USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARY RESOURCES AND SERVICES IN A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY: A STUDY

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In this study, an attempt has been made to study the user's perspective on public library multicultural resources and services and its role in maintaining the social harmony. To conduct the study, a total of 100 questionnaires were distributed among the multicultural users of the City Central Library, Belagavi using simple random sampling method. In the distributed 100 questionnaires 93 were received back with response rate of 93%. Results of the study revealed that, majority of the respondents are satisfied with resources i.e. 89.24% and services i.e. 95.7% of CCL belagavi. The study also provide some important suggestions to the authorities of the City Central Library as well as for users for further improvements.

Key Words: Public Library, City Central Library, Multiculturalism, Multicultural Society, Social Harmony, Multicultural Resources and Services.

INTRODUCTION

'Multicultural Society' can be defined as the co-existence of diverse cultures, where culture includes racial, religious, lingual or cultural groups and customary behaviors, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles (Multicultural Library Manifesto, 2012). Multiculturalism or Multicultural Society is not a new phenomenon. But, today with globaliza- tion, faster communication and ease of transportation, no country or state or region left untouched with Multiculturalism. In the modern world, all people are living in an increasingly diverse society. This is very much true particularly, in the case of India where multiculturalism is a norm, not an exception. India is a multi-cultural, multi-religious, multi-lingual country and termed as an ethnological museum. Multiculturalism is the common inheritance of mankind hence it should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all.

However, multiculturalism or multicultural society comes with its

own challenges. The biggest challenge in the world today is to promote and maintain social harmony among the diverse communities in the society. In the endeavor of promoting harmony in the society public libraries can play a significant role. Public libraries provide services on the basis of equality regardless of race, religion, culture or language. (Public Library Manifesto, 1994). They offer resources and services which reflect diversity and they also work as a social and physical meeting place in the society. Multicultural library services include both the provision of multicultural information to all types of library users and the provision of library services specifically targeted to traditionally underserved groups (Multicultural Library Manifesto – Implementation Kit).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Fitzgerald (2011) explored how the My Language project, a project commenced in Australia during 2004 is supporting public libraries and community organizations develop ownership and capacity to access and build content that meets the expressed needs of their linguistically and culturally varied communities. IFLA/UNESCO Multicultural Library Manifesto (2012) discusses objectives, principles and missions of multicultural library services in detail along with management and operation of libraries in regard to multicultural services. Further it elaborates actions, staffing, funding, legislation and network related to multicultural library services. Khoir, Du &Koronios (2015) analyzed immigrants' information behavior studies and the use of public library services by immigrants in Australia to find out the existing gaps in the literature. Authors found that, very less research work has been carried out on information behavior of Asian immigrants and their use of public libraries.

Dali (2016) interviewed immigrant readers with the aim of assisting public library to provide better services for them. Findings of the study revealed that library statistics are vital for librarians in understanding readers as individuals rather than unknown persons. Chen and Ke (2017) aimed to investigate the perceived results and societal value of public libraries, especially from the viewpoint of Singang Library, Taiwan. Results of the study revealed that, users get benefited from public library services in many areas of everyday life. Results also indicated that, there is direct relationship and positive correlation between the four variables i.e. library use frequency, perceived outcomes, library as a meeting place, and social capital. Backman, Sundt and Dahlen (2018) noticed lack of collections in a Urban Public Library that represents Asian American teens literature while, examining the 2010, 2012, 2014, and 2016 teen book acquisitions. Authors stressed on the need for more collections because of growing Asian population.

