

## Identifying and Classifying the Roles of the Public Library in the Development of Small Businesses: A Meta-Synthesis Approach

Maryam Ahmadinasab<sup>1</sup>, Soraya Ziaei<sup>2</sup>, Afshin Mousavi Chelak<sup>3</sup>

Received: February, 1, 2025; Revised: June, 10, 2025

Accepted: June, 12, 2025; Published: October, 23, 2025

### Abstract

**Purpose:** The objective of this study is to identify and classify the roles of public libraries in supporting the growth and development of small businesses.

**Methodology:** The meta-synthesis method was employed to synthesize and interpret existing studies in this field. This research adopts a qualitative approach for data collection and is fundamental in purpose. To achieve the study's objectives, the seven-stage model of Sandelowski and Barroso was applied to obtain a comprehensive synthesis of the research topic based on qualitative studies.

**Findings:** The findings indicate that public libraries play seven effective roles in the development of small businesses: educational services, literacy enhancement, human skills development, information provision, consulting and reference services, technology support, and the provision of space and facilities.

**Conclusion:** Based on the results, public libraries can facilitate major transformations and shift toward an economic impact model by revising their service processes. This enables them to secure an appropriate role in development programs and contribute to the self-sufficiency of small businesses. Libraries today have the potential to serve as gateways to business and commerce, leveraging their existing facilities and resources.

**Value:** To date, no comprehensive meta-synthesis has been conducted to identify the full range of public library services for small business owners over an extended period. Most prior studies have examined only a limited number of these services, highlighting the novelty and importance of this research.

**Keywords:** *Public Libraries, Economic Growth, Economic Development, Small Businesses, Library Services.*

### How to Cite:

Ahmadinasab, M., Ziaei, S., & Mousavi Chelak, A. (2025). Identifying and Classifying the Roles of the Public Library in the Development of Small Businesses: A Meta-Synthesis Approach. *Journal of Knowledge-Research Studies*, 4 (3): 70-91.

Doi: [10.22034/jkrs.2025.65736.1134](https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2025.65736.1134)

URL: [https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article\\_19961.html?lang=en](https://jkrs.tabrizu.ac.ir/article_19961.html?lang=en)

**Article Type:** Review Article

©The Author(s)

**Publisher:** University of Tabriz

**E-ISSN:** [2821-045X](#)

The paper is an open access and licensed under the Creative Commons CC BY NC license.



1 . Corresponding Author, PhD Student of Knowledge and Information Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran. (Corresponding Author)

2 . Associate Prof., Department of Knowledge and Information Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran (Corresponding Author) soraya.ziaei@pnu.ac.ir

3 . Associate Prof., Department of Knowledge and Information Science, Payame Noor University, Tehran, Iran

## Extended Abstract

**Introduction:** Development encompasses improvements in lifestyle, efficient utilization of resources, and the creation of favorable conditions for the well-being of all people. It can be achieved through various means, including education, research, services, and public goods. Public libraries, through their mission and objectives—such as education and research, information provision and dissemination, creating entertainment and hobbies, organizing book fairs and conferences, promoting reading, and fostering cultural engagement—can be among the most influential institutions in driving development. Today, given their public functions and services, libraries serve as tools to positively impact economic indicators.

Public libraries empower different segments of society by providing free education and access to information. Key factors in economic development include human development, poverty reduction, income equality, and the welfare and quality of life of community members. Skilled human resources, with expertise and capabilities, can establish and manage businesses, contributing to societal development and progress. Public libraries play a significant role in empowering individuals through educational programs, supporting business development by linking skills to market needs, saving time, and reducing training costs.



Journal of

Knowledge-Research  
Studies (JKRS)

Vol 4

Issue 3

Serial Number 13

**Purpose:** This study aims to identify and classify the roles of public libraries in the growth and development of small businesses.

**Methodology:** Given the multi-dimensional and extensive nature of public libraries' roles in supporting small businesses, the meta-synthesis method was employed to integrate findings from existing studies based on interpretation and translation. This research adopts a qualitative approach for data collection and is fundamental in purpose. To achieve the study's objectives, the seven-stage model of Sandelowski and Barroso was utilized to obtain a comprehensive synthesis of qualitative research on the topic. The steps included clear problem definition, systematic literature review, text search and refinement, extraction of information from texts, analysis and synthesis of findings, quality control, and presentation of results.

