
Senior Citizens' Perception of the Sources and Services of Public Library: A case study of Tirunelveli District Central Library, Palayamkottai

K.Pool Pandian

Research Scholar,
Department of Library and Information Science
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University
Tirunelveli-627 012, Tamil Nadu, India
Email: poolpandian46@gmail.com

P. Balasubramanian

University Librarian & Head
Department of Library and Information Science
Manonmaniam Sundaranar University
Tirunelveli-627 012, Tamil Nadu, India.
E-mail: bala_2010@yahoo.com

Abstract

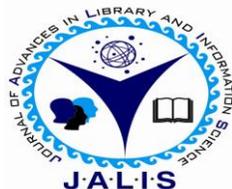
Public Libraries have played an important role in the social, political, economic, and cultural developments. In recent years, they have provided reading materials and other documents to aged persons and physically challenged readers to alleviate their miseries; assisted destitute members of society to gain a rightful place in society; helped businessmen to improve their business; assisted decision-makers, researchers, students and other members of society in achieving their goals. A public library is a cultural centre and services as a centre for self-education. UNESCO manifesto proclaims public library as a living for education, culture and informs as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and understanding between people and between nations

Keywords

Senior Citizens'; Public Library; Sources, and Services

Electronic access

The journal is available at www.jalis.in



Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science
ISSN: 2277-2219 Vol. 9. No.4. 2020. pp.143-149

1. Introduction

The public Library and society are interlinked and interdependent. A society without libraries has no significance and also a library without society has no meaning. The library is a product of the cultural and social maturation of society. From the very beginning of society, the library has been a product of social organization and a handmaiden of scholarship. The Library has been created by actual necessities in modern society and is now a necessary unit in the social fabric. The library is the product of society for cultural advancement and acts as a social agency. Thus libraries not only conserve our culture but also act as agencies of communication by collecting, organizing, and disseminating required information to the people. It serves as a vehicle of social progress and therefore plays many vital roles.

The library is the product of the "cultural maturation" of a human being. It is essentially a response to the total communication patterns of modern society. The advent and advance of democracy; the extension of the horizons of education; the intensification of research, and the knowledge and information explosion have resulted and necessitated a well-organized and up-to-date library. So the library can be termed as the web of social relationships; the hub of research activities; the crowning glory of education, and education, and an agency for educating the masses in the values of democracy - Justice, Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.

2. Profile of sample unit

The district central library is the apex library of the district, usually located in the district capital. Books and other reading materials are purchased, technically processed, and distributed to all public libraries in the district by the district central library authority. District Central Libraries are governed and controlled by the Director of Public Libraries. Each District Central Library covers a particular district and caters to the needs of the entire branch libraries of the district. The District library of Tirunelveli is situated at Palayamkottai. Tirunelveli and Palayamkottai are the twin cities located on the banks of the river Tamiraparani. The river separates the two cities. The west and northern side of the river is occupied by Tirunelveli Town. The east and south side is Palayamkottai town. Though the northern parts may appear arid, the southern parts are decked with fertile fields of paddy and plantations and are bordered with a beautiful long coastline on the east and the south.

The District Central Library, Palayamkottai was established in 1952. It functions under District Central Library Association. It covers Palayamkottai, Nellai, Thatchanallur, and Melapalayam with a population of 12,24,319 men and 12,68,870 women. During the year 2018 - 2019, the total number of people used the library was 1,91,421. All books for this library are received from the state central library, Chennai. The books include a wide range of disciplines such as Computer Science, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Fine Arts, Statistics, History, Sociology, Tamil, and English. 13 staff members manage the library. It is functioning at 2/32, North High Ground Road, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli - 627 002. Telephone No: 0462-2561712, Email: dcltnvopac@gmail.com. The working hours of the library Morning 8.00 am to Evening 8.00 pm and holidays on Friday, 2nd Saturday, and Government Holidays

3. Review of Literature

Sutton (1998) explained a plan to enhance public library support to users who were engaged in open or distance learning by identifying and classifying a range of learning resources, which could be accessed through the Internet. The proposal included a preliminary stage which involved collaboration with the Robert Gordon University School of Information and Media, to develop information and skills training for independent learners, which could then be used as the basis for developing information skills courses which could be run locally by public library staff. Johannsen (2004) reports the results on a particular management issue of a recent Danish qualitative interview survey on experiences with fee-based public library services. It also includes a systematic comparison between underlying values, revealed through the survey, and the results of a recent large scale survey of Danish public sector values. The article outlines the evolution of the library charging discourse and investigates to what extent and how values associated with fee-based services differ and resemble the general public sector values. In particular, it will be examined to what extent fee-based services facilitate the penetration of New Public Management oriented values into public libraries. Finally, management practices concerning fee-based services are considered, focusing, in particular, on possible discrepancies between expressed values and actual practice. Usherwood (2000) reported the first stage of an investigation into the public library workforce in the UK. The investigation consisted of a postal survey of all UK

public library authorities and had an 80 percent response rate. Information and data were collected from variation in attitudes and practices. There is evidence that some authorities that have career development initiatives are twice as likely to be actively recruiting candidates, and a statistically significant relationship between the length of stay of new professional and ongoing career development.

