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2019

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Mohammad Karim Saberi
Corresponding Author, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Iran, mohamadsaberi@gmail.com

Fatemeh Pazooki
Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran, pazooki.f@gmail.com

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Mohammad Karim Saberi

Assistant Professor, Department of Medical Library and Information Sciences, School of Paramedicine, Hamadan University of Medical Sciences, Hamadan, Iran
Corresponding Author: mohamadsaberi@gmail.com

Fatemeh Pazooki

Head of Standard office in Iran Public Libraries Foundation, and PhD Candidate of Knowledge & Information Science, Faculty of Education and Psychology, Alzahra University, Tehran, Iran
Email: pazooki.f@gmail.com

Abstract

This study aimed to compare the conditions of the public libraries in Iran with the standards of IFLA. Iran is a country in the southwest of Asia. With 1,648,669 square kilometers, it is the 18th country in the world and has a population of 79,926,270. There are more than 3000 public libraries in Iran. Under Iran's law, the Iran public libraries Foundation, which is a non-governmental entity, is responsible for the task of establishing, constructing, equipping, developing, managing, and monitoring the public libraries across the country. In this study, the five indicators of resources, Stack space, the space of the reading hall and public library staff are compared with the IFLA standards to determine the difference between the current conditions and the standards. The methodology of the research is comparative. Data collection instrument is a checklist, based on which the number of public libraries in different indices will be extracted and compared with IFLA standards. This study presents a clear portrait of the conditions of public libraries in a country and can be a model for other developing countries to compare the conditions of public libraries with IFLA standards. Presenting this article and sharing its results, the authors also hope to benefit from the opinions of other expert participants for the further improvement of public library activities.

Keywords: IFLA Standards, public libraries, Iran.

Introduction

Public libraries are as global phenomenon. These are located in various kinds of societies including different cultures and various positions of developments.

Due to activities of public libraries in various contexts, their services are offered in different types and methods inevitably while including joint features naturally as following.

A public library is an organization which has been established, supported and also funded by society. These activities are done through local, regional or national government or the other social organization forms (IFLA guidelines for public libraries, 2010).

Iran locates in South-West Asia with 1,648,669 square kilometers as the 18th world country with 79,926,270 populations. The first public library in Iran in modern sense was opened in 1340 in Tehran Park-e Shahr. In 1344 a law was adopted that based on it 1.5 percent of the annual incomes of municipalities have been allocated to the creation and development of public libraries. As a result of the law, in small and big cities of Iran public libraries were developed gradually (Mazinani, 2002).

The government due to unprecedented growth of incomes as a result of the sharp increase of global oil price in 1352 was able to disregard incomes of municipalities to manage budget of public libraries and had ability to afford their budget from general budget of the country. According to it, with approving of the 49th note of budget law in 1353, paying 1.5 percent of incomes of municipalities to public libraries was stopped (Khodaei, 2006).

However unfavorable and unfair status of public libraries in Iran caused that the parliament established "Iran institute of public libraries (IIPL)". Moreover, Iran institute of public libraries (IIPL) is a non- governmental and public institute. Its duty is to establish, construct, equip, develop, manage and supervise the affairs of public libraries all over Iran.

There are 3169 public libraries in Iran according to the latest statistics of IIPL (20.03.2015). This statistic indicates that the numbers of public libraries of Iran have a suitable quantity and their numbers have been a good growth in recent years.

Suitable standards and guidelines for libraries can be helpful for managers and librarians to gain a perspective of available status of their libraries firstly, and criticize some actions to improve the circumstances secondly.

Therefore, the present research aims to compare 4 indicators (namely resources, storage space, study hall and staff) of IIPL with IFLA standards in order to recognize the gap between available condition and standard status. As a result, a new and pervasive movement can be suggested to develop public libraries in Iran based on international standards and guidelines.

Methodology

The type and nature of the issue of the research is comparison between the actual conditions and standard ones with defined criteria.so the present study is done with comparative method. In the research, 4 indicators (namely resources, storage space, Study Hall and staff) of IIPL with IFLA standards are compared. A checklist is used as data collection gathering. Therefore, the statistics of public libraries of Iran in mentioned indicators were elicited and compared with IFLA standards.

