User Satisfaction with Facilities and Services in Public Libraries: A Study of Ramanathapuram District, Tamil Nadu

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ABSTRACT

Public libraries play a vital role in the educational and informational infrastructure of every country. As government-funded institutions, public libraries must justify their existence through the provision of relevant and satisfactory information services. This study investigated users' satisfaction or displeasure with the facilities and services of major public libraries in Ramanathapuram district, Tamil Nadu, India. The research design selected was the survey method, with the respondents comprising two hundred and forty (240) users of public libraries located in four (4) of the district's primary administrative centers: Ramanathapuram, Paramakudi, Rameswaram, and Mudukulathur. Data gathered via a tailored questionnaire, administered through a mix of availability and random sampling methods, were examined using frequency tables and simple percentages.

The results revealed that the primary purposes of library visits were academic studies (25.4%) and preparation for competitive examinations (25%), followed by reading newspapers and magazines (15.8%). Regarding available resources, 54.6% of respondents utilized publications such as textbooks, journals, newspapers, and magazines, while only 7.1% reported the availability of computers. The age group most represented among users was 18–25 years (36.7%), and students formed the largest occupational group (42.5%). Although libraries provided basic services, the limited access to digital resources and modern facilities was noted. The findings highlight the need for updating library resources, expanding digital access, and improving infrastructure to enhance user satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: User Studies, User Satisfaction, Public Libraries, Ramanathapuram.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ramanathapuram, or Ramnad, is a city that serves as the Municipal Corporation within Ramanathapuram district in Tamil Nadu, India. It serves as the administrative center of Ramanathapuram district and is the second most populous town in the district.

Public libraries in Tamil Nadu were established under the Tamil Nadu Public Libraries Act, 1948, and the Directorate of Public Libraries was formed in 1972 to improve library services. In Ramanathapuram District, a total of 88 libraries operate under this directorate, including 1 District Central Library, 8 Full-Time Libraries, 49 Branch Libraries, 25 Village Libraries, and 5 Part-Time Libraries. The District Central Library in Ramanathapuram and the 8 Full-Time Libraries in Kamuthi, Rameswaram, Paramakudi, Thiruvadanai, Muthukulathur, Kadaladi, Emaneswaram, and Velipattinam operate from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM. All libraries remain closed on Fridays, the second Saturday of each month, and other Tamil Nadu Government holidays.

In Ramanathapuram district, numerous libraries exist that function as vital hubs for education and community engagement. Ramanathapuram's District Central Library serves as a significant center for the community, providing an extensive collection of books, periodicals, and digital materials. To assist students and researchers, numerous local schools and colleges have their own libraries that are well-stocked. The libraries are vital in fostering education, reading habits, and cultural awareness among the residents of Ramanathapuram.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. **To determine how satisfied patrons are** with the resources, services, and amenities offered by public libraries in the district of Ramanathapuram.
2. **To determine which services and resources are** most commonly utilized by various user types (e.g., professionals, researchers, students, and the general public).
3. *To evaluate the quality of physical/digital resources and their impact on user satisfaction*
4. **To ascertain the obstacles and constraints** users have when trying to access and make use of library services.
5. **To gather user feedback on** how the district's public libraries may be enhanced to better serve their needs.
6. **To suggest tactics and legislative** measures that can raise the general efficacy and user happiness of public libraries in Ramanathapuram and other comparable rural or semi-urban areas.

3. NEED FOR THE STUDY

Particularly in rural and semi-urban areas like Ramanathapuram district, public libraries are essential for promoting education, literacy, and information access. Public libraries in various regions of India confront difficulties like obsolete collections, poor infrastructure, and restricted access to technology, despite their importance. It is imperative that public libraries adapt to the changing requirements of their patrons as society grows more digital and knowledge-based.

Understanding public satisfaction is crucial in the Ramanathapuram area, because a sizable section of the populace relies on public services for information and education. Assessing the caliber and applicability of library services from the viewpoint of patrons aids in discovering current deficiencies and areas in need of improvement.

This study is necessary to:

- Understand how well current library services align with user expectations.
- Provide data-driven insights to policymakers and library authorities.
- Encourage improvement of library services and resources to better serve the community.

