

# Performance Evaluation of Public Library Services: Measuring User Satisfaction and Identifying Critical Deficiencies in Tenkasi, Tamil Nadu

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## Abstract

*Libraries are repositories of knowledge, and public libraries play a vital role in the intellectual and cultural development of a nation. This study evaluates the service quality of public libraries in Tenkasi Taluk, focusing on user satisfaction, staff behavior, available facilities, and infrastructure adequacy. The research is **descriptive and analytical**, utilizing **primary data** collected through structured questionnaires from **50 respondents** (users and staff) via the **Convenience Sampling Method**. Statistical tools like Percentage Analysis, Weighted Average, and **Garrett Ranking** were used for analysis. **Key Findings:** The majority of users are young students (18-25 years, 36%). Service quality dimensions **Responsiveness (52% weighted average)** and **Empathy (51.2% for accessibility)** showed moderate satisfaction. The **most significant problem** identified by Garrett Ranking is the **Lack of Internet/Computer facilities (64.4% mean score)**, followed by poor seating arrangements. **Conclusion:** While public libraries in Tenkasi Taluk are useful for the community, **modernization is necessary** to address the lack of digital resources and improve infrastructure to enhance overall service quality.*

*Keywords: Public Library Services, Service Quality, SERVQUAL Model, User Satisfaction*

## Introduction

Libraries stand as the "**Temples of Learning**" and indispensable repositories of knowledge, playing a vital and multidimensional role in the intellectual, educational, and cultural development of any civilized society. A well-equipped and functional library system provides crucial opportunities for **self-education, continuous learning, and lifelong development** for all its community members.

Among the various types of libraries, **public libraries** occupy a unique and pivotal position. They are universally established, maintained, and managed by government or local authorities with the fundamental mandate of providing **free access** to a wide spectrum of resources—including printed books, journals, newspapers, reference materials, and digital content—to all sections of society, regardless of age, education, occupation, or socio-economic status. In the context of the 21st century, the public library's function has evolved significantly. They are no longer limited to merely lending books; they have transitioned into dynamic **Information Hubs**, offering essential digital literacy programs, access to online databases, e-resources, and modern computing facilities to bridge the existing **digital divide**.

## 1.2 Background and Legal Framework

In the Indian administrative context, public libraries operate under state-specific library legislation. **Tamil Nadu** is recognized as a pioneer in the library movement, operating an extensive network of district and branch libraries under the provisions of the **Tamil Nadu Public Libraries Act, 1948**. These institutions are crucial democratic instruments that support literacy, promote informed citizenship, and facilitate social mobility.

**Tenkasi Taluk**, situated in the southern part of Tamil Nadu, encompasses a diverse population, including a significant student community heavily reliant on these public libraries for academic reference, exam preparation, and general informational needs. Given the importance of these institutions, assessing the quality of service delivery in this specific regional context is paramount. The level of service quality directly dictates **user satisfaction** and the effectiveness of the library in fulfilling its mandate as a primary educational and information gateway.

## 1.3 Need for the Study

Service quality is now universally recognized as a critical determinant of success for any service-oriented organization. In the context of public libraries, user satisfaction is the ultimate measure of effective resource management and institutional success. User dissatisfaction, irrespective of a library's rich collection, often results in decreased patronage and a failure to meet community needs.

This study is vital for the following reasons:

1. **Empirical Assessment:** It aims to empirically measure the existing level of service quality against established service quality models, such as the widely accepted **SERVQUAL model** (which measures Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance, and Empathy).

2. **Addressing Regional Gaps:** There is a pronounced scarcity of recent, localized empirical research specifically focusing on the service quality and user perception of public libraries within the **Tenkasi Taluk** region. This research intends to fill this specific gap by providing localized, evidence-based data for library authorities. Such data is necessary to strategically allocate resources and upgrade facilities in response to tangible user demands, particularly concerning **digital integration and modernization**.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The primary objectives formulated to guide this research are:

1. To evaluate the current level of service quality provided by public libraries in Tenkasi Taluk across the defined SERVQUAL dimensions.
2. To analyze the socio-economic profile and study the usage patterns of the library users in the selected region.
3. To identify and scientifically prioritize the major infrastructural and service-related problems faced by library users using appropriate statistical ranking methods.
4. To furnish practical and specific recommendations for library authorities to strategically enhance service delivery and improve overall user satisfaction.

#### **1.5 Scope of the Study**

The scope of the research is strictly limited to the public libraries functioning under the Directorate of Public Libraries within the geographical boundary of **Tenkasi Taluk**. The study focuses specifically on assessing user perceptions related to key service quality factors, including **digital facilities (computers/internet), staff professional behavior, physical infrastructure (seating, lighting, cleanliness), and the availability and currency of resources (books/journals)**. The findings are intended to function as a localized diagnostic tool to assist policy-makers in optimizing resource allocation and strengthening the public library system in this semi-urban and rural area of Tamil Nadu

#### **1.6 Research Methodology**

The research design is **descriptive and analytical**.