Findings

1. **Resources:** public libraries should have suitable and efficient collections. The following proposed standard is related to collection of books. The size of collection depends on populations of users. It is worth mentioning that with absolutely limited resources, these standards can be considered as main goal and also average and long-term strategies should be contemplated in order to gain these standards in the future.

Guideline and standard: collection of books of each library should be about 2-3 volumes for each person (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P.75). There is comparing the Iranian public libraries statues IFLA standards with guidelines in table 1.

As Table 1 show in resources index all province are under standard level. As table 1 data, 19 provinces (Yazd, Semnan, Chaharmahal, Ilam, Zanjan, Kohkilouye, Khorasane Jonoubi, Qom, Boushehr, Markazi, Khorasane Shomali, Qazvin, Aedebil, Azarbayejane Sharghi, Kordestan, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Khouzestan, Fars) are upper than national standard level (0.45) and 12 provinces (Hamedan, Mazandaran, Kerman, Azarbayejane Gharbi, Alborz, Khorasane Razavi, Hormozgan, Lorestan, Gilan, Golestan, Sistan Balouchestan, Tehran) are under national standard level.

Table 1: comparing with Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Recourses (Books)	Population	Resource Index (Recourses per Person)
1	**IFLA standard**	**2**	**1**	**2**
2	Yazd	1721409	1074428	1.60
3	Semnan	802870	631218	1.27
4	Chaharmahal	771570	895263	0.86
5	Ilam	473068	557599	0.85
6	Zanjan	831810	1015734	0.82
7	Kohkilouye	528408	658629	0.80
8	Khorasan Jonoubi	528511	662534	0.80
9	Qom	915363	1151672	0.79
10	Boushehr	732025	1032949	0.71
11	Markazi	934870	1413959	0.66
12	Khorasane\ Shomali	558830	867727	0.64
13	Qazvin	693974	1201565	0.58
14	Aedebil	717084	1248488	0.57
15	Azarbayejan Sharghi	2094690	3724620	0.56
16	Kordestan	837341	1493645	0.56
17	Isfahan	2550898	4879312	0.52
18	Kermanshah	980875	1945227	0.50
19	Khouzestan	2168946	4531720	0.48
20	Fars	2086043	4596658	0.45
21	**Nation Index**	**34090132**	**75149669**	**0.45**
22	Hamedan	748436	1758268	0.43
23	Mazandaran	1295948	3073943	0.42
24	Kerman	1238196	2938988	0.42
25	Azarbayejan Gharbi	1238974	3080576	0.40
26	Alborz	901475	2412513	0.37
27	Khorasan Razavi	2191493	5994402	0.37
28	Hormozgan	560340	1578183	0.36
29	Lorestan	604624	1754243	0.34
30	Gilan	850977	2480874	0.34
31	Golestan	597136	1777014	0.34
32	Sistan Balouchestan	536812	2534327	0.21
33	Tehran	2397136	12183392	0.20

2. **Storage Space:** each library should predict suitable place to keep books. The size of the place depends on the size of the collection. The following proposed standard can be considered as a general guide for storage space.

Guideline and standard: storage space can be determined through average 110 books for per square meter (10.8 square feet) (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P.131). There is comparing the Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA standards and guidelines in table 2.

