

Effectiveness Of Library Services In Public Libraries Across West Bengal

¹Ratan Sarkar, ²Dr. Nand Kishore

¹ Research Scholar, Department of Library & Information Science, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehare, M.P., India.

² Research Guide, Department of Library & Information Science, Sri Satya Sai University of Technology & Medical Sciences, Sehare, M.P., India.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to examine the state of public library services in West Bengal with an eye toward determining how well they meet the needs of their patrons and how well they incorporate technology. The poll used a structured questionnaire and a random selection technique to get data from 180 participants. Quantitative methods were used to gather information on use of library, availability of books, attention of librarian, and the perceived necessity of computers. The study highlights the significance of implementing ICT in order to fulfill changing user demands, enhance library efficiency, and availability of resources. In a world where everything is becoming digitalized at a rapid pace, these findings help shape library services that are more responsive.

Keywords: Information technology, Digital Library, Library Services, Public Libraries, Resource Management

INTRODUCTION

Cornerstones of community development and information transmission have long been acknowledged by public libraries. An array of educational, recreational, and cultural services, as well as increased access to information, are provided by these vital organizations. As we go deeper into the digital era, public libraries are adapting to suit the requirements of their communities. The public library is one of a kind because of the many services it offers, including free book and digital resource circulation as well as other programs that encourage knowledge retention and expansion throughout life. Public libraries, in contrast to specialty libraries, strive to serve a wide range of people and backgrounds, regardless of their socioeconomic level, by providing easy access to information and services. By providing services like book lending, research assistance, cultural programming, educational seminars, and access to digital resources, public libraries strive to create a more informed and educated society. Libraries now provide more than just books to patrons; they now host programs to help people with things like digital literacy, career guidance, and community engagement, among other things. It is essential that library services be accessible and inclusive. Library services at public libraries are intended to be accessible to people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, and they are usually situated in conveniently accessible parts of communities. The library's services are accessible to everybody, including those from underrepresented communities, because of its commitment to diversity. The literacy program, senior citizen reading hours, and disability-friendly places are just a few examples of the specialized services that are available to a wide range of people, including children, the elderly, those with low incomes, and those with disabilities. For all these reasons, public libraries are vital for fostering social justice and community growth.

There are a number of elements that determine how well public library services work. These include the variety and quality of the materials offered, the expertise of the library personnel, the level of community involvement, and the flexibility of library services to adapt to changing technological environments. Library systems need to change with the times and embrace new technology if they want to keep up with the ways people access and use information. Giving patrons access to digital resources such as databases, e-books, audiobooks, and more enables libraries to fulfill this expectation. Additionally, it is the responsibility of libraries to ensure that its employees are well-trained to assist users in making good use of digital resources. Therefore, it is essential to include technology into library services in order to heighten their efficacy.

Community engagement and the correspondence of library programming to the requirements of local communities are additional critical components in determining the efficacy of library services. Instead, then existing in a vacuum, libraries reflect the hopes, dreams, and concerns of the people they serve. As a result, libraries should have conversations with locals to find out what they need and then provide it to them. For library directors, the best way to get the word out and

make adjustments to their services is to hold regular meetings, focus groups, and surveys. As an example, libraries may be relevant and effective by reacting to specific needs; for example, some may discover a need for adult educational support services, while others may prioritize children's programs or services for non-English speakers.

A number of approaches exist for determining the true value of library services. One such method is interviewing and surveying library patrons to get their thoughts on the quality and usefulness of library materials. Examining data on library services' use, such as the number of books checked out, program attendance, and involvement in digital learning initiatives, are other methods of evaluation. These indicators show how well library services are being used and if they are satisfying the requirements of the communities they serve. In addition, libraries have the option to monitor the sustainability of their programs by looking at the results in terms of community outcomes like enhanced civic involvement, digital literacy, or elevated literacy rates. Public libraries not only help people learn and get the information they need, but they also act as centers for local culture. Cultural events, such as art exhibitions, live performances, and programs, bring people together and nurture their social bonds. Participation from local artists, schools, and community groups is a common way for libraries to enrich the cultural experiences of its users. For the sake of building bridges of understanding and societal cohesiveness, this cultural enrichment component is of paramount importance. Therefore, the larger cultural and social influence of library services, in addition to the supply of information, must be considered when evaluating the efficacy of various library programs.

Challenges Faced by Public Libraries

1. Insufficient Funding

Lack of sufficient finance is one of the main obstacles encountered by public libraries. The inability to purchase new books, improve infrastructure, or invest in contemporary technology is a result of many libraries' restricted finances. The library staff's salary and training opportunities are impacted by this budgetary limitation, which in turn leads to a lack of desire and professional growth.

