

Library usage pattern of school teachers in Sri Lanka: problems and issues

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Abstract

The aim of the study was to explore Sri Lankan school teachers' information seeking behavior, intention and occasions of accessing libraries, and to measure library skills and the challenges and barriers that they faced during library use. It further examined whether there were any association between the extent of library awareness skills of teachers and four variables such as gender, age, work experience and school locations. A simple random sampling technique was applied to draw the sample for the study and 400 school teachers who had followed postgraduate courses in education were selected as sample from total population (106,756). A questionnaire survey method was used to collect data. Data analysis was done by means of simple and inferential statistics by using SPSS Statistical Package. The results emerged from the present study showed that the studied sample did not regularly access the libraries and they were uncertain about their abilities for effective library use. It was further found that the respondents were rather unsatisfied about the weak library collections of school libraries and improper library services and library arrangements. Unavailability up to date electronic materials and proper guidance also made barriers for school teachers' library use. The analysis further found that there was no association between library awareness skills of the teachers and the four given variables (gender, age, work experience and school location).

Keywords: library use, library skills, information seeking behavior, school teachers in Sri Lanka, user studies

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Introduction

School libraries are precious sources of information that contribute to productive educational achievement (CILIP, 2004). They are imperative supplement to education as well as a base for generating creative thinking, cultural improvement and for self-development of a person (Önal, 2009). The school library, therefore, is an essential institution for the learning society that helps teachers and students in achieving educational goals. The school library also has full potential to improve the quality of educational processes in a school since it provides knowledge and skills for students and teachers (De la Vega & Puente, 2010).

Today, most of the resources that relevant to the ‘teaching ‘ can be obtained in digital form and - as a result - users are changing their habits as they do not need to come to physical library for getting information (Hiller, 2002). The physical library has become a student-dominated place and the usage of the physical library by the teachers has declined dramatically since the mid-1990s (Martell, 2008). Thus, an investigation needs to be done to determine the factors that caused for low library use of school teachers.

On the other hand, it is believed that school teachers are the key players in successful education and their teaching and learning can be enhanced by establishing functional library with professionally qualified librarians (Wessels & Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2012). Therefore it is a prime necessity to conduct studies to examine school teachers’ library usage, their satisfaction towards library services, their library skills and problems that they faced while using libraries. The findings of such studies will be certainly helpful to identify the factors that affect teachers’ library use and consequently they may be helpful to plan and organize more customer focused school libraries for the betterment of school education of the country.

Moreover, the library needs to continue working on users’ information needs because users’ needs are getting change continuously (Song, 2009). The understanding of users’ information needs and the level of their satisfaction towards the library services will be helpful to improve the library services to keep up with upgraded information systems in a digital age with limited funding. Therefore the present study will explore the nature of library use by

school teachers and also the challenges faced by them when using libraries to fulfill their information needs. This study can successfully be used to develop new policies in relation to school libraries and their services. This in return will help the school libraries to provide a better and effective information service for the teachers by upgrading library services that is an imperative need for the quality education in a country.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine library usage patterns of school teachers in Sri Lanka and to identify the reasons that they prevent from using school libraries, their services and resources effectively. The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

- i. To examine the purpose and frequency of library use by the teachers
- ii. To assess the level of user satisfaction towards the library services and resources
- iii. To identify the problems faced by the teachers when using school libraries
- iv. To find out any associations between the extent of library awareness skills of teachers and selected variables

Literature Review

Although a substantial amount of research literature is available globally on the role and importance of school libraries in education, a limited number of studies have been conducted to examine the role of the school library in delivering school curriculum (Sim, 2001; Tan, 2003) and the extent of its use by teachers. Mokhtar and Majid (2005) found that teachers in Singapore did not use school libraries effectively. In consistent with these studies Williams and Coles (2007) found that teachers had perceived the school library as a resource for pupils and not for their own professional development. They further found that the lack of time and lack of access to research information in the school library as significant barriers for the school teachers' information gathering. In a study conducted by Tachie-Donkor and Dadzie (2017) found that secondary school teachers in Ghana had used school libraries to supplement their teaching notes on a topic or subject to be taught in schools and to keep abreast with current information

in their subject areas. However, most of them claimed that materials available in school libraries were not relevant for their teaching.