4. Statement of Problem

A public library is a cultural centre and services as a centre for self-education. It plays several vital roles in people's lives. Today, people of different ages, ethnicities, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses can access public libraries across the country. The public library provides information, inculcates ideas, and develops knowledge that is so essential to functioning successfully in today's information and knowledge-based society. It is fundamental to a public library to equip the readers with lifelong learning skills and develop their creative thinking and imagination, and enabling them to live as ideal and responsible citizens. The public library is an institution of the public and for the public. Therefore, they must be open to all, without any let or hindrance. They must be quick and highly accessible. This principle implies that there must be appropriate public library service points available to everyone in the community. The present study is to analyze the senior citizens' perception towards library collections, environment, access, and services of staff.

5. Objectives of the study

- To examine senior citizens' perception of the total collections, growth, and adequacy of collections in the Tirunelveli District central library.
- To analyze the respondents' views on the physical and psychological working conditions in the selected public library.
- To suggest some measures to improve the public libraries.

6. Null and Alternative Hypotheses

H₀: Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens are not significantly influencing their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library

H₁: Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens are significantly influencing their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library

7. Scope of the study

The senior citizens are an important and essential part of Indian society. Throughout their life, they contribute to the development of the home, family, society, and the overall development of our nation. So this study is conducted under the title "Senior Citizens' Perception towards the Sources and Services of Public Library - A case study of Tirunelveli District Central Library, Palayamkottai". The present study aims at evaluating the target population's perception towards sources and services provided by the Tirunelveli District Central Library, Palayamkottai.

8. Methodology

Senior citizen members and users of district central library Palayamkottai become the sampling frame. Visitors index, membership register, and vasagar vattam provided the framework of the respondents. The researcher planned a sample of 150 respondents using the public library and those who belonged to the age group of 60 and above were selected by adopting a simple random sampling technique. The researcher constructed a strong questionnaire by reviewing the previous studies and consulting with experts. Then the researcher distributed the questionnaire to selected respondents and collected 135 full-fledged questionnaires only. The response rate is 90 percent.

9. Limitations

- ⇒ The findings of this study apply only to the Selected Public libraries and their users in Tirunelveli
- ⇒ The study lacks in evaluating the fund generation, fund utility, and expectation.

10. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1. Gender Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Gender wise Distribution		
1.	Male	103	76.30
2.	Female	32	23.70
Total		135	100

The gender-wise distribution of respondents under the study is shown in Table 1 and shows that of the 135 total respondents, 103 (76.30%) respondents are Male and the remaining 32 (23.70%) respondents are Female. It is further found that aged male respondents are more interested in income to the library.

Table 2. Age-Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Age Group		
1.	60 – 65 Years	42	31.11
2.	65 – 70	57	42.22
3.	Above 70	36	26.67
Total		135	100

The table no. 2 says that among the 135 respondents, who have been interrogated, a sizable proportion (42.22%) belongs to the age group of 65 – 70, 31.11% come under 60 – 65 Years and the remaining 26.67% represents the age group of more than 70 years.

Table 3. Religion Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Religion		
1.	Hindu	66	48.89
2.	Islam	22	16.30
3.	Christian	47	34.81
Total		135	100

It is perceived from Table that the majority of the respondents 66 (48.89 percent) are Hindu followed by 47 (34.81 percent) Christians and 22 (16.30 percent) Muslims. It can be concluded that the maximum users of the central library fall under the category of the Hindu religion in Tirunelveli.

Table 4. Type of Family Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Type of Family		
1.	Nuclear	74	54.81
2.	Joint	61	45.19
Total		135	100

It is inferred from table 4 that out of the 135 total users of the district central library, 74 (54.81 percent)

come under the category of the nuclear family and the remaining 61(45.19 percent) come under the category of joint family. It is concluded that the majority of the Tirunelveli district central library users come under the category of the nuclear family.