**Findings:** The inclusion criteria for selecting studies for meta-synthesis focused on their relevance to the research question regarding the role of public libraries in the development of small businesses. The selection process was carried out in three stages:

1. **Title Screening:** Out of 211 retrieved articles, 105 were excluded based on title relevance.
2. **Abstract Screening:** 106 abstracts were reviewed, and 21 articles were excluded for not meeting the inclusion criteria.
3. **Full-Text Review:** 85 full-text articles were examined, and 61 were excluded as their content did not match the research question. Ultimately, 24 studies were selected for meta-analysis.

Through content analysis, the 24 selected articles were coded into 7 major roles and 18 components reflecting the contributions of public libraries to small business development. The findings indicate that public libraries exert influence through seven key roles:

1. **Educational Services** – Offering training and skill-building opportunities.

2. Literacy Enhancement – Promoting reading, information literacy, and knowledge acquisition.
3. Human Skills Development – Supporting the development of managerial, technical, and entrepreneurial skills.
4. Information Provision – Offering access to relevant data, industry knowledge, and research materials.
5. Consulting and Reference Services – Providing guidance, mentoring, and expert advice to small business owners.
6. Technology Support – Facilitating access to digital tools, online platforms, and technological resources.
7. Space and Facilities – Providing physical infrastructure such as workspaces, meeting rooms, and event venues.

These roles collectively demonstrate that public libraries can play a significant role in fostering the growth and sustainability of small businesses. Figure 1 presents the algorithm illustrating the review and selection process for the eligible articles included in this meta-synthesis study.

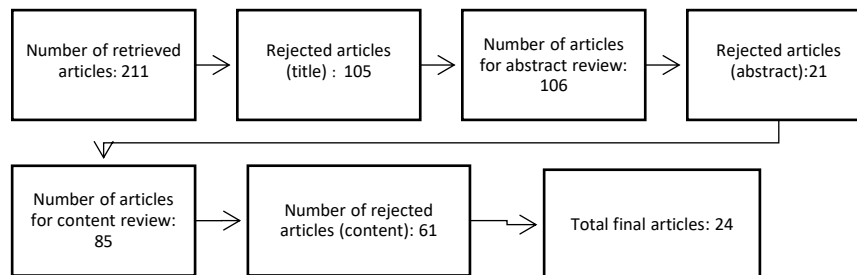


Journal of  
Knowledge-Research  
Studies (JKRS)

Vol 4

Issue 3

Serial Number 13



**Figure 1. Search results and selection of appropriate articles**

**Conclusion:** The results of the study indicate that libraries play a significant role in the development of small businesses. As central institutions within society, libraries provide information and educational resources accessible to all, which can support small business owners seeking income generation and economic advancement. The presence of entrepreneurs in libraries also contributes to neighborhood and local development, as a thriving local economy benefits the entire community. In this regard, libraries can actively participate in strengthening the local economy and transforming communities and living environments into more dynamic and desirable places.

This outcome also aligns with the interests of libraries themselves. The more libraries demonstrate that their resources contribute to local economic growth and that individuals can initiate businesses through library support, the greater public recognition and support libraries will receive. This, in turn, enhances the success of libraries in implementing their programs and sustaining their services. To achieve this goal, librarians need to adopt new perspectives on economic development and reconsider the nature of information and library services, while also acquiring the necessary training in business-related fields. Simultaneously, public libraries should reassess their traditional roles, strengthen strategic management and planning, and expand cooperation with commercial and economic institutions. By equipping themselves with appropriate physical and virtual infrastructure, libraries can move toward becoming dynamic contributors to a growing society. Ultimately, public

libraries play a vital role in developing the local economy by strengthening human capital.

**Value:** To date, no comprehensive study using a meta-synthesis approach has examined public library services for small business owners over an extended time frame. Most existing studies have identified only a limited number of such services through traditional library research methods and literature reviews. Therefore, the present study, by applying a meta-combination of prior research, identifies and categorizes the roles of public libraries in supporting small businesses. This contributes to raising librarians' awareness of the diverse roles and services that public libraries can offer in fostering small business development.

