

## **INFORMATION SEEKING BEHAVIOUR OF PRISONERS IN THE CENTRAL PRISON LIBRARY IN PALAYAMKOTTAI, TIRUNELVELI DISTRICT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Information Seeking Behaviour essentially refers to the strategies and actions undertaken to locate discrete knowledge of elements. Information seeking is a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence seeking means searching for something which they want to get. This article deals with Information seeking Behaviour of prisoners in the central Prison Library, Palayamkottai, Reading materials and information are provided in almost all prison libraries. Apart from review of literature, the article covers the following objects of study. Prisoner Education – A way to Reform, Purpose for using Library – Frequency of visit to Library, Resources Available – Time allocated – Sufficiency of time – Atmosphere of the library Assistance for further education-sharing of information etc.,

**KEYWORDS:** Behaviour, Information, Environmental, Anti-social, Criminal, Correctional Process

### **INTRODUCTION**

Information is considered as a useful commodity for routine life. For anything and everything information is required. This information is available in various sources. Libraries serve as a center for providing right information to the right people at all times. The new information technology has enabled the library and information centre to change their mode of service from traditional to internet based services. Accordingly the information seeking behavior of the clientele has also changed.

Information Seeking Behaviour essentially refers to the strategies and actions undertaken to locate discrete knowledge of elements. It is concerned with the integrated use of the three basic resources i.e., **People, Information and System**. The Behaviour which yields the highest information satisfaction is accepted to be the best.

#### **Information Seeking Behaviour**

There is a universal assumption that man was born innocent or-ignorant and he should actively seek knowledge. Information seeking is thus a natural and necessary mechanism of human existence. Seeking means searching for something which they want to get. F.W.Taylor defines Information Behaviour as product of certain elements of the environment of information user. The elements are:

- The assumption formally learned or made by a defined set of people concerning the nature of their work.

- The kinds and structure of the problems deemed important and typical by this set of people.
- The constraints and opportunities of typical environments with in which any group or sub group of this set of people operates and works.
- The conscious and perhaps unconscious, assumptions made as what constitutes a solution or a resolution of problems, and what makes information useful and valuable in their contexts.

### **Prison Libraries**

Prison libraries are provided in many prisons, Reading materials and information are provided in almost all prison libraries. Libraries have become an integral part of modern societies. They provide many services and perform a number of functions. The role of the prisons have become more dynamic and innovative in character. Now, the knowledge society' and knowledge explosion have become practically popular. It is said that a hundred prisons will be closed if a single library is opened”.

Libraries are of several types. There are National Libraries, registered Libraries, state-level libraries, District central Libraries, educational institution libraries, public libraries, village libraries mobile libraries and Prison Libraries.

Prison libraries also play a strategy. In many Prisons in tamil Nadu, library facilities have been provided. There are eight prison libraries in Tamil Nadu. They are Chennai Central Prison, Coimbatore Central Prison, Cuddalore central Prison, Madurai Central Prison, Palayamkottai Central Prison, Puzhal central Prison, Tiruchirappalli Central Prison and Vellore Central Prison. There are a few district jails, sub jails and borstal schools are also functioning in Tamil Nadu.

### **Centrla Prison, Palayamkottai**

This Prison was constructed during the year 1880. It was functioning as a District Jail till 1929. During the year 1929, it was converted as a Borstal school. Due to lesser admission it was shifted to the premises of the erstwhile District Jail, Palayamkottai. The present premises has been functioning as a central prison with effect from April 1, 1968. The area of the prison is 117.75 acres. The authorized accommodation of this Prison is 1332.

### **Statement of the Problem:-**

A study on prison libraries is regarded as vital and socially relevant. It will throw necessary light on the bright and grave areas of the organization. Hence, the present study has been titled as, “Information Seeking Behaviour of Prisoners in the central Prison Library in Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli.”

### **Objectives of the Study**

The Present study aims at the following objectives:-

- To study and understand the need and importance of Prison education.
- To analyse the purpose for using library by the prisoners.
- To know the frequency of visit to library by the prisoners.
- To acquire information about the resources and atmosphere available in the prison library.
- To analyse and understand how the prisoners collect the required information and share the information.

### Scope of the study

The study is undertaken only in one central prison library at palayamkottai. The study was carried out in three places i.e., the central prison palayamkottai, the female Annexure at Kokrakulam and the Borstal school in the south bypass road, palayamkottai.

### Period of Study

The study was carried out for three months during June, July and August 2015.

### Sources of Information

The required information was collected both from primary and secondary sources. The selected respondents who are Prisoners constituted the primary source of information and records of the prison library, articles appeared in the journals and news papers formed secondary source of information.

### Sampling Technique

A sample of 133 respondents were selected on the basis of stratified random sampling method choosing 123 male prisoners, 5 women prisoners and 5 young convicts from Borstal school.

### Review of Literature

THE following are some of the past studies reviewed.

