

Investigating the Status of Ancillary Services Provided in Public Libraries Based on IFLA and UNESCO Standards from the Perspective of Librarians: A Case Study of Public Libraries in West Azerbaijan Province, Iran)

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Abstract

Purpose: The objective of this research is to investigate the ancillary services provided in the public libraries of West Azerbaijan Province, Iran, based on IFLA standards and from the perspective of librarians.

Methodology: The research employed a survey and analytical method. The statistical population consisted of 300 librarians working in the public libraries of West Azerbaijan Province, Iran. The data collection tool was a questionnaire developed based on IFLA standards and UNESCO guidelines regarding ancillary services of public libraries.

Findings: The findings indicated that the mean scores for extra-library services, storytelling programs, and study group formation were 2.93, 3.61, and 3.36, respectively. The results of the one-sample t-test showed that, from the librarians' perspective, all three components significantly contribute improving the ancillary services of public libraries. Furthermore, the results of Hotelling's T² test revealed a significant difference among the components influencing the enhancement of these services.

Conclusion: The results of this study demonstrate that, from the librarians' point of view, all components of ancillary service in public libraries are effective - with slight variations- in improving service delivery. However, it appears that offering ancillary services without considering the role and engagement of librarians, who are directly responsible for delivering these services, may alter the outcomes.

Value: The findings of this study provide practical solutions and policy recommendations for enhancing ancillary services in Iranian public libraries.

Keywords: *Public libraries, Ancillary services, IFLA, librarians, Iran.*

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Extended Abstract

Introduction: As a social and cultural institution, the public library, through the collection, organization, and preservation of human knowledge, enhances intellectual capacity and transforms a passive mind into an active and inquisitive one. These libraries are regarded as one of the main centers of development in advanced societies, playing a significant and distinctive role in overall growth and progress by providing access to the information resources required by their communities. In general, public libraries serve as valuable cultural centers by offering a wide range of resources -including educational, informational, and recreational materials- in a constructive and healthy manner (Azimi, Khedri & Khademizadeh, 2023).

Purpose: As a social and cultural institution, the public library -by collecting, organizing, and preserving human knowledge- enhances intellectual capacity and transforms a passive mind into a dynamic and inquisitive one. These libraries are considered among the main centers of development in advanced societies, playing a vital and distinctive role in overall growth and progress by providing access to the information resources required by their communities. In general, public libraries serve as valuable cultural centers by offering a wide range of educational, informational, and recreational resources in a constructive and enriching manner. The main objective of this research is to investigate the ancillary services provided in the public libraries of West Azerbaijan Province in Iran, based on IFLA standards, from the perspective of librarians.

Methodology: The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive-analytical in terms of methodology. The statistical population included all librarians and managers of public libraries in Iran. Considering the 31 provinces of the country, West Azerbaijan Province was selected as the sample through cluster sampling. The total population in this province was estimated to be 300 individuals. Based on the Morgan table and using a random sampling method, 171 participants were selected as a sample. The data collection instrument was a questionnaire designed according to IFLA and UNESCO guidelines (Koontz, 2010). The questionnaire consisted of two main sections – demographic information and specialized questions- with a total of 48 items (6 demographic questions, 16 items related to extra-library services, 13 items on storytelling activities, and 13 items on study group formation). Responses were measured on a five-option Likert scale: "very little," "little," "somewhat," "a lot," and "very much," assigned scores from 1 to 5, respectively. To ensure content validity, the questionnaire -after slight revisions based on the study population- was reviewed by 20 experts in public library affairs, and their feedback was incorporated. To assess reliability, a pilot test was conducted with 30 participants, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.924 for the entire questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha values for the subcomponents were as follows: 0.835 for extra-library services, 0.921 for storytelling programs, and 0.923 for study group formation. Since all values exceeded 0.7, the questionnaire demonstrated strong internal consistency and reliability. Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 24. Descriptive statistics included frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Inferential statistical tests included the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (to examine data normality), Student's t-test, and Hotelling's T² test.

Findings: Based on the results, the averages score for extra-library services was 2.93, for storytelling programs 3.61, and for study group formation 3.36. The results of the one-sample t-test indicated that, from the librarians' perspective, all three components



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mentioned above contribute effectively to improving the ancillary services of public libraries. Furthermore, the results of the Hotelling T² test revealed a significant difference among the effective components in enhancing the ancillary services of public libraries. Specifically, from the librarians' point of view, storytelling programs and study group formation have a greater impact on improving ancillary services than the extra-library services component. In addition, the findings showed that demographic variables of librarians providing ancillary services in public libraries do not have a significant influence on the quality or quantity of the mentioned services.

Table 1. Results of one-sample t-test on the effect of components of public library ancillary services

Variables	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					lower	upper
Extra-library services	1.07	168	0.039	0.3955	0.23-	0.12-
Forming storytelling groups	1.77	168	0.006	0.5326	0.54	0.70
Formation of study groups	1.90	168	0.017	0.5598	0.28	0.45

Table 2. Results of Hotelling's T-squared regarding the components of ancillary services of public libraries

Hotelling's T-Square	F	df1	df2	Sig
21.548	9.526	2	167	0.000

Conclusion: in conclusion, the main goal of providing ancillary services in public libraries is to encourage and motivate people to read, transforming the library from a mere repository of books into a dynamic and active center that fulfills the cultural, social, and scientific needs of society. Paying attention to ancillary services in libraries is meaningless without considering the individuals who deliver these services. Professional ethics, librarians' interest and sense of responsibility towards their work and institution, staff shortages, issues related to salary and rewards all have a significant impact on the quality of ancillary services provided in libraries. Unfortunately, the Public Library Institution in Iran, as the main authority responsible for public libraries, has not given sufficient attention to the librarians who perform these ancillary services. In general, librarians have limited discretion or budget to implement additional programs, even though they interact directly with the community and are best positioned to identify which programs should be implemented and what resources are required. One of the most critical problems in some public libraries under this institution is the lack of dedicated staff capable of independently pursuing and implementing additional services across different departments. In many cases, librarians perform these activities voluntarily, in addition to their traditional duties, depending on their personal interest and available time. However, since no specific salary or incentive is provided for such work, some librarians are unwilling to engage in it, and even those who do may not devote sufficient time or attention to these services. Considering these issues, the importance of implementing ancillary services and cultural programs in public libraries is now widely recognized. The aim of this study was to examine the successful and popular ancillary services provided by librarians in public libraries in West Azerbaijan Province, based on IFLA standards and strategies. These results and analyses of this study can serve as useful guidance for policymakers and decision-makers in improving the quality and effectiveness of ancillary services in Iranian public libraries.



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Value: The results of this study serve as practical solutions and useful guidelines for enhancing and organizing ancillary services in Iranian public libraries.

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