A similar study conducted by Korobili et al., (2011) among public secondary schools in Greece found that most of the teachers preferred using their personal collection rather than the library collection because the library did not comprise relevant materials that could help them in developing curriculum. The study further found that teachers did not have the requisite skills that needed to browse the library's collections. Asselin and Doiren, (2003) noted that school library programs were not included in the training of pre-service teachers. As a result, most of the teachers were unable to develop adequate skills for effective school library use. Another study by McLelland and Crawford (2004) revealed that the school library was seriously under-utilized by teachers as a result of limited staff.

Although there are many studies on school library usage of learners, there is little evidence of research on library usage of school teachers in Sri Lanka. In the Sri Lankan context, only one study was found on a similar topic. The study conducted by Rathnayake (2013) found that most of the teachers visited the library to find information that was relevant for the subjects that they taught in the schools. In addition, they used school libraries for reading newspapers (32%) and referring curriculum related materials (28%) such as syllabi and teacher's guides etc. The study further revealed that school libraries helped teachers by providing supplementary reading materials that is relevant for teaching. Out of total, 76% respondents mentioned that the library helped teachers by providing required materials for their professional development as well. With regard to the frequency of library use, the majority (72%) visited the library when the need arose and 20% visited once a week which gave an evidence of poor library usage of teachers. It was further evident from the study that the lack of time and heavy work load as main problems encountered by the teachers when using libraries.

Methodology

The participants who took part in this study were all in- service graduate teachers who followed postgraduate courses at the Department of Education, University of Peradeniya which is one of the main higher educational

institutions in Kandy district. The total population of graduate school teachers who work in government schools in Sri Lanka is 106,756 (Statistical Abstract, 2017). Based on sample size calculation prescribed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 400 were determined as the sample of the present study from the above population (106,756).

A specifically designed self-administered questionnaire (printed version) was used as the main data collection tool and 400 questionnaires were distributed randomly among the participants at their lecture halls in early September 2018. The collected data were analyzed by using SPSS software package (version 21.0).

Results and Discussion

As mentioned earlier, 400 questionnaires were distributed among the sample and 318 returned resulting 79.5% response rate.

Personal characteristics of the respondents

As it can be gleaned from the Table 1, the majority of the sample (88 %,) was female and male comprised only 12%. With regard the age of the respondents, majority were 31- 40 years of age group, with the remainder being between 20-30 (20%) or 41-50 (19.5%) years. More than half of the respondents engaged in teaching profession for 1-5 years. Teachers who had been in the profession for 6-10 years made up 23.6% of the sample, followed by more than ten years(23.9%). With regard to the area of school located, more than one third of the respondents, 125 (39%) indicated that their schools were situated in a suburb area followed by 35% in rural area and 24% in a central city. The schools where the respondents taught were fairly represented town areas as well as rural areas.

Table 1. Personal characteristics of the respondents

	Characteristics	Frequency	%
1	Gender		
	Male	39	12.3
	Female	279	87.7
	Total	318	100

2	Age		
	20-30 years	65	20.4
	31-40 years	183	57.5
	41-50 years	62	19.5
	More than 50	8	2.5
	Total	318	100
3	Work experience		
	Less than 1 year	2	0.6
	1-5 years	165	51.9
	6-10 years	75	23.6
	More than 10	76	23.9
	Total	318	100.0
4	Location of school		
	Central city	75	23.6
	Suburb	125	39.3
	Rural	110	34.6
	No response	8	2.5
	Total	318	100

Source: Survey data

School library use

The respondents were asked whether they used the library to obtain information that was relevant for teaching. Two hundred and seventy (84.9%) respondents indicated that they used the library to obtain information to fulfill their information needs and 48 respondents (15.1%) indicated that they did not use the library to fulfill their information needs. When the respondents were asked whether they met their information needs from the library, 80.8% mentioned that their information needs were fulfilled by the library while 11.3% mentioned that their needs were not fulfilled and 7.9% refrained from responding.