Table 5. Status Wise Distribution of Respondents

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Status		
1.	Full-time Worker	39	28.89
2.	Part-time Worker	44	32.59
3.	Retired	52	38.52
Total		135	100

It is understood from the above table that a maximum of 38.52 percent of respondents retired and presently not doing any work followed by 32.59 percent of them part-time workers and the remaining 28.89 percent of respondents as full-time workers.

Table 6. Frequency of visit to the District Library

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Frequency of visit		
1.	Daily	52	38.52
2.	Twice in week	31	22.96
3.	Once in a week	23	17.04
4.	Monthly	17	12.59
5.	Occasionally	12	8.89
Total		135	100

It is grasped from the Table 6 that out of the 135 respondents, maximum of 52 (38.52 percent) of them visit the library daily followed by, twice in a week, once in a week, monthly, and Occasionally which constitute 22.96 percent, 17.04 percent, 12.59 percent, and 8.89 percent respectively. It is witnessed from the above analysis that most of the senior citizens daily go to the library.

Table 7. Purpose of visiting Library

Sl. no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Purpose of visit		
1.	To borrow and return books	37	27.41
2.	To read newspapers/ Magazines	54	40.00
3.	To read personal books	22	16.30

4.	For browsing	7	5.19
5.	To meet friends &Relaxing	15	11.11
Total		135	100

Table 7 represents the senior citizens' purpose for visiting the library. It is found that a maximum of 40 percent of respondents visits the library to read newspapers/ Magazines to know the current affairs followed by "To borrow and return books, to read personal books, for browsing and to meet friends &Relaxing which constitute 27.41 percent, 16.30 percent, 11.11 percent, and 5.19 percent respectively. It is concluded that more than one-third of senior citizens visit the district central library to read newspapers/ magazines.

Table 8. Variables Selected for the Study

Sl.No	Variable	Coding
1.	Developed its collection by procuring necessary reading materials	VAR 01
2.	Back volumes are properly maintained	VAR02
3.	Adequate infrastructural facilities	VAR03
4.	Working as a community information centre	VAR04
5.	Proper assistance of library staff	VAR05
6.	Easy to find out the location of books.	VAR06
7.	An online public access catalogue is very useful	VAR07
8.	Availability of latest publication of journals	VAR08
9.	Sufficient reference books collection in the library	VAR09
10	Sufficient reading materials are available in the library	VAR10
11	Proper arrangement of books in the shelves	VAR11

Table 9.Senior Citizens' Perception of Sources and Services of Public Library

Particulars	Respondents perception						
	SA	A	NU	DA	SDA	Mean	Rank
VAR 01	59.00	34	22	11	9	3.911	I
VAR02	39.00	29	18	28	21	3.274	VIII
VAR03	48.00	39	17	19	12	3.681	II
VAR04	40.00	31	22	24	18	3.378	IV
VAR05	34.00	29	32	17	23	3.252	IX
VAR06	37.00	32	34	21	11	3.467	III

VAR07	29.00	27	32	29	18	3.148	XI
VAR08	34.00	28	29	21	23	3.215	X
VAR09	33.00	29	37	24	12	3.348	V
VAR10	30.00	42	21	23	19	3.304	VI
VAR11	29.00	27	19	39	21	3.030	VII

Table 9 exposes the ranking of variables related to Senior Citizens' Perception of Sources and Services of Public Library. The first rank agreed to "Developed its collection by procuring necessary reading materials" the second rank allotted to the variable "Adequate infrastructural facilities", the third rank assigned to the variable "Easy to find out the location of books", fourth rank to "Working as community information centre" and fifth rank to "Sufficient reference books collection in the library".

Table 9. Respondents perception towards the working conditions of the Library

Sl.no	Particulars	Number of Respondents	Percentage
	Working conditions		
1.	Very good	34	25.19
2.	Well	67	49.63
3.	No opinion	19	14.07
4.	Not good	15	11.11
Total		135	100

It is found from the above table that nearly one half (49.65%) of selected respondents said the working conditions of the public library are well followed by one fourth said very good, 14.07% no opinion, and 11.11% of respondents said physical and psychological working conditions are not good.

Table 10. Association between Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens and their perception

Variable	Pearson Chi-Square	Likelihood Ratio	Degrees of Freedom	Significance value	Result
Gender	15.555	15.599	11	0.002	Significant
Age	16.085	16.043	22	0.013	Significant
Religion	16.518	16.918	22	0.004	Significant
Family type	12.256	12.631	11	0.023	Significant
Status	14.831	15.222	22	0.017	Significant
Frequency of visit	13.247	12.342	11	0.013	Significant

Table 10 reveals the Association between Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens and their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library. The significance value of Gender, Age, Religion, Family type, Status, and Frequency of visit is less than the confidence level at 95 percent level. Hence it is concluded that the null hypothesis "Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens are not significantly influencing their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library" is rejected and accept the alternative hypothesis "Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens are significantly influencing their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library".