2. Outdated Infrastructure

Many rural public libraries are housed in dilapidated or badly maintained structures. The library is not a welcoming place for patrons because of the poor lighting, uncomfortable chairs, and lack of air circulation. To add insult to injury, many libraries are underutilized as community centers because they do not have the room to house expanding collections or to hold community programs.

3. Limited Digital Resources

Electronic books, journals, and other digital materials are crucial in today's digital world. On the other hand, incorporating digital technology into library services is a challenge for the majority of public libraries. Libraries are already struggling to keep up with patrons' ever-changing demands, and the shortage of computers and fast internet only makes matters worse.

4. Lack of Skilled Personnel

The competence and commitment of library employees determine the quality of library services. There is a severe lack of qualified staff in many public libraries. Staff members frequently lack the knowledge to administer digital resources, run community outreach initiatives, or establish new library services due to a lack of consistent training.

5. Urban-Rural Disparities

In terms of amenities, rural libraries are light years ahead of their metropolitan counterparts. More resources and better facilities are available at metropolitan libraries, yet even the most fundamental needs, such sufficient collections and operating hours, are sometimes neglected by rural libraries. All citizens of the state should have equal access to information, yet this inequality prevents that from happening.

6. Limited Community Engagement

Many public libraries suffer from poor patron involvement despite the fact that they have the capacity to be thriving community institutions. This issue is exacerbated by factors such as people's ignorance of library services, unattractive programming, and insufficient outreach initiatives. Libraries aren't effective places for study and cultural exchange unless members of the community use them.

7. Insufficient Government Support

Libraries are frequently overlooked by lawmakers; despite the important role they serve in education and community development. Libraries are unable to respond to people's evolving demands and new technologies because of the government's inconsistent backing and absence of thorough policies.

8. Challenges in Collection Development

It is an ongoing endeavor to build and maintain a collection that is varied and current. Libraries frequently have shortages in resources due to budget restrictions, which cause them to prioritize some materials above others. Furthermore, collections become disorganized and useless due to the absence of systematic strategies for removing obsolete materials.

9. Resistance to Change

It might be challenging for conventional libraries to adapt to new trends like digitization and novel service models. Adoption of essential improvements is frequently stalled due to staff resistance and users' unfamiliarity with new technology.

10. External Factors

Problems like dwindling youth reading habits and competition from freely available online information are external factors that libraries cannot change. Less use of library services and fewer people using them are results of these issues.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hussien, Fatin et al., (2018) If libraries want to increase their profile and stay relevant, one of the most essential things they can do is provide reference services. It is critical for libraries to make sure that reference services are accessible, quick to respond, provide high-quality answers, and that librarians are able to communicate effectively with patrons. Results show that reference services are effective in terms of service accessibility, librarian response, answer quality, and communication tactics, and that these factors correlate with user happiness. The academic library reference services were utilized by 231 randomly selected students, who were then given questionnaires to complete. The SPSS program was used to conduct the analysis. The results show that there is a weak but favorable association between service accessibility, librarian response, answer quality, communication style, and user happiness. The study's findings can help libraries improve their services for library patrons. To make sure libraries remain relevant in this day and age, they should promote the services they offer energetically and work to enhance their reference services.

Yi, Zhixian. (2016) This research looks at academic librarians in Australia to see what they think about promotional strategies for services and resources and what influences their opinions on how effective these strategies are. Four hundred academic librarians from 37 different Australian institutions were polled online. There was a 57.5% response rate. We used content analysis to look at the qualitative data. There was an application of descriptive and inferential statistics (ordinal regressions) to the gathered quantitative and qualitative data. Promoting library services and resources was a multi-pronged effort by librarians. Perceptions of the effectiveness of the advertising tactics were significantly predicted by demographic, human capital, and library characteristics. The study did find that years spent providing library services and the number of library professional jobs held were not significant independent factors. Findings from this study give light on how academic librarians feel about various forms of service and resource promotion. Librarians may use the data to think about how well these methods worked, how much each component mattered, and how different promotion strategies worked. In the future, they will be able to advertise the library's services and materials more successfully.