Respondents were again asked to mark the reasons for their school library use and the results are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Reasons for school library use*

	Reason	Frequency	Percentage
1	Support own reading	254	79.9
2	Support class room teaching	251	78.9
3	Keep abreast with current information	247	77.7
4	Lesson preparation	239	75.2
5	Read newspapers/magazine	234	73.6
6	Use of reference books	222	69.8

(N=318)

Source: Survey data *Note: Multiple responses allowed

As shown in the Table 2, the majority of the respondents used the school library to obtain information for their own reading, to get supplementary information for classroom teaching and to keep abreast with current information in their subject areas. More than 75% of the respondents used the library for lesson preparation followed by reading newspapers or magazines and for reference.

The respondents were asked to rate the level of adequacy of information resources available in the school library by using four scales namely “Very good”, “Good”, “Fair”, and “Below standard”. At the same time, they were asked to indicate how they access information available in the library and the action that they took if they did not meet their information needs from the library. Results are depicted in Table 3.

According to the Table 3, for more than 40% of the respondents, the information resources and facilities available at the school’s library was “fair” followed by “good” (26%), “below standard” (15.4%), , and “very good” (6.3%).

Table 3. Descriptive statistics on library access and resource adequacy

	Library access and resource adequacy	Frequency	Percentage
Adequacy of library resources			
1	Very Good	20	6.3
2	Good	83	26.1
3	Fair	135	42.5
4	Below Standard	49	15.4
	No response	31	9.7
Access to the library*			
1	Browse through the library stock	253	79.6
2	Seek help from library staff	240	75.5
3	Use the library catalogue	140	44.0
Action taken if not met information needs*			
1	Ask the officer in charge of the library for assistance	263	82.7
2	Seek help from the Internet	263	82.7
3	Consult colleague teacher	238	74.8
4	Give up	14	4.4
(N= 318)			

Source: Survey data * *Note: Multiple responses allowed*

With regarding to the access to the library, the majority of the respondents accessed by browsing the library stock (79.6%), while 75.5% sought help from the library staff and only 44% of them used the library catalogue. It was further revealed that the majority (83%) of respondents asked the officer in charge of the library for assistance or sought help from the internet to find information wherever they were not available at the school library. Of the respondents, 75% consulted colleague teachers whereas 4.4% gave up when their information needs were not met by the school library. (Table 3)

Frequency of library use

The respondents were asked about the frequency of visit to their school library. More than one third of the respondents indicated that they visited the library weekly while 25.8% visited occasionally and 14.2% visited the library monthly and only 9.4% visited the library daily (Figure 1). As a whole, the results confirmed that a majority of the respondents had not been to their school libraries regularly.

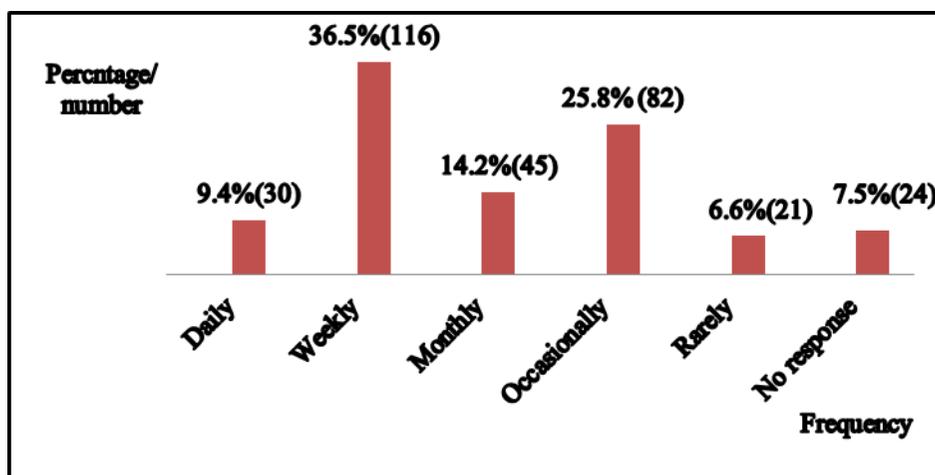


Figure 1. Frequency of school library use

Library skills of school teachers

The respondents were asked to rate how much they agreed on the given statements about library skills. In this regard, a five points scale was utilized (from 1 to 5, where 1 indicated “Strongly Disagree” and 5 indicated “Strongly Agree”). Library skill scale developed by Kampen (2004) was used to measure teachers’ library skills after making necessary modifications to suite with the local context. Statements are listed in descending order according to the Likert mean scores.