Lin and Boamah (2019) explored the opinions of immigrant library users on Auckland Libraries. Immigrants recognized that, different cultural background, language, beliefs and values are reasons for gaps between diverse ethnic groups hence they admire the public library because it helps to bridge that gap. Robinson (2020) showed how public library is helping the everyday multiculturalism by focusing on a knitting group,

established by south London library, which consists mostly elder women from racially and ethnically different backdrop. Author found that, the public library has ability help everyday multicultural conviviality. Akbar and Asmiyanto (2021) aimed to recognize the responsibility of public libraries in providing resources and services in the multicultural society. Results of the study reiterated that, the public libraries play huge role in satisfying the different information needs of multicultural societies and they also help to maintain original identity and culture. It is evident from the literature review that not a single study is conducted on usage of public library in multicultural society from India or Karnataka. Hence this study is conducted.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Several studies have firmly established that, public libraries play a very significant role in securing and nurturing people's diverse cultural, religious and linguistic identities of people through their resources and services. However, it is also important to get the perspective of multicultural users on public library's services. Because users are integral part of any public library and also best judges of its resources and services. Hence this study has been conducted to assess the public library multicultural services from the viewpoint of multicultural users.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To find out whether the multicultural users of the City Central Library, Belagavi understand the concept of multicultural society.
2. To know whether the City Central Library is providing multicultural resources and services to the users.
3. To ascertain whether multicultural resources and services provided by the City Central Library to users are helpful in maintaining social harmony in the society.
4. To know whether personnel working in the City Central Library are helpful in satisfying the information needs of multicultural users.
5. To determine whether the City Central Library is organizing any programs/activities related to the multicultural society and in turn maintaining social harmony among the public library users.
6. To assess the satisfaction level of multicultural users on Resources and Services of the City Central Library.

METHODOLOGY

Keeping the objectives of the study in mind, a well-structured questionnaire was constructed and distributed among Multicultural Users of the City Central Library, Belagavi. For the distribution of questionnaires simple random sampling technique was used. Total 100 questionnaires were distributed and 93 questionnaires were received back with response rate of 93%. To distribute questionnaires, personal visit has been made to City Central Library, Belagavi. The obtained data was put in to excel worksheet for better analysis and achieving the desired objectives set for the study.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

Gender wise Distribution of the Respondents

The table 1 Shows gender wise distribution of respondents. Out of 93 respondents surveyed, 63 (67.74%) are males and 30 (32.26%) are females. It can be noticed from the table that male respondents are more compared to female respondents. It can also be inferred that, male users use the CCL more compared to female users.

Table 1: Gender wise Distribution of the Respondents

Sl. No	Gender	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Male	63	67.74
2	Female	30	32.26
Total		**93**	**100**

Frequency of Visit to the City Central Library

The table 2 depicts the frequency of visit to the City Central Library (CCL) by the respondents. Out of the 93 respondents, i.e. 68 (73.12%) visits City Central Library daily and 13 (13.98%) respondents visits CCL 2-3 days a week. Whereas, 10 (10.75%) visits weekly while, only 2 (2.15%) visits occasionally. It is can be noticed from the table no 2 that majority of the respondents are daily visitors. This clearly indicates that, majority of the users do give importance to the library and use it regularly.

Table 2: Frequency of Visit to the City Central Library

Sl. No	Frequency of Visit	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Daily	68	73.12
2	2-3 days a week	13	13.98
3	Weekly	10	10.75
4	Fortnightly	00	0.00
5	Occasionally	02	2.15
Total		**93**	**100**

Languages Known by the Respondents

The table 3 reveals the languages known by the respondents. The City of Belagavi is multicultural city since it shares border with the state of Maharashtra and Goa and it is one of the biggest city in Karnataka. Out of the 93 respondents, majority i.e. 91 (97.85%) know Kannada followed by English (78.47%), Hindi (64.52%), Marathi (43.01%), Telagu (6.45%), Urdu (5.38%) whereas only 02 (2.15%) know Konkani language. It can be noticed from the data on the table that, majority of the respondents are multi-lingual.

Table 3: Languages Known by the Respondents

Sl. No.	Languages Known	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	English	73	78.49
2	Hindi	60	64.52
3	Kannada	91	97.85
4	Konkani	02	2.15
5	Marathi	40	43.01
6	Telagu	06	6.45
7	Urdu	05	5.38

Understanding about Multicultural Society

To answer any question on multicultural library services, one should have basic knowledge about Multicultural Society. It helps public libraries to develop resources and services accordingly. Hence a question was asked to assess the respondent's understanding on Multicultural Society. From the analysis (table 4) it can be noticed that, majority of the respondents don't know what is multicultural society.

