

Socio-economic Development and Responsibilities of the Public Libraries: A Micro Level Study

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Abstract: *The saliently the public libraries work for the betterment of socio economic development of the society. But the contributions to the society of the public libraries are not being recognised by the society to focus on the contributions of these libraries for these developments. This study reveals that mostly the readers are visiting these libraries to seek information on women development, health and family welfare religious movements and information on un touchabilities, self-employment, and information on entrepreneur loans. Therefore, this paper studies social and economic developments responsibilities of the public libraries of Vellore District.*

Introduction

Unlike other libraries, the public libraries are the symbol of all round social developments in the country, and one or the other way they are more responsible for the social and economic development of a country by contributing so much with available minimum information resources and dilapidated staff strength especially in the Indian context. In this context, it is also to state that saliently the public libraries work for the betterment of socio economic development of the society. But the contributions to the society of the public libraries are not being recognised by the society to focus on the contributions of these libraries for these developments. As stated above, the socio and economic roles of the public libraries are not much recognised by the society, though for every information need either for applying for job opportunities, higher education or even government schemes for entrepreneurship and agriculture and so on, the society or the public especially the people from lower and middle income groups depend on the public libraries as information centre. As such, this study is aimed to focus on the roles of the public libraries for the upliftment of the society. This study conducted in Vellore District of Tamil Nadu, which has a total of 67 branch libraries, 69 village libraries and 42 part-time libraries. One district central library, named after the great rationalist E.V.R. Among these libraries only five libraries are selected for this study, they are Ambur, Alangayam, Ranipet, Kaveripakkam and Vellore. The researcher personally visited these libraries and interviewed both the library staff and few of the library users. Therefore, this study focuses on social and economic development and responsibilities of the public libraries of Vellore District.

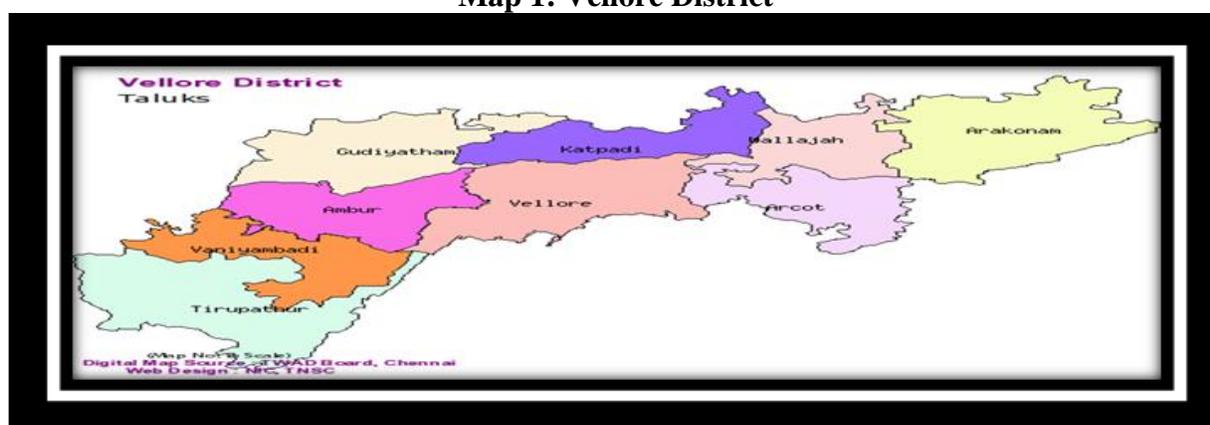
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Historical and Socio – economic profile of Vellore District

Vellore district has a number of historical events as it is ruled and controlled by Cholas of Uraiyur, Pallavas, Rashtrakutas of Malkhed and Sambuvarayar. The rulers of Vijayanagaram, Marathas, the Nawabs of the Carnatic and the British are also controlled the district for several years. The Vellore fort, which was probably built during the rule of Chinna Bommi Nayak (1526 to 1595 A.D.), was considered as a historical monument of the country. The Sepoy Mutiny of 1806 that took place inside the Vellore fort was seen as a prelude to the Revolt of 1857. After the Indian independence in 1947, Vellore became a part of the erstwhile Madras state. The modern Vellore District was formerly part of North Arcot District, which was established by the British in the 19th century. On 30 September 1989 the district was split into Tiruvannamalai-Sambuvarayar (present-day Tiruvannamalai) and North Arcot Ambedkar districts. North Arcot Ambedkar District was later renamed as Vellore District in 1996.

