Library Reading Habits: An Exploratory Study on School Children of Delhi

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Abstract: The present study entitled "LIBRARY READING HABITS: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY ON SCHOOL CHILDREN OF DELHI " was carried out to check the time spent by the school children in the library. The study was carried out in six schools of Delhi out of which two are Government, two are Government aided and two are Private schools, viz., School A, School B, School C, School D, School E and School F respectively. One hundred eighty people formed part of the sample to understand their perspective.

Salient features of the study were:

1. Most students from government, government aided and private schools use libraries for reading purposes. Reason for this trend could also be the peer pressure to excel and be better in class and among their peer groups and the highly competitive environment particularly in private schools motivates students to read books beyond their prescribed texts.
2. Students from private schools claimed that even though their library was comfortable and provided a good atmosphere for reading, but the seating space is not always enough as per the class strength and at times a suitable well-spaced area may not be available. In contrast, students from government schools felt that even though seating is provided, most seats are not well built and nearly broken which reduces the number of seatings as compared to the number of students.
3. Most of the students feel that the time spent by them in the library is useful and helps them in the process of learning, the reason probably being that the library opens to them a plethora of resources that helps them connect with the happenings of the world outside their classroom. The percentage is low in case of government schools, because they visit the library on a monthly basis.

Keywords: *Library, Reading Habits, Skill Development.*

1. INTRODUCTION

"*A library is a delivery room for the birth of ideas, a place where history comes to life.*"
- Norman Cousins

Reading has the unique power of transforming readers. According to William S. Grey, reading influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the attitudes, moral beliefs, judgments and actions of readers. The reading habit is one of the powerful and lasting influences in the promotion of one's personal development in particular and social progress in general. Regular and systematic reading sharpens the intellect, refines the emotions, elevates tastes and provides perspectives for one's living; and thereby prepares him for an effective civilizing force tending to unite social groups through the dissemination of common experiences. (Thanuskodi-S-Tt.pdf)

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading has been described as the art of interpreting printed and written words (Devarajan, 1989). It is regarded as one of the most effective processes of conscious learning. According to Devarajan and Gray, as cited in Panigrahi and Panda (1996), reading influences the extent and accuracy of information as well as the attitudes, morals, beliefs, judgment and action of These authors postulate that

"a creative and pragmatic education involving the habit of personal investigation requires self-study to be followed by self-thinking and analysis".

Lohar and Kumber (2005) in their study on the present situation of school libraries in Shimoga District (Karnataka) have concluded that the situation does not meet the prescribed norms. Begum and Ramesh (1991) investigated factors inhibiting public library use. They analyzed responses gathered from the users of the central library, Mysore, India. Somsong (1999) looked at reading habit promotion in ASEAN libraries. Factors limiting reading habits were discussed, along with the role of local institutes or organizations in helping libraries promote reading. Bndaka (2007) explored the use of newspaper articles to develop students' reading skills in senior high school. Bristow (1996) indicates that the school library is often the first and only place that the rural child has access to reading material. De Perez (1971) suggests that school libraries influence teachers, students and the community in a lasting manner; school libraries are appropriate for all levels of education; they have been successful in other countries; they distribute educational materials more efficiently to larger groups of readers; and they encounter less resistance from teachers and administrators than would a change to the curriculum. Zondi (1982) raises another important point about the school library, stating that school libraries can make up for other inadequacies in the classroom such as the lack of textbooks and other teaching aids. Dumea (2001) implies that access to reading materials, such as that provided through libraries, encourages students to read and reread books, which improves their reading skills. Each of these points has relevance for the Kitengesa Community Library. Olanlokun (1982) found that students use the library for class work, research, discussions, leisure, and Ajayi (1993) notes that students who do not appreciate the value of the library are at disadvantage and may visit the library to only read for examinations.

3. RATIONALE

Reading habits develops skills to succeed in the dynamic external environment i.e. the environment beyond schools. Healthy reading habits promote holistic development in students. Library offers convenient access to reading resources that range from books to journals to newspapers. Besides this, good reading habits also cater to differences in learning and teaching. Provision of and equality of access to, a wide range of reading material is easily available in the libraries. The students get access to a large number of references and reading materials that may not easily be available at all instances and times and therefore it is a need that library reading should be encouraged in schools.

4. OBJECTIVE

To find out the time spent by the students in the library

5. METHODOLOGY

The present study entitled "Library Reading Habits Among School Children in Delhi - An Exploratory Study" was carried out to check the time spent by the school children in the library. The methodology adopted for the study is discussed under:

Identification and selection: The identification and selection of the final sample for the study involved some preliminary exploration. The investigation included pilot study, meeting with the librarians working in related fields as well as secondary data research in order to familiarize oneself with the field situation and to have a realistic view of sample and site so that a suitable sample could be drawn. The organizations visited were NCERT, Directorate of Education for gathering information and talking to Librarians.