Table2. Comparing with storage space index with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Storage Space (m2)	Recourses (Books)	Storage Space Index (Per Person)
1	Kerman	15709	1238196	1.40
2	Kohkilouye	6189	528408	1.29
3	Khouzestan	22466	2168946	1.14
4	Golestan	5853	597136	1.08
5	Hemedan	7285	748436	1.07
6	**IFLA Standard**	**1**	**110**	**1**
7	Tehran	20261	2397136	0.93
8	Chaharmahal	6499	771570	0.93
9	Yazd	13861	1721409	0.89
10	Hormozgan	4482	560340	0.88
11	Azarbayejan Sharghi	16738	2094690	0.88
12	**Nation Index**	**255375**	**34090132**	**0.88**
13	Gilan	6785	850977	0.88
14	Boushehr	5562	732025	0.84
15	Fars	15278	2086043	0.81
16	Markazi	6712	934870	0.79
17	Khorasan Jonoubi	3772	528511	0.79
18	Zanjan	5876	831810	0.78
19	Lorestan	4109	604624	0.75
20	Ardebil	4859	717084	0.75
21	Isfahan	17033	2550898	0.73
22	Mazandaran	8503	1295948	0.72
23	Azarbayejan gharbi	7816	1238974	0.69
24	Qom	5755	915363	0.69
25	Sistan Balouchestan	3268	536812	0.67
26	Kermanshah	5891	980875	0.66
27	Khorasan Shomali	3307	558830	0.65
28	Khorasan Razavi	12851	2191493	0.65
29	Kordestan	4579	837341	0.60
30	Alborz	4884	901475	0.60
31	Qazvin	3714	693974	0.59
32	Semnan	3851	802870	0.53
33	Ilam	1628	473068	0.38

As Table 2 show in Storage Space Index 5 provinces (Kerman, Kohkilouye, Khouzestan, Golestan, Hemedan) are upper IFLA standard and 26 provinces are under IFLA Standard Index.

As table 2, 10 provinces (Kerman, Kohkilouye, Khouzestan, Golestan, Hemedan, Tehran, Chahar Mahal, Yazd, Hormozgan, Azarbayejan sharghi) are upper than national standard level (0.88) and 21 provinces (Gilan, Boushehr, Fars, Markazi, Khorasan Jonoubi, Zanjan, Lorestan, Ardebil, Isfahan, Mazandaran, Azarbayejan gharbi, Qom, Sistan Balouchestan, Kermanshah, Khorasan Shomali, Khorasan Razavi, Kordestan, Alborz, Qazvin, Semnan, Ilam) are under national standard level.

3. **Study Hall:** one of the most useful spaces in Iranian public libraries is study hall. Each library should predict a fruitful and suitable study hall for members. The following proposed standard can be considered as a general guide for study hall.

Guideline and standard: 2.8 square meter (30-meter feet) for study hall for each member is an acceptable standard (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P. 132). Acceptable standard for user space in library is from 1000 people should be for 5 users (IFLA guidelines, 2010, P. 132). There is comparing the Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA standards and guidelines in table 3.

As Table 3 show in Study Hall Index all provinces are under IFLA Standard Index. As table 3, 21 provinces (Yazd, Markazi, Semnan, Chaharmahal, Kohkilouye, Ilam, Qazvin, Khorasan Jonoubi, Boushehr, Azarbayejan Sharghi, Kermanshah, Zanjan, Ardebil, Khorasan Shomali, Kerman, Khouzestan, Azarbayejan Gharbi, Kordestan, Isfahan, Hemedan, Fars) are upper than national standard level (0.41) and 10 provinces (Alborz, Golestan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Qom, Hormozgan, Lorestan, Khorasan Razani, Tehran, Sistan Balouchestan) are under national standard level.