It was found that 64% of the respondents were in the opinions that the school library should provide more services for the teachers, while 45% of the respondents felt that library was easy to use and 38% of the respondents had confident about their awareness on resources available in the library (Table 4). However, the majority (72%) disagreed on the statement

“availability of too many information sources in the library” while 55% of the respondents disagreed on “adequacy of information training sessions offered by the library for the teachers” and 45% of the respondents disagreed on “comfortable use of computers in the library”.

Table 4. Library skills and use scale

Statements	SDA	DA	NU	AG	SA	RS*	MN*	SD*
1 The library should provide more services for teachers	6 (2%)	28 (9%)	59 (19)	110 (35%)	93 (29%)	296	3.86	1.029
2 The library is easy to use	25 (8%)	19 (6%)	98 (31%)	122 (38%)	21 (7%)	285	3.33	1.016
3 I know what resources are available in the library	18 (6%)	32 (10%)	132 (42%)	95 (30%)	25 (8%)	302	3.25	.963
4 I can usually find the resources I need in the library	32 (10%)	32 (10%)	155 (51%)	69 (23%)	15 (6%)	303	3.01	.978
5 I think my ability to use the library has had a negative effect on my teaching	161 (51%)	94 (32%)	18 (6%)	11 (4%)	9 (3%)	293	3.01	.968
6 My knowledge of the library is limited to my area of interest	37 (12%)	42 (13%)	145 (46%)	61 (19%)	18 (6%)	303	2.94	1.032
7 I am uncomfortable using the library catalogue	29 (9%)	69 (22%)	112 (35%)	80 (25%)	12 (4%)	302	2.92	1.017
8 It is difficult to locate materials I need in the library	31 (10%)	97 (31%)	90 (28%)	46 (14%)	35 (11%)	299	2.86	1.160
9 The library's resources for my area of interest are satisfactory	41 (13%)	70 (22%)	109 (34%)	68 (21%)	12 (4%)	300	2.80	1.063
10 I am comfortable using the computers inside the library	91 (27%)	56 (18%)	64 (20%)	29 (9%)	27 (8.5%)	267	2.42	1.325
11 The library offers enough information skills training sessions for teachers	60 (19%)	116 (36%)	89 (28%)	29 (9%)	8 (2.5%)	302	2.37	.992
12 There are too many possible sources of information	113 (36%)	113 (36%)	40 (13%)	21 (7%)	8 (2.5%)	295	1.98	1.025

SDA= Strongly Disagree; DA= Disagree; NU= Neutral; AG= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree, RS*= Number of Responses; MN*= Mean Score; SD*= Standard Deviation

These results gave an insight that the teachers had the skills on the use of libraries easily while they were aware about the available library resources. At the same time they urged more library services for the teachers. On the other hand, they felt that libraries lack information sources and they urged from the library to offer more information skills training sessions for them.

Satisfaction towards available library services and resources

The respondents were asked to rate about their level of satisfaction and it was found that more than half of the respondents agreed on the statement “library arrangement is good and relevant information sources could be easily located” while less than half of the respondents agreed on “helpfulness of user awareness programs conducted by the library” (47%) and “helpfulness of library staff” (46%) with the highest mean score values. However, there were a substantial proportion of respondents who were uncertain (43%) or dissatisfied (38%) on library resources available in the subjects that they taught in schools and 45% of the respondents indicated their disagreement on the statement, “library has current and updated collection”.