Stejskal, Jan & Hájek, Petr. (2015) In reality, individuals frequently have extensive and, to varied degrees, fundamental access to digital services provided by public institutions. An impartial way of evaluating the efficacy of public services (including digital services) is essential for the efficient allocation of public funding. An approach is suggested for evaluating the efficacy of digital services offered by government agencies. Analyzed were the digital resources made available by the MLP, or Municipal Library of Prague. Using this approach, we can evaluate the relative merits of the various services on offer. The decisions made by public officials and the digital services offered as a whole benefit society in this way. The 2012 findings reveal that the MLP's digital services (offered through remote access) had an effectiveness of 4.02 (i.e., that each unit of investment yields benefits equal to 4.02 units). Digital services offered directly in libraries, on the other hand, have an extremely low efficacy (i.e. 1:0.89) and are thus obviously useless. As an added bonus, digital services are the most effective of all the offered services. Economic decision-making, as well as service quality and variety, can benefit from the presented technique. It has potential applications in a variety of public and private enterprises.

Badurina, Boris et al., (2010) Academic and public libraries are the primary foci of this article, which explores assessment difficulties related to library services. Keeping up with patron needs while simultaneously defending the library's purpose and budget is an increasingly difficult task for modern libraries. The key to effective library administration is keeping a close eye on patrons' wants and opinions, while also tracking progress towards goals and predetermined standards. This paper shares some of the results from the study "Evaluation of library services: academic and public libraries." The study's central hypothesis was that neither libraries nor library staff in Croatia adequately invest in measuring the quality of their services. While libraries may not be completely content with their services, the results do demonstrate that they are aware of the need for assessment, which might lead to future studies in this area.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sampling technique

This study utilized a random sampling procedure.

Sample

There was a total of 180 people that took part in the study: 60 teachers and 120 students.

Data Collection Methods

The research for this project includes the collection of quantitative data. In order to gather information, a structured questionnaire was utilized, which include closed-ended questions. Both students and teachers were asked to fill out the survey, which asked them about their experiences with both online and offline forms of technology.

Survey Process

Few selected public libraries of West Bengal have been selected for the study. In order to gather data, libraries were visited, so they could see the library's space and how people used technology firsthand. Data was collected by field observations and participants' replies, with the survey format derived from the questionnaire that was constructed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Need of computers in library

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	150	83.33%
No	30	16.67%
Total	180	100

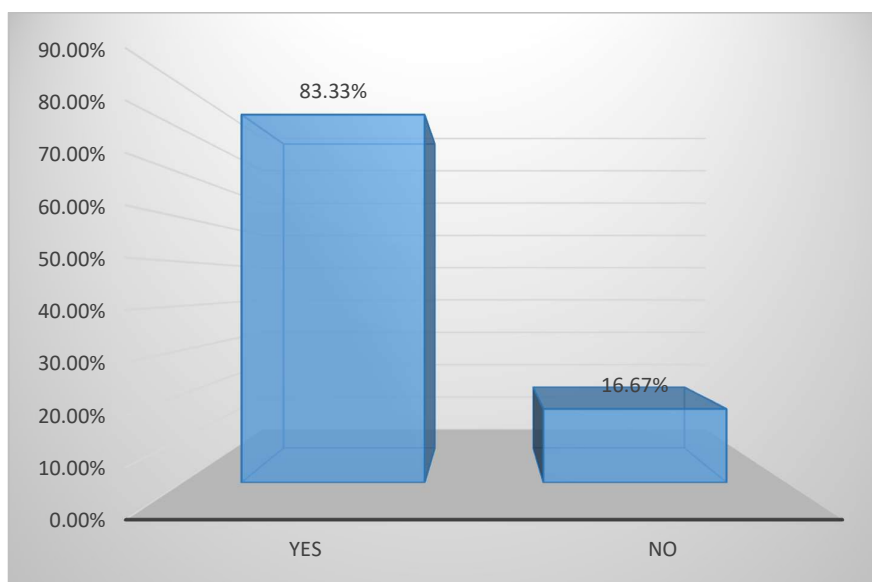


Figure 1: Need of computers in library

The table displays the result of the survey on the topic “need of computers in library”. A large majority of 180 respondents (150 out of 180) think computers are essential for the library, suggesting a strong desire to incorporate technology into library services. This high proportion is indicative of the increasing use of computers in library resource management, digital material access, and operational efficiency. Thirty people (16.67%) were in disagreement, indicating that some people either don't think libraries need computers or think the way they are set up is sufficient without them.

