

Utilization of Library Resources among Women Users : with special reference to Theni District Central Library

1. Dr. R. Renganathan, 2. Dr. Sugirtha Kumar

^{1.} Associate Prof. & Librarian, Hajee Karutha Rowther Howdia College, Uthamapalayam, 625533, Theni Ph: 9942639406, e-mail: libraryhkrh@gmail.com

^{2.} Librarian, Sarah Tucker College, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli, 627007.

Abstract

Public libraries play a vital role in ensuring free and equal access to information for all sections of society. They provide a wide range of resources, including books, newspapers, journals, digital materials, and internet facilities. Through these services, libraries promote literacy and encourage lifelong learning among individuals of all age groups.

In addition, public libraries support students, job seekers, researchers, and general readers by offering reliable and up-to-date information. They also provide a quiet and peaceful environment that is conducive to study and research activities.

This article presents the details of the resources available at the Theni District Central Public Library and the usage. The average number of daily visitors indicates that reading habits are increasing among users despite the distractions of the mobile-driven world.

The frequency of library visits among women readers, time spent in the library reading preferences, the importance of the public library and the level of satisfaction with library resources were examined and the results distributed in the tabular form and chart.

Key Words: Public Library, Theni District Central Library, Women Readers, Importance of Public Library, Library Resources.

Introduction

A public library plays a vital role in the social, educational, and cultural development of a community. It provides free and equal access to books, newspapers, journals, digital resources, and internet facilities, thereby promoting literacy and lifelong learning among people of all age groups. Public libraries support students, job seekers, researchers, and general readers by offering reliable information sources and a peaceful study environment.

They also organize educational programmes, workshops, exhibitions, and community events that encourage creativity and social interaction. Furthermore, public libraries help bridge the digital divide by providing access to modern technology and guidance in using online resources effectively. Thus, a public library functions as a knowledge centre, cultural hub, and democratic space that empowers individuals and strengthens society.

Theni District Central Library

Theni District Central Library was established in the year 1956. The library has a total collection of 1,49,109 books. Magazines and journals are among the primary resources used by readers to obtain the latest information from various fields. The library subscribes to 91 Tamil magazines and 41 English magazines. Newspapers are also a major source of information in the library. It provides 7 newspapers in the local language and 3 newspapers in English.

The library has classified subject collections, including Higher Secondary textbooks and competitive examination books. On average, 450 users visit the library daily, of which around 60 are women users. The library functions through various sections, including the Book Section, Reading Section, Children's Section, Reference Section, Exam Aspirants' Section, and Study Area.

The total utilized area of the library consists of 3,541 sq. ft. on the ground floor and 3,703 sq. ft. on the first floor, both used for the main library purposes. The second floor, measuring 3,703 sq. ft., is utilized for the administrative office of the District Local Libraries.

Objectives of the Study

The study was carried out with the following objectives for the better understanding of women user's reading behavior.

- To identify the frequency of library visits among women readers
- To examine the time spent by women readers in the library
- To understand the reading preferences of women readers
- To understand the opinions of women readers on the importance of the public library

Sampling:

The study employed a systematic random sampling technique to select a representative sample of library users, comprising a minimum of 120 women respondents. This method facilitated the inclusion of participants representing different age groups, educational qualifications, and information requirements.

Methodology

The present study was conducted to examine the reading habits of women users at the Theni District Central Library. Only female readers were selected as respondents for this study.

A well-structured questionnaire was prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study to collect relevant data. The researcher personally distributed and collected the questionnaires from the respondents. In total, 128 women users participated in the survey. However, eight respondents were unable to complete the questionnaire due to time constraints. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 120 respondents.

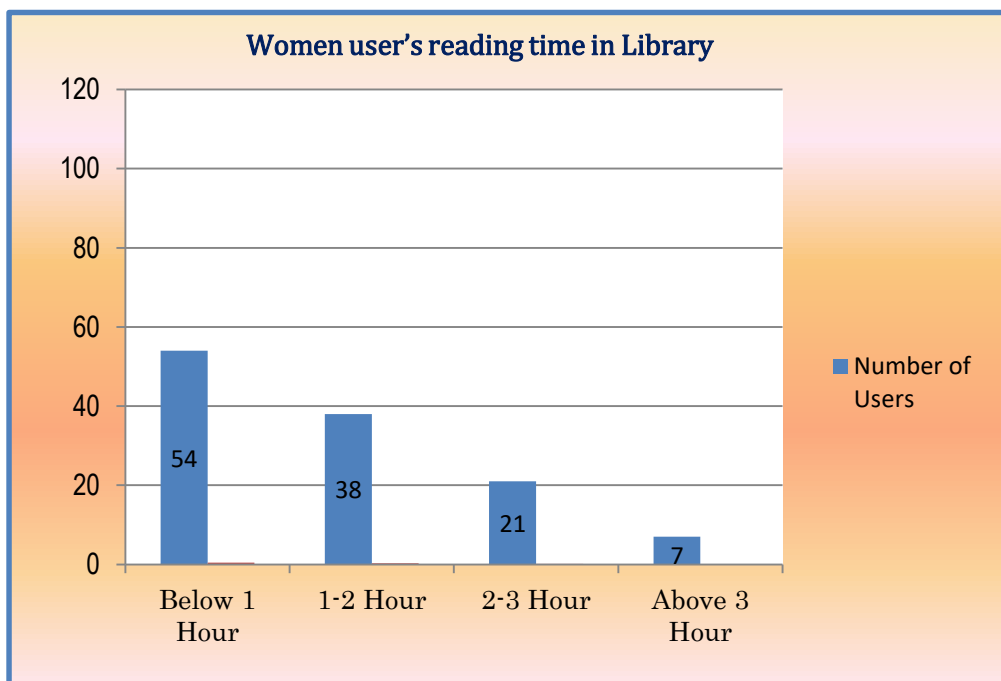
The data collected were organized in tabular form and analyzed using the simple percentage method.