- **Respondents & Sample Size:** The study was conducted among **50 respondents**, including users and library staff members from public libraries in Tenkasi Taluk.

- **Sampling Method:** The **Convenience Sampling Method** was adopted for selecting the respondents.
- **Data Collection:** **Primary data** were collected through a structured questionnaire, while **secondary data** came from books, journals, reports, and websites.
- **Tools for Analysis:** Data was analyzed using **Percentage Analysis, Weighted Average Method**, and the **Garrett Ranking Method**

### 1.7 Socio-Economic Profile (Percentage Analysis)

The percentage analysis helps understand the user base:

- **Age:** The **18–25 years** category forms the largest group (**36%**).
- **Gender:** **Male respondents** constitute the majority (**56%**).
- **Education:** Most respondents are well-educated, with **Undergraduates (40%)** being the largest group, followed by **Postgraduates (36%)**.
- **Occupation:** The highest percentage of users are **students (36%)**.
- **Frequency of Visit:** Library usage is divided between **Weekly visitors (32%)** and **Occasional visitors (32%)**

### 1.8. Service Quality Dimensions (Weighted Average Method)

The service quality was evaluated across the five SERVQUAL dimensions using the Weighted Average Method. (VP=1, P=2, A=3, G=4, V.G=5)

**Table No. 1 Service Quality Dimensions**

Dimension	Highest Rated Factor	Weighted Average (Score)	Rank	Key Interpretation
Tangibles	Digital Services	52	II	Moderate satisfaction with physical and technological facilities.
Reliability	Availability of required books/materials	51.2	I	Users are fairly satisfied with consistent book availability.
Responsiveness	Prompt response to user complaints	52	II	Staff provides prompt responses to user needs and complaints.
Assurance	Security of personal belongings & safety	46.4	V	Lower score implies scope for improving safety and security measures.
Empathy	Accessibility for differently-abled/elderly	51.2	I	Reflects reasonable concern and support for differently-abled and elderly users.

### 1.9 Problems Faced (Garrett Ranking Method)

The Garrett Ranking Method was used to determine the true priority of the problems faced by users. The following table shows the final ranking based on the calculated average Garrett score:

**Table No.2 Garrett Score**

Rank	Factor (Problem)	Average Garrett Score
I	Lack of internet/computer facilities (F4)	64.4
II	Poor seating arrangements (F2)	54.96
III	Inadequate lighting/ventilation (F5)	53.88
IV	Inconvenient opening hours (F6)	52.08
V	Unhelpful staff (F3)	50.62

The most significant problem identified by the users is the **Lack of Internet/Computer facilities**, which received the highest mean score of **64.4%**. This indicates a strong user demand for better technological infrastructure in the public libraries.

### 1.10 Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusion

#### 1.10.1 Findings

- The majority of library users are **young, well-educated students** (UG/PG, 18-35 years) who utilize the library for academic and reference needs.
- Overall service quality is found to be **satisfactory**. The staff's **Responsiveness** (prompt response to complaints) is strong, scoring **52%**.
- The **most critical failure point** is the **Lack of Internet and Computer facilities**, ranked first by the Garrett method with a score of **64.4%**.
- Infrastructural issues like **poor seating** and **inadequate lighting/ventilation** are the second and third biggest problems.
- The **Assurance** factor (safety and security) needs more attention, as it received a comparatively lower score of **46.4%**.

#### 1.10.2 Recommendations

Based on the analysis, the following measures are suggested:

- **Digital Infrastructure: Improve internet and computer facilities** urgently to meet the strongest user need.

- **Physical Infrastructure: Improve seating arrangements, lighting, and cleanliness.**
- **Staff Development: Train library staff** to respond quickly to users, especially in finding resources.
- **Safety and Security:** Provide safe lockers and install CCTV for user security.
- **Accessibility:** Continue to make the library **easy to access for differently-abled and elderly people.**
- **Collection:** Add **more new books and study materials** regularly.

### 1.11 Conclusion

Public libraries in Tenkasi Taluk are a crucial resource for the community, especially for students. However, modernization is essential. By urgently focusing on **improving internet facilities**, updating resources, enhancing safety, and upgrading infrastructure, libraries can provide better quality service and successfully attract and retain more users in the future

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### **Author Biography**



**Dr.S.Kanaga Pushpa** is working as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Commerce (Corporate Secretaryship) at JP College of Arts and Science (Autonomous). She holds M.Com., M.Phil., and Ph.D. degrees in Commerce. Her academic focus includes teaching core commerce and corporate-related subjects. She is actively involved in research-oriented academic work and shows keen interest in analytical and conceptual studies related to commerce and corporate practices. Her research approach emphasizes systematic study, interpretation of data, and application of theoretical concepts to practical contexts. She is committed to academic growth, research development, and quality teaching, and continuously strives to contribute to student learning and institutional academic standards.