Table 5. Satisfaction with library services and resources

	Statements	SDA	DA	NU	AG	SA	RS*	MN*	SD*
1	Library user awareness programs are helpful	22 (8%)	36 (12%)	97 (33%)	92 (31%)	46 (16%)	293	3.35	1.115
2	Staff in the library is helpful	31 (11%)	35 (12%)	91 (31%)	90 (31%)	44 (15%)	291	3.28	1.178
3	Library arrangement is good and relevant information sources could be easily located	40 (13%)	49 (16%)	68 (23%)	96 (32%)	45 (20%)	298	3.19	1.263
4	Library catalogue provide easy access to library resources	58 (20%)	44 (15%)	82 (28%)	78 (26%)	34 (11%)	296	2.95	1.288
5	I am satisfied with resources available in the subjects that I taught	45 (15%)	68 (23%)	128 (43%)	48 (16%)	10 (3%)	299	2.70	1.018
6	Library has current and updated collection	37 (12%)	97 (33%)	98 (33%)	49 (16%)	17 (6%)	298	2.70	1.064

SDA= Strongly Disagree; DA= Disagree; NU= Neutral; AG= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree; RS= Number of Responses; MN= Mean Score; SD= Standard Deviation

The results revealed that a substantial proportion of respondents were satisfied about library services particularly on user awareness programs, staff assistance and library arrangement but they were not satisfied about the availability of current and updated resources in their subject fields.

Problems faced in using school libraries

The respondents were asked to indicate the types of problems they encountered in using their school libraries. The top most twelve problems that encountered by the teachers in using the library were listed. From Table 6, it can be seen that the majority had faced some problems such as the lack of relevant materials in the library, lack of information on available resources, non-availability of e-resources and outdated library collections.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of library related barriers

	Barrier/ Problem/ Difficulty	Frequency	Percentage
1	Lack of relevant materials in the school's library	274	86.2
2	Lack of information about available sources	254	79.9
3	Non availability of electronic resource (e-journals)	248	78.0
4	Required materials are not available	244	76.7
5	Latest information sources are not available/ outdated material	240	75.5
6	Difficult in finding from existing resources	215	67.6
7	Information is scattered in too many sources	164	51.6
8	Lack of support from library staff	141	44.3
9	Library staff is incompetent or not well-trained	140	44.0
11	Lack of knowledge in using the library	121	38.1

Source: Survey data

These results were consistent with the study conducted by Williams & Coles (2007) who found that the inadequate library facilities, unavailability and inability to locate up- to-date information as problems faced by the teachers in using school libraries. These findings are not different from the studies

conducted by Johnson (2000) and Tachie-Donkor, and Dadzie (2017) who concluded that teachers did not find relevant materials from their school libraries.

Association of library awareness skills and variables

In order to find out whether any associations between teachers' library awareness skills and four selected variables such as gender, age, experience and school location, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted. The same library skill scale developed by Kampen (2004) was used and it was tested for its reliability, and the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.701 for the overall scale.

Factor analysis of the library skills

The method of list wise deletion was used to exclude respondents who did not check any of the items from the factor analysis. Principal component analysis was employed to extract factors, and two factors were retained by a Scree test and Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalue > 1). Statements with the highest loading with a particular factor were grouped under that factor, and those that correlated less than 0.5 with a factor were not loaded.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy is a test of the amount of variance within the data that could be explained by factors. As a measure of factorability a KMO value of 0.5 is poor; 0.6 is acceptable; a value closer to 1 is better, and the Bartlett's test indicates that the data is probably factorable if $p < .50$ (Brace, Kemp & Snelgar, 2006). Data from the library awareness scale was analysed by means of a principal component analysis, with varimax rotation. The various indicators of factorability were very good, and the residuals indicate that the solution was a good one. Three components with an eigenvalue > 1.0 were found; items with the highest loading were chosen for each factor (see Tables 7 and 8).

A three factor solution accounted for 54.325% of the total variance and three components were elicited (see Table 7). These three factors were grouped into three broad themes: The components (factors) can be thought of as representing three main themes: component 1- related to awareness of what the library offers and its use; component 2- related to attributes towards

using the library and component 3- related to the services offered by the library.