Locale of the study: The study was carried out in six schools of Delhi out of which two are Government, two are Government aided and two are Private schools, viz., School A, School B, School C, School D, School E and School F respectively.

The locations for the study were selected for the following reasons:

1. Some of the schools had put in concerted efforts in the automation of libraries to improve reading skill habits of the students.
2. The three different categories of schools, viz; Government, Government aided and Private were selected to compare the reading skill habits among the students and to find out their reading interests.
3. Easy accessibility allowed frequent and repeated visits.

Sample selection and Sample size: Six schools in Delhi were selected for detailed study of the reading habits of the school children and to understand their reading interests. Students of class IX only were selected to remove variability. The final sample of respondents for the study was drawn from the selected locales based on preliminary investigation, interaction with librarians, students and field visits. It included thirty students each from Government schools, Government aided schools and Private schools and thus the final sample size came to be one hundred and eighty. Feedback was obtained from the students on the books and facilities provided to them in the school library, their reading interests. The respondents were selected based on their availability and convenience.

Sampling technique: Purposive sampling technique was used to select the locales as well as the respondents for the study. The criteria for selection of the sample was that they should be using the school libraries themselves so that they were familiar with the place and could answer questions pertaining to the reading habits and facilities provided in the selected locations.

Tools for data collection: In order to elicit detailed and accurate information, multiple sets of tools were used for the purpose of data collection. The tool employed was: Interview Schedule A questionnaire consisting of closed ended questions was formulated to understand the perception of the students about their reading skills, interests and facilities provided to them in their school library. The closed ended questions were used to gather factual data. The schedule was designed keeping in mind the objectives of the study and was based on the information obtained from the review of literature. A pilot study was conducted to understand the point of view of the subjects so that necessary changes could be made and tools could be finalized. The tool was modified numerous times to obtain the final design of the schedule. A 4-point rating scale was developed to find out the reading interests of the students. Students had to rate the kind of reading material available in their school library from very good to poor. The parameters were duly set and scales suitably worked on.

Pretesting of the tool: The interview schedule was pre-tested on 10 students to assess its reliability and avoid ambiguity. The pilot study indicated that the respondents had problems with understanding certain questions unless given some cues; hence, certain modifications were made in the language to simplify it and sequence of questions for a better flow.

Method of data collection: Two visits were made to each of the selected locales. The first visit was to observe the library setup and to gather data through pilot testing the tool. All the facilities in the library were made note of on the basis of observations on the part of the researcher. Post pilot testing, the tool was found to be effective and easy to interpret. Accordingly, in the second visit to the school, the study was conducted before the schools closed for the winter vacations. The data collection was carried out from 9th December to 20th December, 2012. Time spent on conducting an interview was 30 minutes.

Analysis and Interpretation: The data was interpreted and analyzed as per the objectives of the study. The responses obtained from the three schools were entered into coding sheets created in Microsoft Excel. Each response was assigned a code for ease in tabulation. Following this, the frequencies of responses against their codes were tabulated in MS excel, the percentages calculated and analyzed. The frequencies computed were represented through tables and graphs.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study "Library Reading Habits: An Exploratory Study on School Children of Delhi" entitled was designed to understand the time spent by the students in the library. The questions were analysed keeping in mind the objectives of the study.
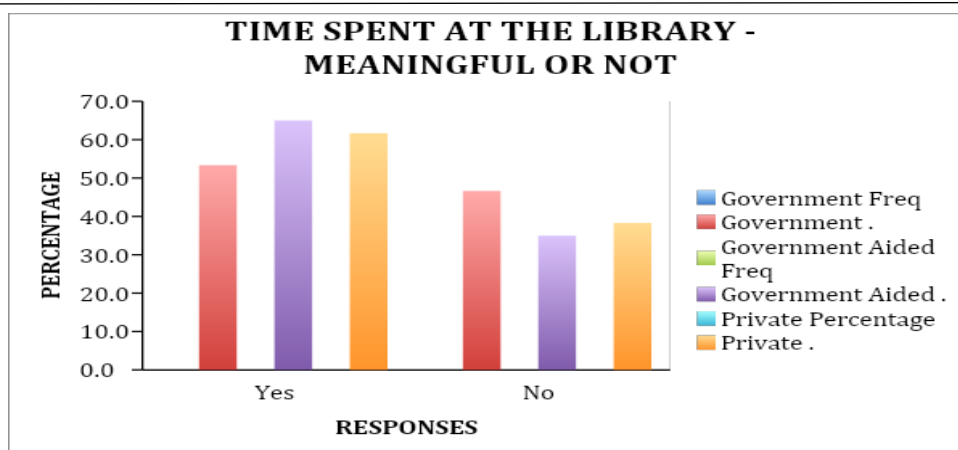
FIGURE 1. Time Spent at The Library - Meaningful or Not