Table3. Comparing with Study Hall index with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Study Hall (m2)	Population	Study Hall Index (per Person)
1	IFLA Standard	14	1000	2.8
2	Yazd	8969	1074428	1.67
3	Markazi	8959	1413959	1.27
4	Semnan	3169	631218	1.00
5	Chaharmahal	4164	895263	0.93
6	Kohkilouye	3012	658629	0.91
7	Ilam	2410	557599	0.86
8	Qazvin	4675	1201565	0.78
9	Khorasan Jonoubi	2529	662534	0.76
10	Boushehr	3698	1032949	0.72
11	Azarbayejan Sharghi	12081	3724620	0.65
12	Kermanshah	6182	1945227	0.64
13	Zanjan	3182	1015734	0.63
14	Ardebil	3798	1248488	0.61
15	Khorasan Shomali	2626	867727	0.61
16	Kerman	8607	2938988	0.59
17	Khouzestan	12265	4531720	0.54
18	Azarbayejan Gharbi	8141	3080576	0.53
19	Kordestan	3339	1493645	0.45
20	Isfahan	10658	4879312	0.44
21	Hemedan	3698	1758268	0.42
22	Fars	9395	4596658	0.41
23	Nation Index	172363	75149669	0.41
24	Alborz	4516	2412513	0.37
25	Golestan	3278	1777014	0.37
26	Gilan	4397	2480874	0.35
27	Mazandaran	5390	3073943	0.35
28	Qom	1995	1151672	0.35
29	Hormozgan	2396	1578183	0.30
30	Lorestan	2400	1754243	0.27
31	Khorasan Razani	7960	5994402	0.27
32	Tehran	12162	12183392	0.20
33	Sistan Balouchestan	2312	2534327	0.18

4. **Staff:** staff is as main components of library activity. Numbers of staff should be adequate to be able to respond needs of society and library is used effectively. The following proposed standard can be proposed as a general guide for staff.

Guideline and standard: a full-time staff for 2500 people (IFLA/UNESCO guidelines, 2010, P. 66). There is comparing the Iranian public libraries statues with IFLA standards and guidelines in table 4.

Table4. Comparing with Staff index with IFLA standards and guidelines

No	Province	Staff	Population	Staff Index (Per Person)
1	**IFLA Standard**	**1**	**2500**	**1.00**
2	Yazd	192	1074428	0.45
3	Chaharmahal	139	895263	0.39
4	Kohkilouye	98	658629	0.37
5	Semnan	91	631218	0.36
6	Qom	149	1151672	0.32
7	Ilam	68	557599	0.30
8	Khorasan Jonoubi	79	662534	0.30
9	Zanjan	116	1015734	0.29
10	Kordestan	145	1493645	0.24
11	Ardebil	119	1248488	0.24
12	Markazi	126	1413959	0.22
13	Qazvin	105	1201565	0.22
14	Boushehr	87	1032949	0.21
15	Azarbayejan Sharghi	303	3724620	0.20
16	Kerman	239	2938988	0.20
17	Isfahan	394	4879312	0.20
18	Gilan	184	2480874	0.19
19	Kermanshah	143	1945227	0.18
20	**Nation Index**	**5205**	**75149669**	**0.17**
21	Alborz	166	2412513	0.17
22	Fars	306	4596658	0.17
23	Hemedan	117	1758268	0.17
24	Mazandaran	200	3073943	0.16
25	Hormozgan	102	1578183	0.16
26	Azarbayejan Gharbi	196	3080576	0.16
27	Khorasan Shomali	53	867727	0.15
28	Khouzestan	270	4531720	0.15
29	Golestan	96	1777014	0.14
30	Lorestan	94	1754243	0.13
31	Khorasan Razavi	314	5994402	0.13
32	Tehran	432	12183392	0.09
33	Sistan Balouchestan	82	2534327	0.08

As Table 4 show in Staff Index all provinces are under IFLA Standard Index. As table 4, 18 provinces (Yazd, Chaharmahal, Kohkilouye, Semnan, Qom, Ilam, Khorasan, Jonoubi, Zanjan, Kordestan, Ardebil, Markazi, Qazvin, Boushehr, Azarbayejan Sharghi, Kerman, Isfahan, Gilan, Kermanshah) are upper than national standard level (0.17) and 13 provinces (Alborz, Fars, Hemedan, Mazandaran, Hormozgan, Azarbayejan Gharbi, Khorasan Shomali, Khouzestan, Golestan, Lorestan, Khorasan Razavi, Tehran, Sistan Balouchestan) are under national standard level.