**Keywords:** *public libraries, economic growth, economic development, library services, small businesses.*



Journal of

Knowledge-Research  
Studies (JKRS)

### References

- Amiri, M., Ziaei, S., Sharif-Moghadam, H., & Fayyazi, B. M. (2018). Designing an effective organizational culture model in Iran's public libraries. *Information and Public Library Research*, 24(4), 501–521. <https://publij.ir/article-1-1812-fa.html> [In Persian]
- Ataei Zahir, S., Tajefri, M., Sanatjoo, A., & Sharif, A. (2021). Feasibility of providing effective services for economic development in public libraries of Mashhad. *Library and Information Science*, 24(2), 59–84. [https://lis.aqr-libjournal.ir/article\\_68911.html?lang=fa](https://lis.aqr-libjournal.ir/article_68911.html?lang=fa) [In Persian]
- Bahraminia, S., Ziaei, S., & Moradi, M. (2023). The role of public library services and functions in community economic development. *Knowledge Studies Journal*, 2(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.22034/jkrs.2023.57250.1031> [In Persian]
- Beigi, M., Dadkhah, N., & Amel, F. (2019, January 19). *Developing startups in public libraries*. Iranian Institute for Information Science and Technology, Tehran. <https://civilica.com/doc/999752> [In Persian]
- Bertot, J. C., Jaeger, P., Lee, J., Dubbels, K., McDermott, A., & Real, B. (2014). *2013 digital inclusion survey: Survey findings and results*. Information Policy & Access Center, College of Information Studies, University of Maryland. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED601682.pdf>
- Bishop, B. W., Mehra, B., & Partee, R. P. (2016). The role of rural public libraries in small business development. *Public Library Quarterly*, 35(1), 37–48. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2016.1163971>
- Dent, V. F. (2007). Local economic development in Uganda and the connection to rural community libraries and literacy. *New Library World*, 108(5/6), 203–217. <https://doi.org/10.1108/03074800710748777>
- Eghbali, A., & Norouzi, A. (2022). Analyzing the role of public library services in local economic development: A case study of Kermanshah Province. *Information and Public Library Research*, 28(1), 76–93. <https://doi.org/10.52547/publij.28.1.76> [In Persian]
- Faghani, E., & Seifi, L. (2020, December 16–17). The role of public libraries in local economic development. In *Public Libraries in the Karun and Karkheh Riverbanks: Proceedings of the National Conference on Social Functions of Public Libraries*. <https://www.gisoom.com/book/11686286/> [In Persian]
- Faulkner, A. E. (2018). Entrepreneurship resources in US public libraries: Website analysis. *Reference Services Review*, 46(1), 69–90. <http://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-07-2017-0025>
- Franks, J. E., & Johns, C. (2015). Entrepreneur assistance & economic development in Florida libraries. *Reference Services Review*, 43(3), 400–418. <http://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-03-2015-0014>

Vol 4

Issue 3

Serial Number 13

- Garjizadeh, A. (2015, May 21). *Mutual relationship between culture and economic development*. Raymand Research Institute, Mashhad. [In Persian]
- Gholamhosseinneshad, S. (2019). Establishing a business in the library. *Ketabdar 2.0*, 5(3). <http://lib2mag.ir/10390> [In Persian]
- Gichohi, P. M., Onyancha, O. B., & Dulle, F. W. (2018). A model for public libraries' support in the development of small-scale business enterprises in Meru County, Kenya. *Public Library Quarterly*, 37(1), 81–102. <http://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2017.1391033>
- Glass, R., Clifford, N., Harris, B., & Rose, C. (2000). The role of public libraries in local economic development. Institute for Public Policy and Business Research, University of Kansas. <http://www.ipsr.ku.edu/resrep/pdf/m260.pdf>
- Haseli, D., Safavi, Z., & Parsa, F. (2023). Public library activities in community economic development: A systematic review. *Information and Public Library Research*, 29(2), 162–181. <http://doi.org/10.61186/publi.29.2.162> [In Persian]
- Holcomb, S., Dunford, A., & Idowu, F. (2019). *Public libraries: A community's connection for career services* (pp. 1–33). John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED601682.pdf>
- Hughes, C., & Boss, S. (2021). How rural public libraries support local economic development in the mountain plains. *Public Library Quarterly*, 40(3), 258–281. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01616846.2020.1776554>
- Karajina, D. S. (2011, August). *Reading and literacy: A path to an inclusive social library*. In M. Khandan (Ed.), *Selected papers of the 77th IFLA Conference* (pp. 23–48). <https://rdm.iranpl.ir/files/site1/files/2011/2.pdf> [In Persian]
- Karimzadeh, M. (2018). Eleven services that libraries can offer to support local businesses and entrepreneurs. *Ketabdar Journal*, 2. <https://princh.com> [In Persian]
- Macdonald, A. T. (2015). Dedicated business centers in public libraries. *Reference Services Review*, 43(3), 344–368. <http://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-02-2015-0007>
- McClure, C. R., Fraser, B. T., Nelson, T. W., & Robbins, J. B. (2000). *Economic benefits and impacts from public libraries in the State of Florida. Final Report*. <https://scispace.com/pdf/economic-benefits-and-impacts-from-public-libraries-in-the-1b5974mlst.pdf>
- McClure, C., & Jager, P. (n.d.). *Measuring and improving internet services in public libraries* (M. Azargoon & M. Jafari, Trans., 2013). National Public Libraries Institute, Tehran. <https://lib.ut.ac.ir/site/catalogue/1082734> [In Persian]
- Mirzamohammadi, M. H., Fathi, M., & Nadirkhanlou, S. (2012). Examining the role of skill development in human resource empowerment. *Skill Development*, 1(2), 103–122. <https://sid.ir/paper/255987/fa> [In Persian]
- Mohammadi Hamidi, S., & Sobhani, N. (2018). Sustainable development in the Middle East with emphasis on Iran. *Geographical Planning of Space*, 8(28), 99–114. [https://gps.gu.ac.ir/article\\_70695.html](https://gps.gu.ac.ir/article_70695.html) [In Persian]
- Najafi, F., Monjazebi, F., & Nikpeyma, N. (2013). Meta-synthesis of qualitative research in nursing: A review study. *Qualitative Research in Health Sciences*, 2(4), 320–335. <https://sid.ir/paper/215452/fa> [In Persian]
- Nicki, M. (2022). *Libraries that build business: Advancing small business and entrepreneurship in public libraries*. ALA Editions. <https://alastore.ala.org/lbb>
- Oyeronke, A. (2012). Information as an economic resource: The role of public libraries in Nigeria. *Chinese Librarianship: An International Electronic Journal*, 34, 66–75. <https://www.white-clouds.com/iclc/cliej/cl34oyeronke.pdf>
- Randal, K. (2004). *The innovation imperative*. Economic Development Administration, US Department of Commerce Conference. <http://www.compete.org/nri/>
- Rusk, M. D., & Cummings, E. (2011). Libraries and the local economy: Partnerships for economic growth (a presentation to the Oklahoma Library Association, March 30, 2011). *Community & Junior College Libraries*, 17(2), 53–61. <http://doi.org/10.1080/02763915.2011.591708>