Map 1: Vellore District



The administrative details of the district³

Headquarters	:	Vellore
No.of Taluks	:	9
No.of Revenue Divisions	:	3
No.of Community Division Blocks	:	20
No.of Municipal Towns	:	14
No.of Town Panchayats	:	22
No.of Village Panchayats	:	763
No.of Revenue Villages	:	842

There are nine taluks in Vellore District namely Vellore, Gudiyatham, Katpadi, Vaniyambadi, Thirupattur, Walajah, Arcot and Arakkonam

The administrative structure of the district, according to 2011 census, the population of Vellore district is enumerated as 9, 29,281 comprising of 39, 36,331 males and 19, 61,688 females. As per population size, it is third among the 32 revenue districts of Tamil Nadu accounting for 5.6 percent of population is estimated as 15.09 percent of the state population, the decadal growth of population is estimated as 15.09 percent between 1991-2011 i.e., just above the state average decadal growth rate of 11.19 percent. The sex ratio in the district as per 2011

³ District Collector Office, Vellore

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census is 997 females for every 1000 males as against the state average of 986 recording an increase from 978 of 1991 census. The literacy rate in the district has increased from 60.87 percent in 1991 to 72.36 percent in 2001, which is lower than the state average of 73.47 percent. A quick look at occupational pattern of the people in the district shows that main workers from 33.72 percent, of whom cultivators form 19.86 per cent of the population followed by marginal workers in household industries as 10.02 percent. Agricultural labourers and other workers form 88.47 per cent of the population.

Profiles of the Public Libraries

Vellore District has a total of 67 branch libraries, 69 village libraries and 42 part-time libraries. One district central library, named after the great rationalist E.V.R who is an instrumental in Dravidian movement in the country as Thanthai Periyar E.V.R. District Central Library was opened on 22nd November 1959, in Infantry Road, Vellore.

Number of books available in the Libraries

Table 1.1 presents a total of 172346 books both in general books and reference books are available in the libraries. Among general books, 21962 Tamil, 4523 English and 1274 other language books and reference books categories 8550 Tamil, 3504 English and 1147 other languages books are available in the Ambur public library. In Alangayam, the general book categories, 18514 Tamil, 2530 English and 525 other language books and reference books categories 4957 Tamil, 2126 English and 522 other languages books are available in the library. In Ranipet library, the total number of general books in Tamil 23511, in English 2157 and other languages 1052, and the total number of reference books in Tamil 11510, in English 4456 and in other languages 2038 books are available.

In Kaveripakkam library, the general book categories, 20816 Tamil, 3858 English and reference books categories 5852 Tamil, 2326 English books are available. But other languages book both in general and reference book categories are not available in the libraries in Kaveripakkam area. Among all these libraries Vellore District central library has more number of books of both general and reference categories.

Table 1.1: Total numbers of books available in the Libraries

Libraries	General Books			Reference Books			Total
	Tamil	English	Other Languages	Tamil	English	Other Languages	
Ambur	21962	4523	1274	8550	3504	1147	40960
Alangayam	18514	2530	0525	4957	2126	522	29174
Ranipet	23511	2157	1052	11510	4456	2038	44724
Kaveripakkam	20816	3858	-	5852	2326	-	32852
Vellore	98573	28061	6431	28375	7525	3381	172346

Source: Computed

Newspapers available in the Libraries

Table 1.2 reveals that the Newspapers available in the Libraries under Study, an account for 17 Tamil, 7 English and 2 (Urdu) other languages newspapers are available in the Ambur library. There are 17 Tamil news papers are available in all the libraries, and 7 English news papers are available both in the libraries of Ambur and Ranipet, 5 English news papers are available in the libraries in Alangayam and Kaveripakkam and 9 English dailies are subscribed by Vellore

district central library. However, it is interesting to note that there are 2 Urdu newspapers are available in Ambur libraries and only one Hindi paper available in Vellore District. This is because the Urdu speaking people are dominated in this region

Table 1.2: Newspapers available in the Libraries

Place	Tamil	English	Other Languages	Total no. of available news papers
Ambur	17	7	2 Urdu	26
Alangayam	17	5	-	22
Ranipet	17	7	-	26
Kaveripakkam	17	5	-	22
Vellore	17	9	1 Hindi	27

Source: Computed

Table 1.3: Journals and Magazines available in the Libraries

Place	Tamil	English	Other Languages	Total no. of Journals available
Ambur	94	8	-	102
Alangayam	94	8	-	102
Ranipet	94	8	-	102
Kaveripakkam	94	8	-	102
Vellore	163	12	-	175

Source: Computed

Table 1.3 presents the details about the number of Journals and Magazines subscribed in the Libraries under Study. 102 total numbers of journals available in four study Libraries viz., Ambur, Alangayam, Ranipet and Kaveripakkam, 94 Tamil and 8 English journals and magazines are subscribed. In the Vellore library, there are 163 Tamil and 12 English journals and magazines are subscribed. The other languages journals and magazines are not available in the libraries under study in the study areas.