By assessing user satisfaction, this study aims to contribute to the overall enhancement of public library services in the district, ensuring they continue to serve as inclusive and effective knowledge hubs in the digital age.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

[1]**Pharcy, Md Soleman; Hossain, Abuzar; and Kikon, Pichano, (2022),** a study was conducted to evaluate the services offered by public libraries to the residents of West Bengal's Murshidabad District. To perform this study, survey techniques and questionnaire instruments were used. According to the study, using public libraries helps readers develop their reading abilities in a variety of ways. The public libraries of the Murshidabad District were deemed to need more services like computers, photocopiers, drinking facilities, newspapers, periodicals, and more subject-related books and journals.

[2]**Olayemi (2020)** stated how to utilize the public library resources and services to effectively provide without any cost. Data collection was done by structured questionnaire analysis using SPSS 21 for windows. There were 53 (64.6%) male and 29 (35.4%) female respondents' in the age group of 25-54 year. The respondents utilized the public libraries for general reading, career and research. The majority of respondents were satisfied with the library resources, and staff's attitude.

[3]**Mondal and Das (2019)** stated that Indian public libraries development in India stated from the Nalanda University because it is the first university in India with rare resources likes seals, stupas and inscriptions. The development of public libraries can be divided into the chronological order as ancient, medieval period and modern period and also the modern period can be divided as another two part such as pre-independence and post-independence. The West Bengal state's public library development was a milestone in the history of Indian public libraries history. India has 30 State Central Libraries, 40 Regional Libraries, 362 District Central Libraries, 4656 Town/Sub-divisional libraries and 50884 primary unit/rural libraries in India. This study described the public library movement of Purulia district and the necessity of resources, services and rectifying insufficient library professionals.

[4]**Nurjaman (2019)** studied public libraries based on perception of services, Sources and services provided to the user community. The Karnataka state presently has more than 2655 public libraries. The author has taken the pathmavathi district public libraries and covered the preferred medical and health related resources available for research purposes. The study revealed that 44.54% users were aware about H1N1, DPT, Polio, BCG, TT, AIDS Control, 108 Arogya Kavacha, Malaria Cholera, Dengue, Family Planning, Chikungunya district health programs of Karnataka state.

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5. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a **survey research design**, which is appropriate for gathering data from a large number of respondents to analyze their opinions, behaviours, and levels of satisfaction. The survey method enabled the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data related to the use and perception of public library services.

Study Area

The research was conducted in **Ramanathapuram district**, located in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, India. The district includes several public libraries situated in key towns such as **Ramanathapuram, Paramakudi, Rameswaram**, and **Mudukulathur**. These locations were selected based on their population size, accessibility, and relevance to the study.

Population and Sampling

- ❖ The target population consisted of **regular users of public libraries** across the selected towns. A total of **240 respondents** were selected using a combination of **availability (convenience) sampling** and **random sampling techniques** to ensure representation across different age groups, educational levels, and user types (students, professionals, general readers, etc.). **January 2025 to march 2025** is the **timeframe** of data collection.

Data Collection Instrument

Data was collected through a **structured questionnaire**, which included both **closed-ended** and **open-ended** questions. The questionnaire was designed to capture:

- Demographic details of respondents
- Frequency and purpose of library usage
- Satisfaction with various library services and facilities
- Suggestions for improvement

Data Collection Procedure

The questionnaire was administered in-person by the researcher and trained assistants at the library premises. Respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and participation was voluntary.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed using **Excel** for statistical tests **descriptive statistics**, including **frequency tables and simple percentages**, to summarize user responses and identify trends in satisfaction levels. Qualitative responses from open-ended questions were categorized and interpreted to provide deeper insights.

6. HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant difference between the frequency of visit to the public libraries with Age, Occupation and Educational qualification

2. There is no significant difference between the purpose of visit to the public libraries with gender, age, educational qualification and profession.

3. There is no significant difference between the usage of resources with gender, age, educational qualification and profession.

Statistical Tools

The data has been tested using statistical tools.

Simple Percentage Analysis: It is nothing but all the collected data from the questionnaire was converted into the percentage for easy to understand.

7. DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

Table I Age Range of Respondents

Range	RMD.	P.K.	RMM	MKR	Total	Percentage
Below 18	7	5	8	6	26	10.8%
18 - 25	23	21	19	25	88	36.7%
26 - 35	11	15	8	16	50	20.8%
36 - 50	12	11	10	9	42	17.5%
Above 50	7	8	15	4	34	14.2%
Total	60	60	60	60	240	100%

(Source: Primary Data)

RMD - Ramanathapuram, P.K. - Paramakudi, RMM - Rameswaram, MKR - Mudukulathur
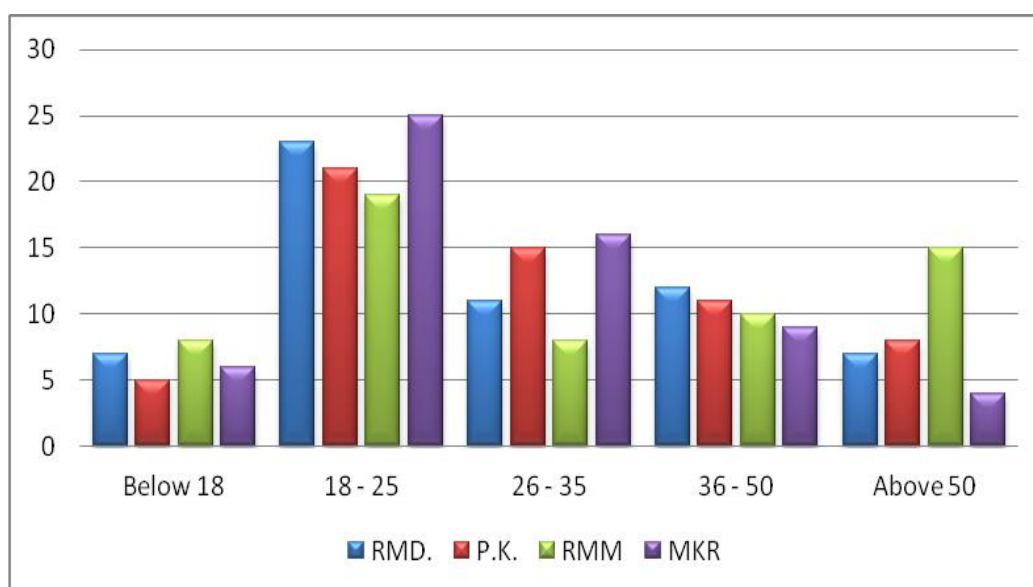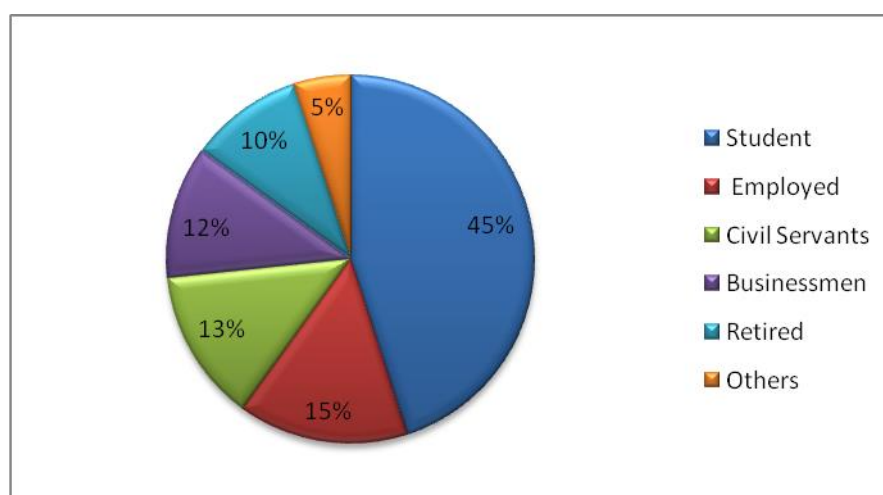
Figure 1: Age Distribution of Library Users"

Table II Occupation of Respondents

Occupation	RMD.	P.K.	RMM	MKR	Total	Percentage
Student	27	21	25	29	102	42.5%
Employed	9	11	7	8	35	14.6%
Civil Servants	8	9	12	10	39	16.2%
Businessmen	7	10	5	6	28	11.7%
Retired	6	4	9	4	23	9.6%
Others	3	5	2	3	13	5.4%
Total	60	60	60	60	240	100.0%