Table 2: Time spend in library per week

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
1-2 hours	90	50.0%
3-4 hours	60	33.33%
5-6 hours	30	16.67%
Total	180	100

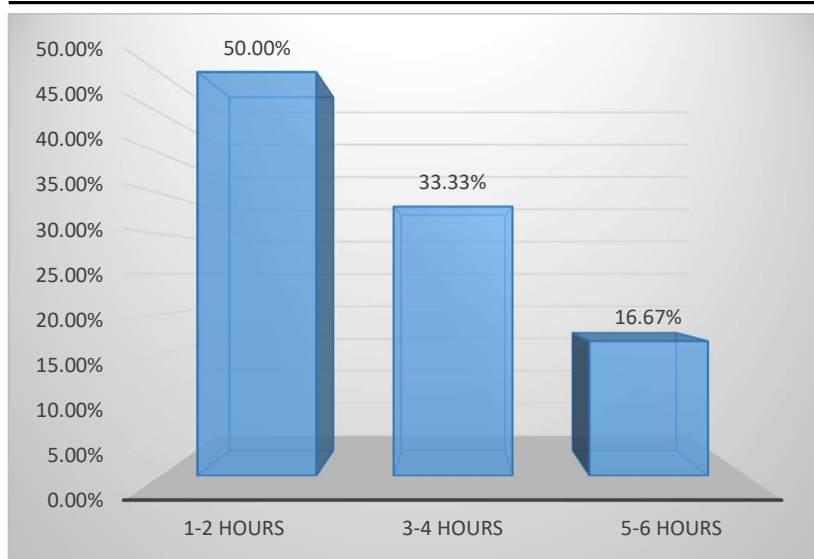


Figure 2: Time spend in library per week

The data shows that most respondents spent 1-2 hours per week in the library, with 90 (50.00%) reporting this. Sixty people (33.33% of the total) report spending three to four hours a week in the library. Thirty people (16.67%) make up the smallest group, and they devote five to six hours a week.

Table 3: Attention given by librarian

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	140	77.78%
No	40	22.22%
Total	180	100

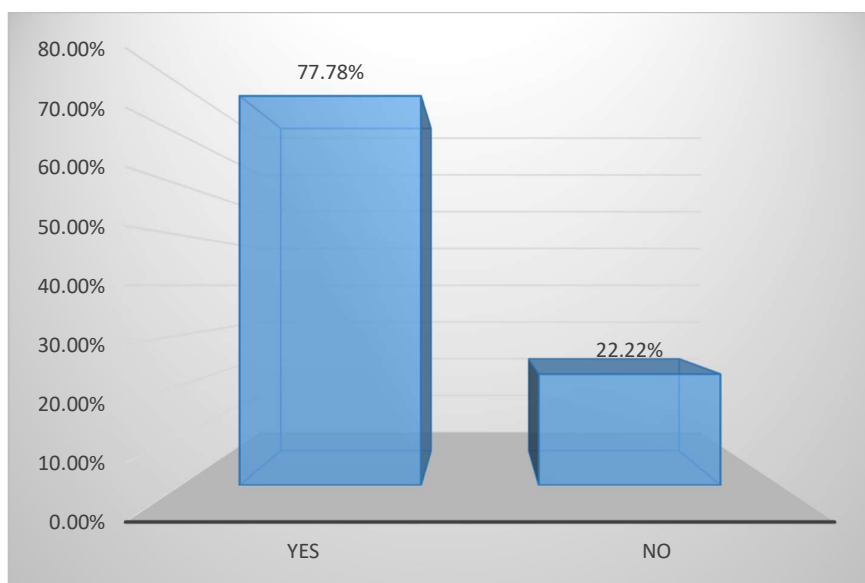


Figure 3: Attention given by librarian

A total of 140 people (or 77.78%) think librarians provide their patrons the attention they need, according to the data in the table. Having said that, forty people (22.22%) feel that they are not given enough attention.