- Association of specialized and co-operative library Agencies (1992), Library standards for adult correctional institutions, Chicago 1 L; American Library Association.
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### Tools for Collection of Data

For collection of primary data, a structured, close ended questionnaire schedule was used. In addition, interview technique was also used to collect information from the office-bearers of the central Prison and library professionals of the Prison Library. Observations and informal talk with knowledgeable persons were also made for collection of the required

first hand information.

### Tools for Analysis and Interpretation

For analysis and interpretation of the data collected, simple statistical tools such as averages, percentages, tables and diagrams are used.

### Analysis of the Data

To study the information seeking Behaviour of Prisoners the following factors are analyzed: Need and importance of prison education, Purpose for using library, frequency of visit to library, resources and atmosphere available and how the collected information is shared.

### Prisoner Education- A way to Reform

Education of the Prisoner is the heart and soul of the correctional process. It helps the offenders in his ultimate resettlement in society. It brings about sublimation of the anti-social instinct in a criminal by slowly moulding his knowledge, character and behaviour. Emphasizing the importance of literacy to prisoners, Dr. Bhattacharya very poignantly observes: "Literacy, even elementary education, can make a world of difference specially in the life of longterm Prisoners.

### Purpose for Using Library

**Table 1: Purpose for Using Library**

Purpose	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Studies	17	13
Knowledge Improvement	109	82
Time Pass	07	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

It is evident from table I that about 109 respondents covering 82% prefer to use library to improve their knowledge. About 17 (13%) prisoners used library for their studies. Only about 5% of the respondent prisoners visited library for time passing.

### Frequency of Visit to Library

**Table 2: Frequency of Library Visit**

Frequency of Visit	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Daily	17	13
Weekly	79	59
Monthly	09	07
Rarely	18	14
Never Uses	10	07
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Table 2 shows that about 13% of the respondent prisoners used to visit the library daily. The majority of (79 Nos.) 59 percentages of respondents visit library weekly once. About 7% of the Prisoners visit the library monthly once. About 18(14%) respondent prisoners opined that they visit library rarely. About 7% of the respondents said that they never visited the prison library. Hence, it is inferred that majority of the respondents visit library once in a week.

**Resources Available in the Library:-****Table 3: Resources Available in the Library**

Resources	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Books- General	45	34
Newspapers	30	23
Magazines	08	06
Story Books	50	37
Any other	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Table 3 gives the details of the resources available in the central prison at Palayamkottai. About 45(34%) prisoners read general books, about 30 respondents covering 23% stated that they go to library to read newspapers. A majority of 50 respondent prisoners covering 37% of the total respondents accepted that their purpose of visiting library is to read story books.

**Time Allocated****Table 4: Aware of the Timings of the Library**

Aware of the timings	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Yes	103	77
No	20	15
NA	10	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

The respondents were asked whether they were aware of the time allocated to visit library. Table 4 depicts that 77% of the prisoners accepted (yes) that they were aware of the timings. But 20 (15%) prisoners answered "No". Another 10 Prisoners did not answer the question.

**Sufficiency of Time****Table 5: Sufficiency of Time Allocated**

Opinion	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Yes	75	56
No	25	19
No Opinion	33	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

When the respondents were asked whether the time allocated for visiting library was sufficient, about 75 respondents covering 56% of the total accepted that the time allocated was sufficient and 33 prisoners said that it was not sufficient and 33 prisoners covering 25% did not answer the question.

It is inferred from table 5 that the time allocated for library visit is sufficient.

**Atmosphere of the library**

A question was asked whether the library was designed in such a way to encourage inmates to study in a more relaxed atmosphere. The information collected is shown in table 6

**Table 6: Atmosphere of the Library**

Atmosphere of the library	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Good	75	56
Not so good	22	17
Does not matter	26	19
N A	10	08
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

A high response of 75 out of 133 respondents agreed that the atmosphere in the library is good to read and relax. Above 22 (17%) stated that the library is not a good place to relax. About 26(19%) respondents have stated that it is not at all a matter. For another 10(08%) Prisoners, it is not applicable. Since a majority of the respondents have accepted it is inferred that the prisoners are able to relax in the library.

### Assist for further Education

**Table 7: Resource Support**

Type of Resource Support	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Distance Education	11	08
Other type of Courses	36	27
Online Courses	00	0
Not any course	86	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

Table 7 shows that library helps the prisoners to further their education. Some of them said that library helps them to think and improve knowledge. Library helps them to know what are happening in the outside world. About 11(08%) have stated that the library supports them for distance education. About 36(27%) stated that the library helps them to learn other type of vocational courses. Nobody is permitted to do any course on line. About 85(65%) Prisoner respondents stated that they are not undergoing any course of study in the prison.

