11: Time Spent in Library

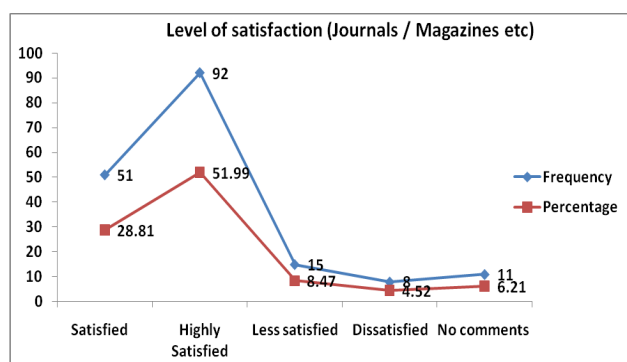
Sr. No.	Time Spent	Frequency	Percentage
1	0-1 Hour	48	27.13
2	1-2 Hours	67	37.85
3	2-3 Hours	26	14.69
4	3-4 Hours	21	11.86
5	4 and Above Hours	15	8.47
Total		177	100

Level of Satisfaction Regarding the Periodical Services

In order to identify the level of satisfaction in connection with services provided to the user community in the periodicals section, the variable has been taken into account. Table 12 shows that a majority of the respondents (92, 51.99%) were highly satisfied with the journals and magazines services, followed by 51 (28.81%) who felt satisfied. It is found that 11 respondents did not provide any comments and eight users were dissatisfied with the periodicals section in the District Central Library of Erode.

Table 12: Level of Satisfaction (Journals/Magazines, and so on)

Sr. No.	Level of Satisfaction	Frequency	Percentage
1	Satisfied	51	28.81
2	Highly Satisfied	92	51.99
3	Less Satisfied	15	8.47
4	Dissatisfied	8	4.52
5	No Comments	11	6.21
Total		177	100

**Fig. 6: Level of Satisfaction (Journals/Magazines, and so on)**

Difficulties in using Library Resources

Table 13 shows the different kinds of problems users face while they use the library, such as lack of resources, fewer staff, improper book arrangements, space problem, and so on. The results indicate that 27 (15.25%) of the respondents felt that there were very few library staff members to assist the users on time. It is found that 30 (16.96%) respondents felt that there was a lack of resources, followed by 14 (7.91%) respondents who felt that there was improper book arrangements. It is also seen that most of the users (101, 57.06%) felt none of the difficulties associated with the library resources and services provided by the District Central Library of Erode during the study.

Table 13: Difficulties in using Library Resources

Sr. No.	Difficulties	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of library staff members	27	15.25
2	Lack of resources	30	16.96
3	Improper book arrangements	14	7.91
4	Space problem	5	2.82
5	None	101	57.06
Total		177	100

Opinion about Overall Library Services

Table 14 (Fig. 7) shows that a majority of the respondents (89, 50.29%) felt that the overall library services were very good, followed by 44 (24.86%) who felt that the library services were good. Around 31(17.51%) were satisfied; six (3.39%) did not comment; and seven (3.95%) felt that the library services in the District Central Library of Erode were poor.

Table 14: Opinion about Overall Library Services

Sr. No.	Library Services	Frequency	Percentage
1	Good	44	24.86
2	Very Good	89	50.29
3	Satisfied	31	17.51
4	Poor	7	3.95
5	No Comments	6	3.39
Total		177	100

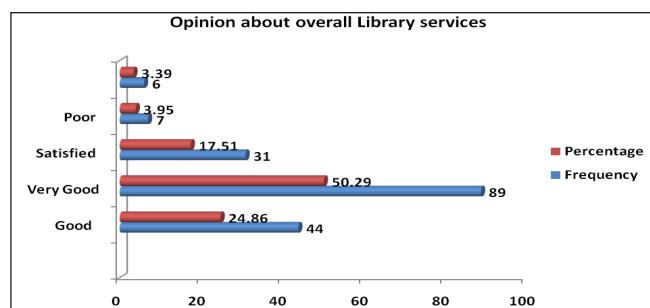


Fig. 7: Opinion about Overall Library Services

Major Findings

Selected major findings are as follows.