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S. No.		Govt.		Govt. Aided		Private	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Yes	32	53.3	39	65.0	37	61.7
2	No	28	46.7	21	35.0	23	38.3

From the above given table it can be seen that about 65% students from government aided and 61.7% of the students of private schools feel that the time spent by them in the library is useful and helps them in the process of learning, the reason probably being that the library open to them a plethora of resources that helps them connect with the happenings of the world outside their classroom. The percentage is lower in case of government schools, because they visit the library on the monthly basis.
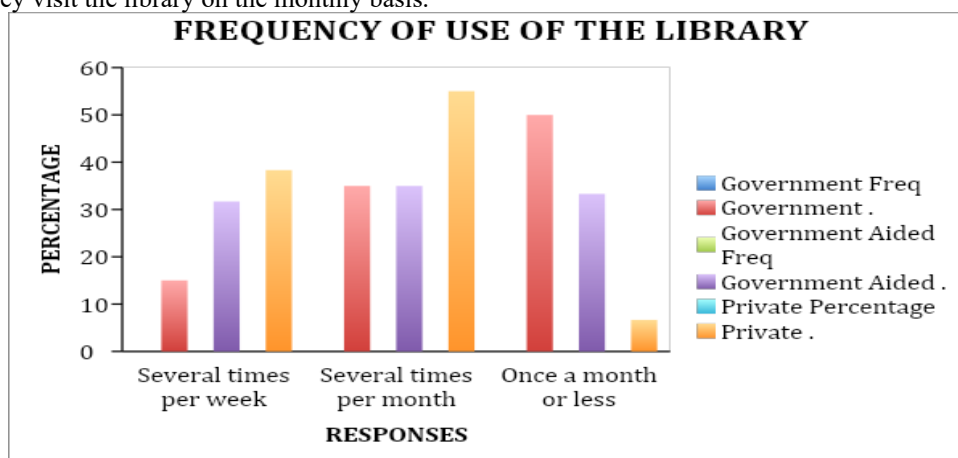

FIGURE 2. Frequency Of Use of The Library

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S.No.	Frequency of use of the library						
		Govt.		Govt. Aided		Private	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Several times per week	9	15	19	31.7	23	38.3
2	Several times per month	21	35	21	35.0	33	55.0
3	Once a month or less	30	50	20	33.3	4	6.7

From the above table it can be seen that students in the private schools comprised the lot that visited the library most frequently (38.3%) as opposed to students in Government and Government aided schools (15% and 31.7% respectively). The students in private schools mentioned that even though the facilities and editions of books in the reference sections may not always be updated or recent, they still visit the library on a regular basis or as and when it's possible because their curriculum and academic needs cannot be fulfilled by just the prescribed textbooks

given by the central Also, in private schools, the time tables are designed in such a way that a separate slot is assigned for library visit and referencing. This may be the same in government and government aided schools but the low attendance in the library is probably because some students stay on bunk or prefer not to stay for the library sessions as assigned in their time table. Another probable reason for more frequent visits to the library by students of private schools could be because of better infrastructure or ambience or environment to study.
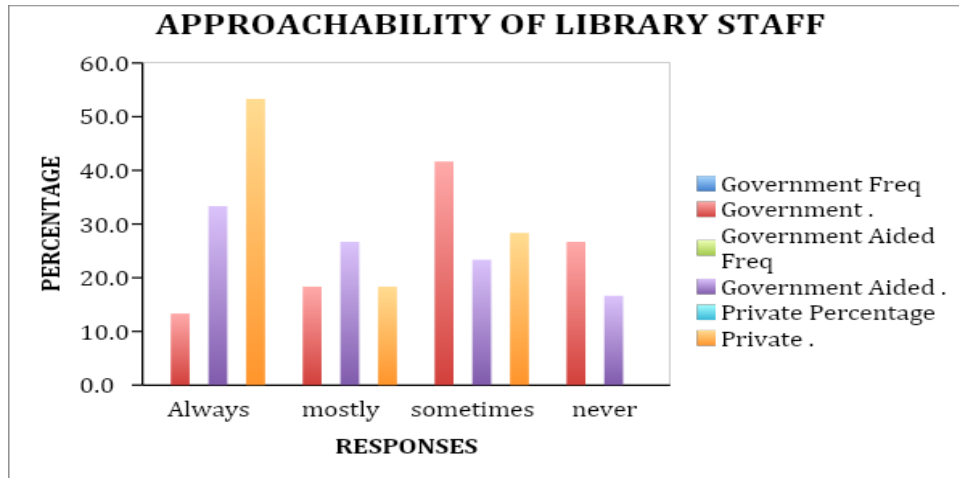

