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Empowerment of Women through Education: The Role of Public Libraries in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Women's roles and contribution to economic, social and cultural activities of a country are significant. Therefore empowering women in social, economic, cultural and political aspects is important and timely. It directly affects the well-being and development of the family, society and finally the country. Education has been identified as one of the main tools that can be used to empower women. The Public Library has to play a key role in empowering women through education. The Public Library has been identified as a place which provides equal access to information irrespective of age, level of education, religion or cultural boundaries. The Public Library also serves as a knowledge center as well as a multipurpose community center. The main objective of this paper is to study the potential of public libraries in empowering women through education. Secondly, it aims to identify the obstacles and problems which public libraries face in empowering women through education. The study also examines the community information programme and user awareness programmes conducted by public libraries around the country.

A literature review, interview and questionnaire methods were used to collect data for the study. Findings of the study show that women's participation in library or community center activities is higher than men. The study concludes that the public library system in Sri Lanka can play a major role in empowering women through education by providing the right information at the right time. It can also assist the enhancement of the day to day livelihoods of their families. The study finally suggests that public libraries must build cooperation with the community by increasing community information programmes and activities.

Keywords: *Public Library, Community Information Programs, Empowerment, Women's Education*