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 2 Occupation of Respondents

Table III Main purpose of your visiting Library

Purpose of your visit	RMD.	P.K.	RMM	MKR	Total	Percentage
Reading newspapers/magazines	9	10	11	8	38	15.8%
Academic studies	17	13	15	16	61	25.4%
Competitive exam preparation	15	18	13	14	60	25%
Borrowing books	9	8	10	11	38	15.8%
Internet access	5	7	6	7	25	10.4%
Research	3	1	2	1	7	2.9%
Others	2	3	3	3	11	4.6%
Total	60	60	60	60	240	100.0%

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 3 Main purpose of your visiting Library
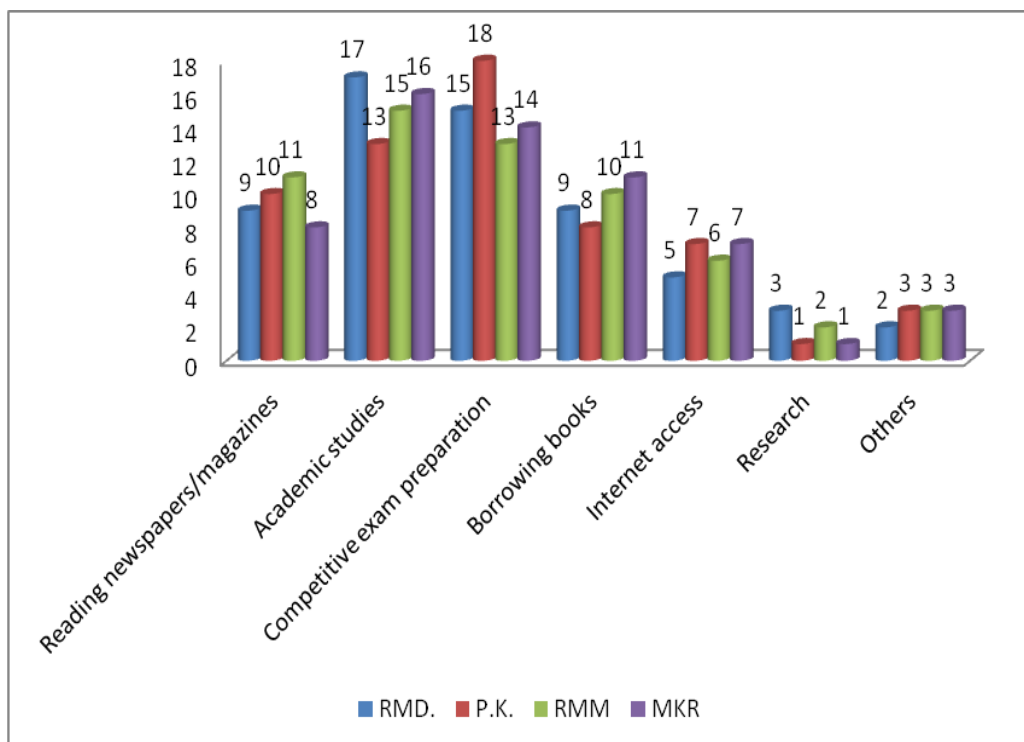
Table IV Library Resources and Facilities

Resources and Facilities	RMD.	P.K.	RMM	MKR	Total	Percentage
Publications (i.e. textbooks, journals, newspapers and magazines).	31	35	30	35	131	54.6%
Sufficient reading rooms	11	9	8	8	36	15.0%
Properly-organized catalogues and shelves.	3	4	5	4	16	6.7%
Sufficient number of reading chairs and tables.	10	8	12	10	40	16.7%
Computers	5	4	5	3	17	7.1%
Total	60	60	60	60	240	100.0%

(Source: Primary Data)