Table 4: Understanding about Multicultural Society

Sl. No.	Understanding about Multicultural Society	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Different cultural groups living together	68	74.19
2	To identity of an individual culture, how it is different from others	16	17.20
3	Serve all members of the community	28	30.11
4	Provide information about different culture	31	34.41
5	Give access to all communities and needs	49	53.76

Providing Multicultural Information Resources

Satisfying the diverse information needs of different communities is fundamental duty of any public library. As information center it should cater to the needs of every individual in society. Hence a question was asked to the respondents that whether the CCL is providing Multicultural information resources or not. From the table 5 it can be noticed that, 65 (69.89%) respondents opined that, CCL is providing Multicultural information resources whereas, 28 (30.11%) opined that, CCL is not providing the Multicultural information resources.

Table 5: Providing Multicultural Information Resources

Multicultural Information Resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	65	69.89
No	28	30.11
Total	**93**	**100.00**

Medium of Getting Multicultural Information

The table 6 reveals the medium by which respondents get Multicultural information from the CCL. Medium plays very important role in attracting users to the library. Majority of the respondents, i.e. 47 (50.54%) are getting the information through books followed by, Lectures on recent issues i.e. 36 (38.71%) whereas, 14 (15.05%) have opined that they receive information through Referral service and State/ Central Govt. schemes/programs. A very few respondents i.e. 10 (10.75%) opined that, they receive information through social and economic development program and cultural activities of the groups and the organizations. It can be noticed from the table that, books are the major source of information by which the majority of the respondents are getting the information.

Table 6: Medium of Getting Multicultural Information

Sl. No.	Medium of Multicultural Information Resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Through books	47	50.54
2	Lectures on recent issues	36	38.71
3	Through Referral service	14	15.05
4	Awareness on the State/ the Central Govt. schemes/ programs	14	15.05
5	Awareness programs for social and economic development	10	10.75
6	Through cultural activities of the groups and the organizations	10	10.75

Information Resources on Maintaining Social Harmony

In the present environment Public Library must come forward and help in maintaining social harmony among the public to uphold unity and integrity among the different communities. In the multicultural society maintaining social harmony among different communities is very essential. Hence a very important question was raised to the respondents i.e. whether the CCL is providing the information resources and services that are helpful in maintaining social harmony among

different communities. Table 7 shows that, majority i.e. 68 (73.12%) respondents have opined that, CCL is providing information resources related to Social Harmony whereas, 25 (26.88%) have opined that, CCL is not providing any information related to Social Harmony.

Table 7: Information Resources on Maintaining Social Harmony

Information on Maintaining Social Harmony	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	68	73.12
No	25	26.88
Total	**93**	**100.00**

Role of the Library Collection in Maintaining Social Harmony

Availability of different resources in the Public Library can play a significant role in maintaining social harmony among the different communities of people in the present society. The table 8 depicts the opinions of respondents on how resources and services of CCL are helping them in maintaining Social Harmony in the society. Majority i.e. 47 (50.54%) respondents opined that, CCL resources are helping them in evaluation of society followed by, Societal communication i.e. 36 (38.71%), Encourage trust in society and Kindness towards society i.e. 14 (15.05%) whereas, only 10 (10.75%) respondents opined that, resources of CCL are helping them in Societal appreciation.

Table 8: Role of the Library resources and services in maintaining Social Harmony

Sl. No.	Role of the Library Collection	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Helps in evaluation of society	47	50.54
2	Societal communication	36	38.71
3	Encourage trust in society,	14	15.05
4	Kindness towards society	14	15.05
5	Societal appreciation	10	10.75

Respondents Satisfaction Level on Collection

The table 9 shows the satisfaction level of the respondents on CCL resources. Data presented on the table no 8 reveals that, majority i.e. 50 (53.76%) respondents are satisfied with the CCL collections and 33 (35.48%) are highly satisfied

Table 9: Respondents Satisfaction Level on Collection/ Resources

Sl. No.	Satisfaction Level	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Highly satisfied	33	35.48
2	Satisfied	50	53.76
3	Uncertain	10	10.75
4	Dissatisfied	00	0.00
5	Highly Dissatisfied	00	0.00
Total		**93**	**100.00**

whereas, 10 (10.75%) are Uncertain. It can be noticed from the table that none of the respondents are Dissatisfied or Highly Dissatisfied with the CCL collection/ resources.

