

## **Understanding the Role of Public Libraries in Supporting Parents of Child Users: a Case Study of the Kesbewa Municipal Council Public Library**

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In line with the current trends in education, parents actively support their children's education by providing resources. In this context, public libraries are highly accessible for all and it plays a vital role. It is compulsory for them to identify their role to serve accordingly. This study aims to understand the information requirements of parents whose children are schooling. A public library was chosen as a case study focusing on understanding parents' access to educational resources, their expectations, and members' participation in library events. The research population consisted of 5710 library members and 90 children under the age of 12 years. The sample size (375) was determined by using the Krejcie and Morgan table. The simple random sampling method was employed for data collection. Data were gathered through a structured Google form that included both open-ended and closed-ended questions. There were a total of 170 responses (45.3%) and MS Excel was utilized for data analysis. The findings indicated that parents mainly sought costly and rare educational resources through the public libraries (72.4%). The results revealed that a considerable number of parents required educational resources and services such as reference services (35%), printed periodicals (25%), and children and other services (20%). Respondents (85%) expressed a preference for online awareness sessions, while (59%) indicated their willingness to participate in workshops, lectures, and on-site training. The study further indicated a significant demand (80%) for outreach programs like storytelling competitions, reading camps, and personal development courses. Parents also expected to have reading materials for public education and common exams. In light of the findings, there is a lack of awareness among individuals regarding all services offered by public libraries. Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that libraries are vital to children's education. It is recommended that public libraries improve their existing services / new services to better cater to parents' information needs. Parents suggested new programs, Dharma educational session (45%), mindset development workshop (19%), Mobile library services for children (30%), Digital awareness sessions (13%), storytelling contests, and motivational sessions (15%). Potential programs may include enhanced support. This study focuses only on parent's information needs, further research can cover the children's information needs to identify the future services and development of the library.

**Keywords:** *Educational resources; Library outreach; Parental information needs; Public libraries*