FIGURE 3. Approachability Of Library Staff

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S.No.		Govt.		Govt. Aided		Private	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Always	8	13.3	20	33.3	32	53.3
2	mostly	11	18.3	16	26.7	11	18.3
3	sometimes	25	41.7	14	23.3	17	28.3
4	never	16	26.7	10	16.7	0	0

From the above table it can be seen that 41.7% of students from government schools feel that it is very difficult for them to approach the teachers or staff in their library at all. In contrast, 53.3% students from private schools and 33.3% students from government aided schools feel they could always approach the library personnel in their school as and when needed by them. The reason may be due to lack of staff in government schools, and possibly in private schools, the number of staff may be more. Another reason could be the healthy interaction patterns between the teachers and the students. In private and government aided schools, children show more keenness towards reading and in the process interact with their teachers in finding the best reference material for their study. Most of the teachers too, are interested in being available for their students in this concern.
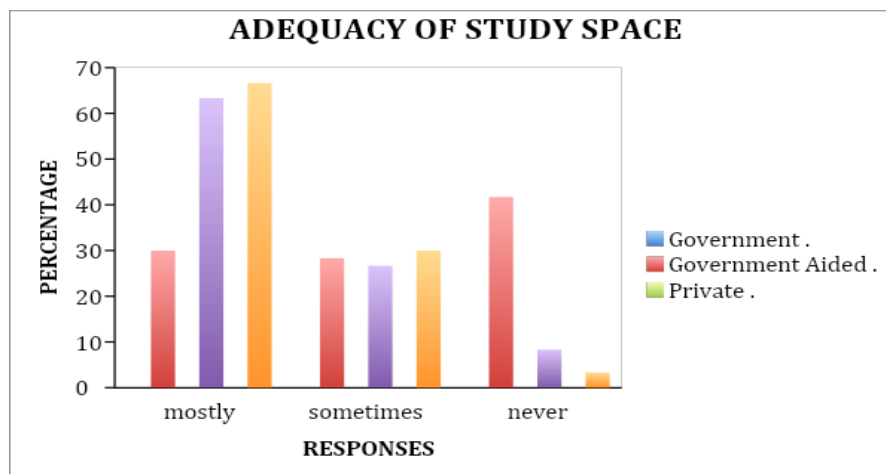

FIGURE 4. Adequacy Of Study Space

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S.No.		Govt.		Govt. Aided		Private	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	mostly	18	30	38	63.3	40	66.7
2	sometimes	17	28.3	16	26.7	18	30.0
3	never	25	41.7	5	8.3	2	3.3

From the above table it can be seen that 41.7% of the students from government schools feel there is inadequacy of study space in the library while 63.3% of students from govt. aided schools say that study space is mostly present in libraries**.** Closely following are students of the private schools, 66.7% of which feel that the special arrangement in their libraries is adequate and sufficient as per their requirements. This is probably because private schools have better infrastructure as compared to government and government aided schools, therefore the adequacy of study space is better in the private schools. *These major differences in students satisfaction regarding adequacy of study space may also be due to the fact that the libraries in private schools are big , spacious and well maintained whereas the infrastructure of government schools is not so good so the libraries are not so big and spacious.*

7. CONCLUSION

It was clearly evident from the analysis of data that in comparison with the government aided and private schools, government school children showed little interest in the library and did not even consider the time spent in the library as meaningful. This is because of the limited exposure of these children to the library environment. In contrast, government aided school children understand the need of a library in the school and also its significance which was evident from the responses followed by private school children who topped the spot and spent the most time in their school libraries. The word 'library' is rich in tradition, meaning, and usage. The definitions of 'school library' given by various library scientists and associations reflect this heritage. It is created and maintained to serve and support the educational activities of the school. The recommendations of numerous commissions and committees established by the Government of India and various other states for the improvement of school education can bring in desired results provided the school has the full complement of library resources, personnel, and necessary infrastructure. So far the school library has not been given its rightful place in the scheme of things. Nevertheless, it can play a very important role and help the school in achieving the educational objectives. If we recognize the value and importance of an informal system of education, then the library method of self-education is sure to get its due place.

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