Table 4: Borrow books from the library

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	100	55.56%

No	80	44.44%
Total	180	100

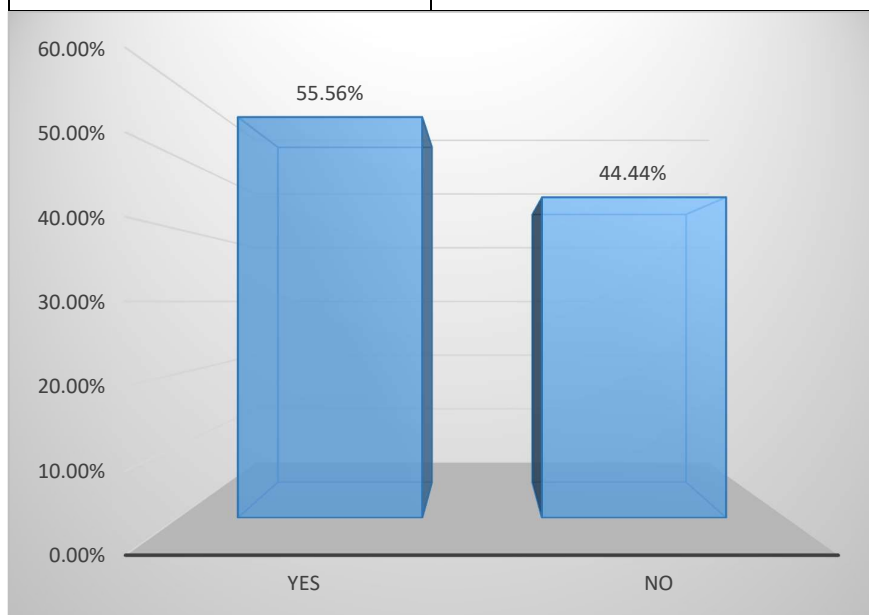


Figure 4: Borrow books from the library

According to the data in the table, 100 people (or 55.56 percent) said they could always borrow books from the library. On the other hand, 80 people (or 44.44 percent) said they often go without necessary books.

Table 5: Availability of Books

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	130	72.22%
No	50	27.78%
Total	180	100

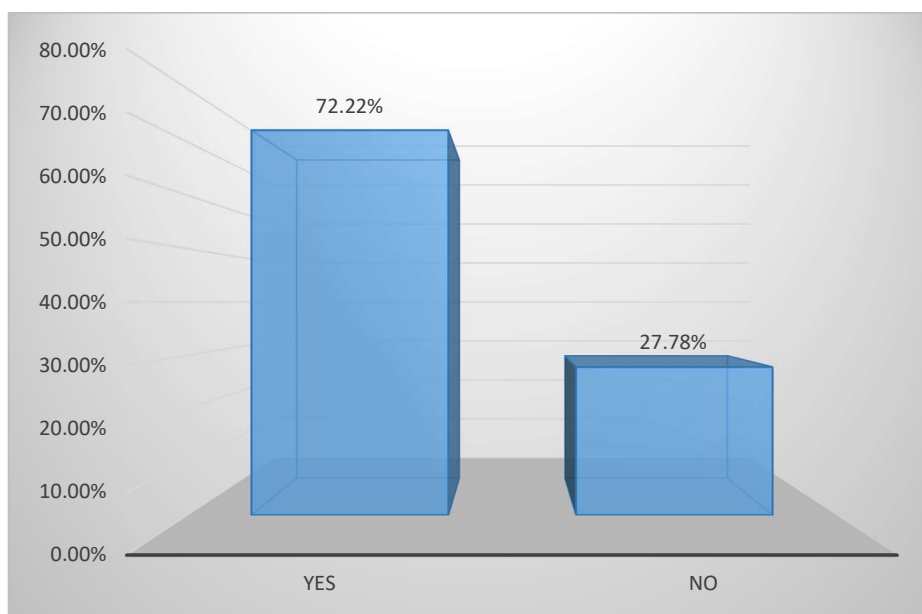


Figure 5: Availability of Books

According to the data in the table, 72.22 percent of the 130 respondents think that the library has the books they want. Fifty people, or 27.78%, disagreed, nevertheless.

Table 6: Independent Samples t-Test: Perception of Library Services Effectiveness

Group	Sample size	Mean	S.D.	T-statistics	p-value
Students	120	3.8	0.6	-4.59	<0.001
Faculty Members	60	4.2	0.5		

There is a noticeable disparity in the average perception ratings between the two groups, according to the data ($t = -4.59$, $p < 0.001$). Students gave library services a lower rating ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 0.6$) than faculty members ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.5$), indicating that students had a more positive impression of library services.

CONCLUSION

This study highlights the significant impact of Information & Communication technology (ICT) on the quality of services provided by libraries. The findings reveal that a majority of respondents (83.33%) recognize the need for computers in the library, emphasizing the essential role of technology in improving resource management, accessing digital content, and enhancing library operations. Although most participants reported spending a considerable amount of time in the library and receiving adequate attention from librarians, concerns regarding the availability of desired books were noted by some respondents. The results suggest that libraries integrating IT can better meet user demands, streamline services, and improve overall user experience. Therefore, it is recommended that libraries continue investing in technological infrastructure to ensure they provide efficient, accessible, and user-friendly services, keeping pace with the evolving needs of their communities.

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