Table 11. Regression Weights

Variable	Profile	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
Problems <---	Gender	-.022	.035	-.641	.522	NS
Problems <---	Age	.069	.025	2.720	.007	Sig
Problems <---	Religion	.068	.021	3.252	.001	Sig
Problems <---	Family	.071	.037	1.934	.053	NS
Problems <---	Status	-.057	.026	-2.234	.025	Sig
Problems <---	Frequency	-.087	.015	-5.709	***	Sig

Table 12. RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	CLOSE
Default model	.921	.885	.956	.000
Independence model	.634	.623	.645	.000

Table 11 discloses the regression weights between Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens and their perception towards the problems faced by them while availing the services of the public library. It is further found that the significance values Age, Religion, Status, and Frequency of visit are less than the confidence level at 95 confidence level, so these are influences the problem factor, Gender and Family type significance value is more than the confidence level. Hence these variables are not influencing the problems.

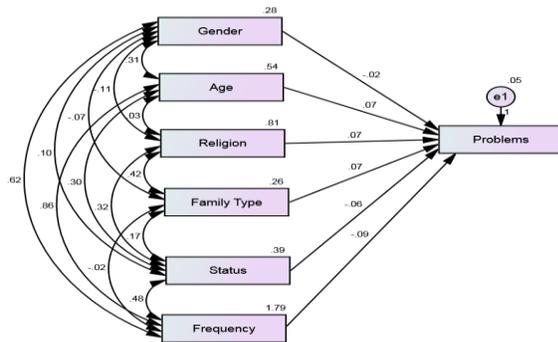


Fig 1 Association between profile variables and problem factors

11. Findings

- The researcher found that 76.30% of respondents are Male and the remaining 23.70% Female.
- It is understood that 42.22% selected senior citizens belong to the age group of 65 – 70, 31.11% come under 60 – 65 Years and the remaining 26.67% represent the age group of more than 70 years.
- It is known that 48.89 percent of respondents are Hindu, 34.81 percent Christians, and 16.30 percent Muslims.
- 54.81 percent of respondents live in the nuclear family and the remaining 45.19 percent in a joint family.
- The researcher comes to know that 38.52 percent of respondents retired and presently not doing any work, 32.59 percent of them part-time workers and the remaining 28.89 percent of respondents are full-time workers.
- It is grasped from the study that 38.52 percent of respondents visit the library daily followed by, twice in a week, once in a week, monthly, and Occasionally which constitute 22.96 percent, 17.04 percent, 12.59 percent, and 8.89 percent respectively.
- The first rank granted to the variable “The public library developed its collection by procuring necessary reading materials” the second rank allotted to the variable “Adequate infrastructural facilities”, the third rank assigned to the variable “Easy to find out the location of books.
- It is identified that nearly one half (49.65%) of selected senior citizens’ respond the working conditions of the public library are

good, one-fourth of them said very well, 14.07% no opinion, and 11.11% of respondents said physical and psychological working conditions are not good.

- It is proved that the Demographic profile variables of selected senior citizens are significantly influencing their perception towards the Sources and Services available in the Public Library”.
- It is found that the significance values of respondent’s Age, Religion, Status, and Frequency of visits are less than the confidence level at 95 confidence level, so these are influences the problem factor, Gender, and Family type significance value is more than the confidence level. Hence these variables are not influencing the problems of respondents.

12. Suggestions

- The books and reading materials should be properly arranged on the shelves and easy access to senior citizens.
- The latest journals should be available in the library
- Librarians should provide proper assistance to the senior citizen members of the public library
- Back volumes are easily accessible to senior citizens.
- Library management make necessary steps for the availability of sufficient reading material in the library
- The public library environment should be made convenient for senior citizen members.

13. Conclusion

A public library has been regarded as an integral part of the social framework from the very beginning. It is considered as a social institution, charged with the responsibility of serving the information needs of the society without any discrimination. In a developing country like India, special emphasis is laid on literacy, adult education, formation, and academic education. The public library should supplement formal education in schools, colleges, and Universities. It should provide books and other library material for self-education, recreation, information, and knowledge. It should also provide audiovisual materials for the neo-literates and even illiterates of functional literacy, and reading circles so

that they may make the best use of other life in the society, become good citizens and discharge their social responsibilities. Besides supplementing traditional knowledge, it muses also enables them to gain experience about their vacation.

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