Table 7. Total variance explained

Factor	Cumulative variance	Total variance	Eigenvalue
1	26.069	26.069	3.128
2	42.236	16.167	1.940
3	54.325	12.089	1.451

Source: Survey data

Table 8. Factor loadings for library awareness scale

s/n	Statement	Component		
		1	2	3
1	I know what resources are available in the library	.750		
2	The library is easy to use	.744		
3	The library's resources in my area of interest are satisfactory	.649		
4	I can usually find the resources I need in the library	.629		
5	The library offers enough information skills training sessions for teachers	.497		
6	I am comfortable in using the computers inside the library	.437		
7	I think that my ability to use the library had a negative effect on my teaching		.695	
8	There are too many possible sources of information		.691	
9	My knowledge of the library is limited to my area of interest		.639	
10	I am uncomfortable using the library catalogue		.318	
11	The library should provide more services for teachers			.752
12	It is difficult to locate materials I need in the library			.665

Source: Survey data

The factor one consisted of six items with factor loading > .3, which accounted for 26.069% of the total variance. The items with highest loadings in this factor were related to the respondents' awareness of library resources and the easiness of library to use.

Factor Two was named “attributes towards using the library”, and it accounted for 16.167 % of the total variance, four items with high loading.

Items in this factor addressed ability to use the library has had a negative effect on teaching and the perception of the availability of too many possible sources in the library.

Factor three named “services offered by the library” and it accounted for 12.089% of the total variance, two items with loading. The item with highest loadings in this factor was related to the perception of the library to provide more services for teachers. (See Tables 7 and 8) These factors will be used for the regression analysis and verifying the study's model.

Regression analysis of the library skills

Logistic regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 21.0 to identify the predictors of the library skills of the school teachers. The goal of this analysis was to study the associations between each dependent variable representing key factors of library skills and four independent variables such as gender, age, experience and location of school. In this section, a series of ordinal logistic regressions were run for achieving the objectives of the study (Objective no.5).

Table 9. Logistic regression key results of “library should provide more services for teachers”

Variables in equation	B	SE	Sig	Exp (B)	95 % C. I. for OR	
					Lower	Upper
Gender (2)	-.295	.463	.523	.744	.301	1.843
Age	.330	.310	.287	1.391	.758	2.554
Experience	-.240	.242	.322	.787	.490	1.264
Location	.167	.194	.391	1.181	.807	1.729
Constant	.323	1.242	.795			

Source: Survey data

Firstly a logistic regression was run for the highest loading factor of the library skill scale that is the library should provide more services for teachers. Three hundred and eighteen cases were analyzed and the full model significantly predicted " library should provide more services for teachers" (omnibus chi-square $X^2=26.856$, $df=16$, $p=0.043$). Overall, 43.4 % of predictions were accurate. Table 9 gives a detailed description of the values calculated for the independent variables entered in the last step of the

regression stepwise forward method. As it can be gleaned in Table 9, there were no variables found to be statistically significant.

Conclusion

As emerged from the findings, teachers top most reason to use school library was to obtain information for their own reading. The next most important reasons to use school library were to obtain information to supplement classroom teaching and to keep abreast with current information in subject areas related to their teaching purposes. The results revealed that most of the teachers apprehend that the library should provide more services for teachers and most of them were uncertain about their ability of using the library easily. Moreover, the results showed that most of the teachers agreed that user awareness programs conducted by the library were very helpful and they were satisfied about the helpfulness of library staff too. The results further revealed that the lack of relevant materials in the school library, lack of information about available sources, unavailability of electronic resources, outdated library materials, difficulty in finding resources from existing collection as main problems encountered by the teachers when using school libraries. Furthermore, it was found that there was no association between library awareness skills of the teachers and the four variables such as gender, age, work experience and school location.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made;

- i. Upgrading school libraries with necessary information resources and services to develop knowledge and skills of teachers.
- ii. Providing more up-to- date information materials relevant to school teaching and learning.
- iii. Conducting information literacy skills courses for teachers to make their use of library more effective and to enable them to transfer these skills to the learners.
- iv. Developing innovative marketing strategies in libraries to promote services that offer for school teachers.

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