Figure 4 Library Resources and Facilities
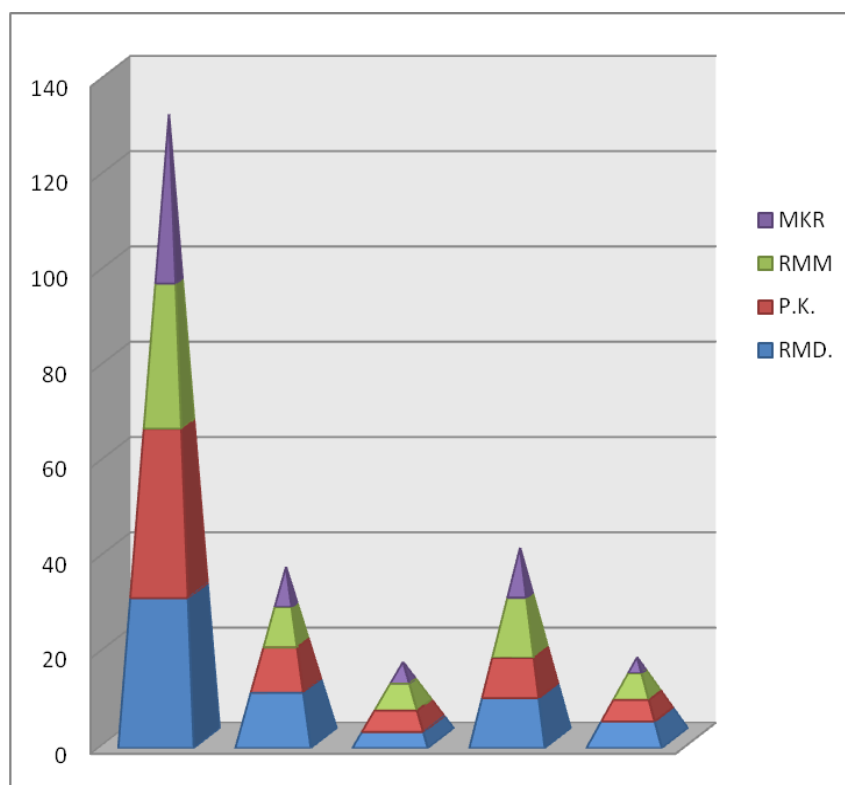
DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

- ✓ The **majority of library users (36.7%)** are in the **18–25 years** age group.
- ✓ Users below 18 years and above 50 years together make up about **25%** of users.
- ✓ **Students form the largest group (42.5%)** using public libraries.
- ✓ Working professionals (Employed + Civil Servants + Businessmen) also represent a significant portion (around **42.5%** combined).
- ✓ The **most common reasons for library use** are **academic studies (25.4%)** and **competitive exam preparation (25%)**.
- ✓ Reading newspapers/magazines and borrowing books are equally popular (15.8% each).
- ✓ Only **10.4%** visit primarily for **internet access** — suggesting limited digital usage.
- ✓ **Publications are the most accessed resource (54.6%)**.
- ✓ **Computer access is very low (only 7.1%)**, indicating a **lack of digital infrastructure**.
- ✓ Seating facilities (16.7%) and reading rooms (15%) are moderately available.

Overall Major Findings Summary:

- ❖ Most library users are **young (18–25 years)** and **students**.
- ❖ The libraries are **used mainly for academic purposes** and **competitive exams**.
- ❖ Libraries **lack sufficient digital resources**, as shown by low computer access.
- ❖ **Publications** (books, newspapers, journals) remain the **core strength** of these libraries.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

For future research, it is recommended to expand the study to cover a larger geographic area, include library staff perspectives, and conduct comparative and longitudinal studies. Further focus on digital resource usage, modernization impacts, and special user groups can provide deeper insights to support the evolving role of public libraries in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The study on user satisfaction in public libraries of Ramanathapuram District reveals several important patterns. The majority of users were students (42.5%) and young adults aged 18–25 years (36.7%), highlighting the crucial role libraries play in supporting education and career preparation. Academic study (25.4%) and competitive exam preparation (25%) were the primary reasons for library visits, indicating that users rely heavily on libraries for educational purposes. While traditional resources like books, newspapers, and magazines (54.6%) remain heavily utilized, access to digital resources was found to be very limited, with only 7.1% indicating the use of computers. Facilities such as reading rooms (15%) and seating arrangements (16.7%) were moderately available, but not sufficient to fully meet user demands. Overall, the findings suggest that although public libraries in Ramanathapuram district continue to serve as important centers for learning, there is a pressing need to upgrade infrastructure, expand digital services, and diversify library offerings to improve overall user satisfaction.

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