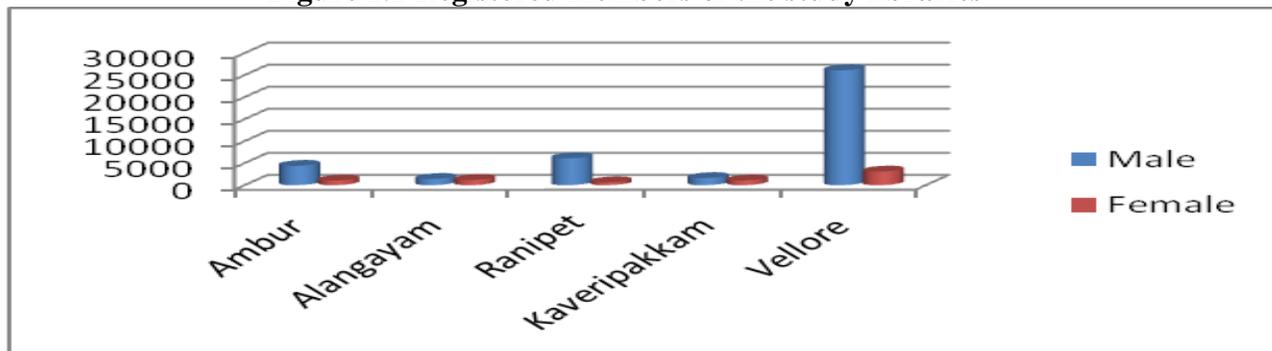
Table 1.4: Registered members of the study libraries

Name of the Library	Male	Female	Total no. of Readers
Ambur	4412	1051	5463
Alangayam	1435	1197	2632
Ranipet	6112	669	6781
Kaveripakkam	1630	1080	2710
Vellore	26109	3120	29229

Source: Computed

Table 1.4 reveals that out of 29229 numbers of readers, 4412 male and 1051 female members are registered in the study libraries in Ambur library. In the Alangayam library 1435 male and 1197 female members are registered. In Ranipet 6112 male and 669 female members are registered. And 1630 male and 1080 female members are registered in Kaveripakkam Public library. It is observed that most of the male member registered in Ranipet library and most of the female members are registered in Alangayam library.

Figure 1.1 Registered members of the study libraries



Socio-economic roles of the Public Libraries

It could be deduced from above discussion that the Ambur is home to a major part of India's leather tanning industry, earning it the nickname Leather City of South India. It lies roughly between IT hubs Chennai and Bengaluru. It is at a distance of 175 km from these two cities. An observatory Vainu Bappu Observatory is located in Kavalur. The hill station Yelagiri is about 30 km from the town. Javadi Hills is another small hill station nearby. Ranipet is a part of Vellore metropolitan area and 100 kilometers from Chennai, the fourth largest urban area in India. It is a major industrial town located on NH 4 Chennai-Bangalore highway. The local library of Ambur is situated in very heart of the town which enables the users accessibility of it, very much and frequently. The library is operating in the (first floor) upstairs in a rental building, which causes difficult to use by the old age people as well as physically challenged readers. The library is used by the mixed group of user population i.e., workmen of leather industries (the town is dominant by leather industry), general public, retired people, students, children and ladies. All the journals and news papers are widely used by the daily readers. The library updates with new books in all categories both in English and Tamil. Almost all state government publications and few of central government publications are available in the in the library. This section is widely used by the students for their career options and development. As far as library's infrastructure is concerned, it is equipped with good lighting, ventilation (sufficient fans are installed) as well as sufficient furniture for the use of readers. Generally readers are attributed that the librarian as well as staff members are naturally helpful and polite in serving the information to readers.

The library is situated in the first floor upstairs, and it is difficult to use by the old age as well as physically challenged readers. There are no racks sufficiently available to keep books in order. Neither water for drinking nor toilet facilities are available. This town is dominant of conservative Muslim population wishes to have separate ladies reading hall. Children are not having separate section. There is no parking space to keep the vehicles of the readers. During electricity power cuts there is no UPS or solar lamps. Alankayam is 8 km from the famous observatory at Kavalur. This town is surrounded by mountains on all sides, which keeps Alangayam at a moderate temperature for most of the year. The Public library servicing the academic community for the area for the career advancement and higher education. The readers are ranging from agricultural labourers and highly educated youths. As such, these readers are mostly using the libraries for both career advancement, news and agricultural related issues. Ranipet also known as Ranipettai is a suburb town and industrial hub of Vellore city in the state of Tamil Nadu in southern India. It is a medium-sized community located about 20 kilometers from the Vellore city centre and also Ranipet is a part of Vellore metropolitan area and 100

kilometers from Chennai. The Public library is one of the information centers for the working community and academics. These types of readers are served by the library with more number of industrial related information along with the career advancement information. The other libraries of the study are serving to different kind of readers for various reasons related to socio economic development.

Conclusions

It could be concluded from above discussion that the contribution of these libraries for the socio and economic development of the society as highly opined by many respondents during the interview. Though these libraries disseminate various information on many issues ranging from agricultural related issues to employment opportunities and educational aspects, these libraries need much improvement in terms of its collections especially improvements in terms of digital resources towards competitive examinations since many aspirants are using these libraries. However, the interview reveals that mostly the readers are visiting these libraries to seek information on women development, health and family welfare, religious movements, information on untouchables, self-employment, and information on entrepreneur loans. This study is also found out that almost all the respondents of the study visit their public library to get general knowledge on politics, science and technology, health related issues, earth and space related issues.

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