### Sharing of Information

**Table 8: Sharing of Information**

Sharing of Information	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Yes	126	95
No	07	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data

The respondent prisoners who visited the prison library and read books and journals were asked whether they share with others the knowledge collected. About 126 covering 95% said that they share the acquired information with others. Only 7(5%) prisoners reported that they do not get chance to share information with others

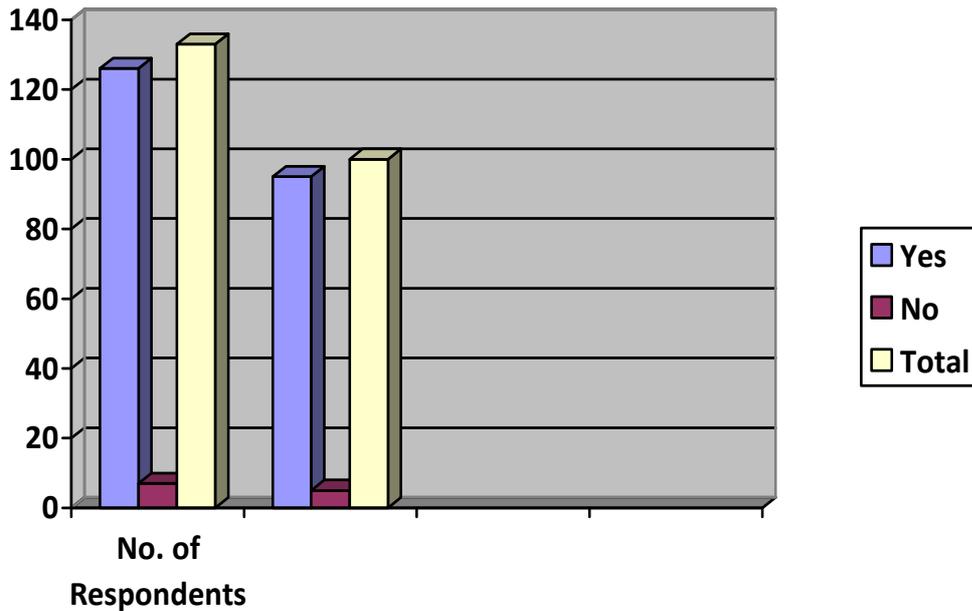
### Sharing with Whom?

When the visitors of library were asked with whom they share the information that they have acquired from library, they replied that they share the information with the neighbor prison mates and visitors to prison. It is shown in the following table 9.

**Table 9: Sharing of Information with Whom?**

Sharing of Information with Whom	No. of Respondents	Percentage to Total
Neighbor in mates	106	80
Visitors to prison	07	05
Both	13	10
NA	07	05
<b>Total</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary Data



**Figure 1: Sharing of Information**

**Findings of the study**

- Education given in the prison helps the prisoner in his ultimate resettlement in society.
- Dr. Bhattacharya has observed that even elementary education can make a world of difference especially in the life of long term prisoners.
- The study revealed that 82% of the respondent prisoners visit library to improve their knowledge. Only a meagre 13% visit library with regard to their studies.
- The study revealed that a majority of 79% of the prisoners visited library only once in a week. Only 17 prisoners covering 13% of the respondents visited library daily with regard to their studies.
- The resources available in the prison library constitute general books, story books, newspaper and magazines.
- About 77% of the respondents are aware of the timings of the central prison library at Palayamkottai.
- 7. The majority of the prison respondents have accepted that sufficient time has been allocated for visiting of the library.

- A high response of 75 out of 133 respondents have been agreed that the atmosphere in the library is good to read and relax.
- The central prison library is very helpful to the prisoners who are pursuing their studies through distance education.
- The prisoners share the information that they have acquired from library with their neighbor inmates and their relatives who visit them in the prison.

### Suggestions

The following are some of the suggestions made by the respondent prisoners.

- The widely used books are not returned in time. Hence, it is to be returned in time and made available to others who need it.
- Subject wise books should be arranged.
- The copies of books, catalogues should be made available in each block. It would be easy for the inmates to decide the required books. The list of the same will be handed over to library in charge during issue day. It may help to avoid rush and time will be saved.
- Books on general knowledge, story books, astrology, spiritual, computer science, simple English, current affairs and dictionary are the general requirements. Hence, such books are to be stocked in the library for the use of prisoners.
- Increase the number of copies of the most frequently used books.
- All major newspapers both English and Tamil Language should be made available in the Library.
- Old newspapers should be maintained in the library. This may help the inmates to refer any court order or government news relevant to their case.
- The collections of books should support the inmates who are doing higher education.

### CONCLUSIONS

The present study indicates that the inmates of Prison are utilizing the library well. The books are the only companions for their prison life. Most of the inmates are in the prison for more than 3 years and they read the books in three days time. One reason is that they love that books and another reason is that they could not find better book according to their liking. As the librarians are service providers, they should find out better way of providing service. Collection of books concern to the inmates requirements should be updated with the latest edition. "The library is the place where the inmates find privacy, quiet and feel independent. The library should fill the mind with the noble aspiration, good purposes and the best ways of realizing them.

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