**Journal of  
Knowledge-Research  
Studies (JKRS)**

**Vol 4**

**Issue 3**

**Serial Number 13**



**Journal of  
Knowledge-Research  
Studies (JKRS)**

**Vol 4**

**Issue 3**

**Serial Number 13**

- Sandelowski, M., Sandelowski, M. J., & Barroso, J. (2006). *Handbook for synthesizing qualitative research*. Springer Publishing Company. <http://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2009.2820>
- Santos, V. F. D. (2009). Public libraries and their contribution towards economic development: A discussion. *Library and Information Science Research E-Journal*, 19(2). <https://www.libres-ejournal.info/543/>
- Sawyer, R. (1996). The economic and job creation benefits of Ontario public libraries. *The Bottom Line*, 9(4), 14–26. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/08880459610131781/full/html>
- Sheikh Sho'aei, F., Naqshineh, N., Alidoosti, S., & Nakhoda, M. (2016). A foundation for designing a digital library maturity model: Application of the FARATKIB method. *Iranian Journal of Information Science and Technology*, 32(3), 843–874. <http://doi.org/10.35050/JIPM010.2017.040> [In Persian]
- Shekari, M., Khademi, R., & Safaei, D. (2023). Facilitating and supporting small business development: Are public libraries in Khuzestan Province ready? *Library and Information Science*, 26(4), 171–198. <https://doi.org/10.30481/lis.2024.429923.2128> [In Persian]
- Shpester, D. (1997). Public libraries and economic development (Z. Mirhosseini, Trans.). *Information and Public Library Research*, 24(7), 69–77. [https://publii.ir/article\\_727710.html](https://publii.ir/article_727710.html) [In Persian]
- Soroya, M. S., Munir, M. A., & Soroya, S. H. (2014). Role of public libraries in economic development of Pakistan: A future vision. *Pakistan Library & Information Science Journal*, 45(1), 3–8. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261703571\\_Role\\_of\\_Public\\_Libraries\\_in\\_Economic\\_Development\\_of\\_Pakistan\\_A\\_Future\\_Vision](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261703571_Role_of_Public_Libraries_in_Economic_Development_of_Pakistan_A_Future_Vision)
- Ziaei, S., Bahraminia, S., & Moradi, M. (2023). Identifying the role of public libraries in community economic development from experts' perspectives. *Information and Public Library Research*, 29(1), 12–32. <http://doi.org/10.61186/publii.29.1.12> [In Persian]