Frequency of women user’s Library Visit

S.No	Frequency of Visit Library	Frequency	Percentage
1	Daily	43	35.83%
2	Weekly	35	29.17%
3	Twice a Week	18	15.00%
4	Monthly	8	6.67%
5	Rarely	16	13.33%
	Total :	120	100%

The data clearly indicate that the majority of respondents (80%) visit the library either daily, weekly, or twice a week. This reflects a positive reading culture and significant utilization of library resources among the users. However, a small segment (20%) visits the library only monthly or rarely, which suggests scope for improving user engagement and awareness programs.

Women user’s reading time in Library



The data on the duration of time spent in the library per visit reveal distinct usage patterns among the respondents. A majority of the users, 54 respondents, spend below one hour in the library, indicating that most visits are short and purpose-oriented. Meanwhile, 38 respondents spend one to two hours per visit, showing a moderate level of engagement with library resources. About 21 respondents remain in the library for two to three hours, reflecting more intensive use for study or reference purposes. Only a small number, 7 respondents, spend more than three hours in the library, suggesting that extended study sessions are relatively less common.

The findings clearly show that women users actively utilize the library for both academic and informational purposes. While a large proportion of respondents visit for routine services such as reading newspapers and borrowing books, many also use the library as a resource for competitive exam preparation and self-improvement. The presence of leisure-oriented visits further highlights the library’s role not only as an academic centre but also as a space for constructive recreation.

Reading Preferences of women readers

<i>Reading Preference (Resources)</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Newspapers	48	40.00 %
General Knowledge Books and Journals	22	18.33 %
Subject and General Books borrow	12	10.00 %
Entertainment News Reading	14	11.67 %
Books for Competitive Examination	24	20.00 %
Total :	120	100 %

The data on reading preferences of respondents show varied interests in different types of library materials. A majority of the respondents, 48 (40.00%), prefer reading newspapers, indicating a strong interest in current affairs and daily information. This is followed by 24 respondents (20.00%) who read books for competitive examinations, reflecting their focus on career development and academic advancement. Additionally, 22 respondents (18.33%) prefer general knowledge books and journals, suggesting an interest in broadening their awareness and intellectual growth. A smaller proportion, 14 respondents (11.67%), read entertainment news for leisure purposes.

The importance of a public library stated by women users

<i>Need for a public library</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
Offers a quiet and safe space for reading & learning	94	78.33 %
Provides free and equal access to information for all sections of society	58	48.33 %
Acts as a community information centre	47	39.17 %
Supports formal and informal education	32	26.67 %
Offers resources for competitive examinations and career development	65	54.17 %
Promotes reading habits and lifelong learning	82	68.33 %
Provides access to newspapers, magazines	101	84.17 %
Encourages self-study	49	40.83 %

Significant proportions, 82 respondents (68.33%), believe that the library promotes reading habits and lifelong learning. Additionally, 65 respondents (54.17%) noted that the library offers resources for competitive examinations and career development, reflecting its role in supporting academic and professional growth.

The findings clearly demonstrate that respondents perceive the library as an essential institution that provides access to information, promotes reading habits, and supports academic and career development. The high percentage of responses highlighting newspapers, a quiet study environment, and lifelong learning indicates that the library plays a vital role in both educational and personal development within the community.

Conclusion

Public libraries play a vital role in enabling access to information, education, culture, and community development. In rural and semi-urban districts like Theni (Tamil Nadu, India), the public library is a key site for learning and social engagement — especially for women who often face barriers to formal education and resources. Women users in Theni District Public Library are generally satisfied with traditional resource offerings and supportive staff. The women-centric programming could significantly improve overall satisfaction and empower more women to use the library for learning and personal growth.

Reference:

1. Baladandayutham, A & Suji, S. (2014). Reading habits among the students of Engineering colleges in Madurai district, Tamilnadu , India: A study. *Journal of Advances in Library and Information Science*.3(3), 244-248.
2. Bisht, L. S. (2008). Reading habits among postgraduate students of Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore: A survey. *SRELS Journal of Information Management*, 45(1), 63–74.
3. Dhiman, A., & Gupta, N. (2017). Reading habits among library users: A study. *International Journal of Library and Information Studies*, 7(1), 22–28.
4. Hussain, M. S., & Sayeed, A. (2013). Reading habits among adolescents: A study on Hyderabad City. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(13), 264–269.
5. Kumbhar, S. (2016). Reading habits and preferences of university students in the digital era. *DESIDOC Journal of Library & Information Technology*, 36(2), 79–84.
6. Mishra, R. P. (2014). A study of reading habits among students at Patna University. *Library Progress (International)*, 34(2), 149–157.
7. Thanuskodi,S.(2011).ReadingHabitsamongLibraryandInformationScience Students of Annamalai University: A Survey.Int J Edu Sci, 3(2): 79-83 (2011).