Providing Multicultural Services

Along with Multicultural information resources, Multicultural services are very important for attracting diverse users to the public library. Hence a question asked to the respondents that, whether, CCL is providing services related to multiculturalism or not. From the responses it is found that, majority of the respondents i.e. 59 (63.44%) have said that CCL is providing Multicultural services whereas, 34 (36.56%) respondents said no to the question.

Table 10: Providing Multicultural Services

Multicultural Services	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	59	63.44
No	34	36.56
Total	**93**	**100.00**

Importance of Library Building and Space

A good library building is very helpful in many ways as public library is meeting place for these diverse communities. Hence a question was asked to the respondents on usefulness of the library building in Multicultural Services. Majority of i.e. 62 (66.67%) is of the opinion that library building and space is very important in Multicultural Services whereas, 31 (33.33%) is opined that library building is not important in Multicultural Services.

Table 11: Importance of Library Building and Space

Importance of Library Building and Space	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	62	66.67
No	31	33.33
Total	**93**	**100.00**

Assistance from the Library Staff

Public library staff plays a very vital role in satisfying the user's information needs with their assistance. The public library staff should be highly qualified, well trained in the area of multicultural services to better serve the users. Hence a very important question was asked on whether the CCL staff is helpful in satisfying the multicultural user's information needs. For this question majority i.e. 80 (86.02%) of the respondents said yes whereas, only 13 (13.98%) said no.

Table 12: Assistance from the Library Staff

Assistance from the library staff	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	80	86.02
No	13	13.98
Total	**93**	**100.00**

Respondents Satisfaction Level on Services

Along with the collection/ resources of a public library services also can play a vital role in maintaining the social harmony among public. The table 13 shows the satisfaction level of the respondents on CCL Services. Data on the table reveals that, majority i.e. 61 (65.59%) respondents are satisfied with the Services and 28 (30.11%) are highly satisfied whereas, 04 (4.30%) are Uncertain. It can be noticed from the table that none of the respondents are Dissatisfied or Highly Dissatisfied with the CCL Services.

Table 13: Respondents Satisfaction Level on Services

Sl. No.	Satisfaction Level	No of Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Highly satisfied	28	30.11
2	Satisfied	61	65.59
3	Uncertain	04	4.30
4	Dissatisfied	00	0.00
5	Highly Dissatisfied	00	0.00
Total		**93**	**100**

SUGGESTIONS

1. The City Central Library, Belagavi should provide better services which are specially designed for multicultural users.
2. The City Central Library should develop culturally diverse and multilingual resources and services including e- resources.
3. The CCL should also organize different activities/programs to promote multicultural services among the user's to maintain social harmony among the public.
4. The study found that, majority of the users do not understand the concept of multicultural society hence, CCL must educate the users on the concept of multicultural society.
5. It is suggested to the professionals/researchers to conduct more and more research in this area to develop and design appropriate services targeting multicultural users.

CONCLUSION

It is evident from the study that, public library resources and services play a very significant role in satisfying the information needs and

maintaining social harmony in the multicultural Society. From the responses of users it can be determined that, City Central Library, Belagavi is providing resources and services to multicultural users. Hence, all public libraries should provide Multicultural library services to their users. All public libraries should participate in relevant local, national or international networks in policy development. The public library should have a definite policy and a strategic plan related to cultural diversity. Further, Governments and other relevant decision-making bodies such as Ministry of Culture and RRRLF ad- equately fund Public libraries and Public library system to offer free library and information services to culturally diverse communities.

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