- The large number of users (62.71%) were male; and a large number of users (33.34%) were between 26 and 30 years old.
- The largest number of respondents (64, 36.16%) were graduates; a very few were in the category above post-graduation (19, 10.73%).
- The maximum number of users (61, 34.47%) who were involved in the present study were employed.
- It is found that a large number of users (119, 67.23%) were from the rural area.
- A majority of the respondents (67, 37.86%) used the District Central Library for preparing for competitive examinations.
- A majority of the respondents (44, 24.86%) prefer to read newspapers, and only nine (5.09%) respondents preferred to read reference books.
- Around 55.36% of the respondents visit the library once a week, and only nine (5.09%) respondents visit the library occasionally.
- A large part of the users (37.85%) spent one to two hours in the library.
- A majority of the respondents (51.99%) were highly satisfied with the periodicals section.
- Around 15.25% of the respondents felt that there was a lack of library staff members to assist the users on time; and 16.96% of the respondents felt that there was a lack of resources.
- A better part of the respondents (50.29%) felt that the overall library services were very good.

Discussion

Generally, a library is a social institution. A public library is also known as people's library. The public library gives out all types of information and knowledge, without any bias in terms of age, race, caste, sex, religion, nationality, language, social status, and so on. A number of case studies have already been done in various fields by different eminent scholars and scientists, and a few of the opinions have been discussed. Bhattacharjee, Bhattacharjee and Sinha (2016) studied the university libraries at Tripura; they found awareness and preference of social networking sites and described the changing patterns or expectations from library services. According to Namugera (2014), the public library users lacked knowledge of the services their public libraries provided, and it caused by poor communication and inadequate interaction between users and the public library. Kayaoglu (2014) explained the perceptions and expectations of public library users in Istanbul, Turkey, and the results showed that the questionnaire method was used on a total of 643 respondents randomly selected from 15 public libraries. The Internet was the main source of information, and people do not use public libraries because they are not aware of public libraries. Kumara and Nikam (2012) pointed out through their study on awareness among young users of public library services that young adult users wanted the libraries to improve essential infrastructure facilities, such as separate reading rooms for users, drinking water, toilet facility, seating facility, and so on. Ranganathan (2012) analysed the perception and expectation of the users of the Bharathidasan University Library and noted that a greater part of the users were male. He also noted that the library ambience was homely and tidy, and the quality of the book collection was good. Kaunda (2013) carried out a study on the development of user needs and user satisfaction measurement instruments for the National Library Service of Malawi. The study found that the services and facilities acted as indicators of library usefulness, and suggested that the relationship between the National Library Service and its users was improved.

Conclusion

According to S. R. Ranganathan, public library gives life-long education and provides up-to-date information

on all subjects to one and all. The District Central Library plays a vital role all over India, as well as at the global level. This is the place where people can gather knowledge and spend their time usefully. The Erode District Central Library deserves a good reputation for its pertinent services, disseminating the right information to the right people at the right time. This study tried to focus on the information gathering pattern of people who visit the public District Central Library, including how they select the search tools, their, age, gender, frequency of visit, time spent, problems they face while searching for information, the level of satisfaction regarding the availability of resources and services provided by the central library, and so on. The findings of the study show that more than fifteen per cent of the respondents felt that there was a lack of library staff members; more than sixteen per cent of the users felt that there was a lack of information resources. Hence, to eradicate these types of problems, it is suggested that serious steps are taken, like orientation programmes and training at the national level, which will help people know about the availability of information resources and services in the District Central Library. Moreover, well-trained and qualified library staff members must be employed in the future. This present study may be further carried over for future research in the following areas: information need and awareness, user perception about the particular collections in the Erode District Central Library, and Information and Communication Technology awareness and services by the user community in the Erode District Central Library.

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