Discussion and Conclusion

In This research we surveyed statues of 4 indexes (Resources, Storage Space, Study Hall and Staff) and compared them with IFLA Standards to specify Iranian Public Libraries distance to achieve better conditions to service. There is cleared the findings in chart 1.
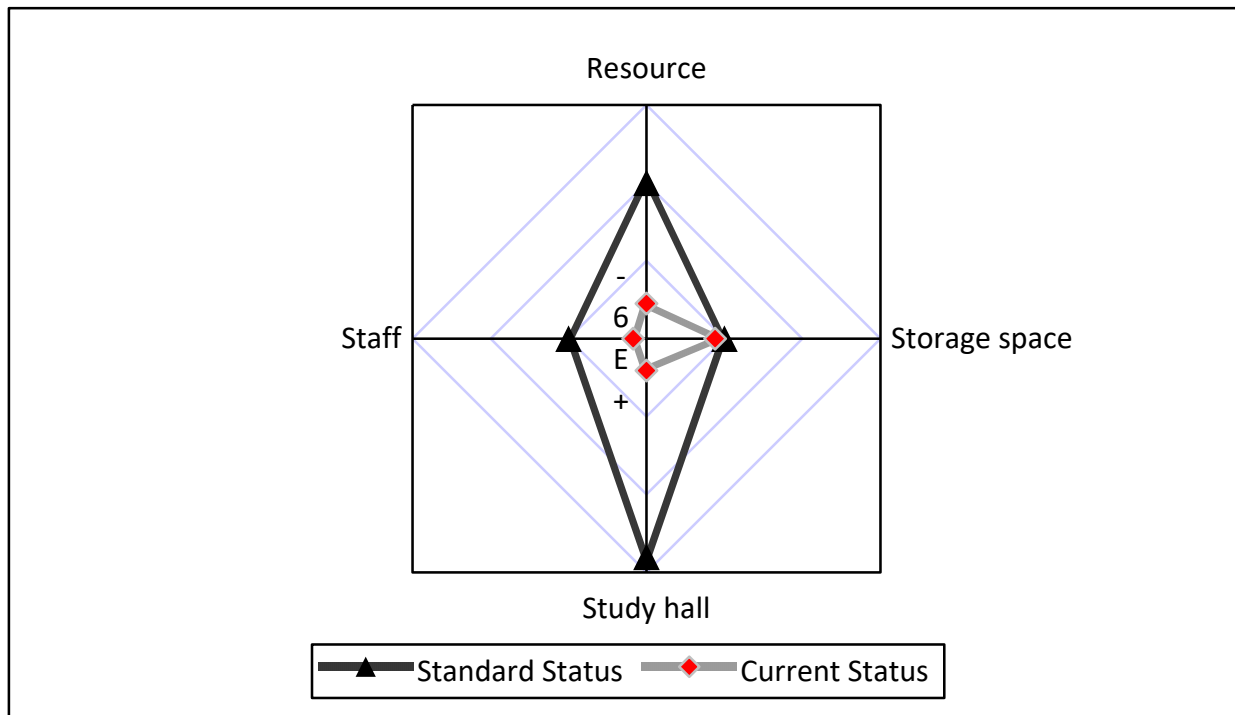

Chart1. The current situation with the desired situation in the four indicators

As diagram1 shows:

- ✓ "Resource" indicator with national average (0.45) is in distance of 1.55 from standard status (2).
- ✓ "Storage space" indicator with national average (0.88) is in distance of 0.12 from standard status (1) and has the least distance with standard condition.
- ✓ "Study hall" indicator with national average (0.41) is in distance of 2.39 from standard status (2.8) and has the most distance with standard condition.
- ✓ "Staff" indicator with national average (0.417) is in distance of 0.83 from standard status (1).

Conclusion

The results of the research indicate that the status of public libraries of Iran has distance and gap with IFLA standards. The reason of this kind of distance can be due to newly establishing (about 12 years) of IIPL. On the other words, IIPL during these years has been doing useful and fruitful measures and wide range of activities as well to develop public libraries and reach desired condition based on library indicators.

Providing library resources for public libraries all over Iran, establishing library in deprived areas, employing expert staff as well as developing library standards are as activities and measures that have been occurring in IIPL.

Authors of the paper are staff of standard office of IIPL who is hopeful that IFLA support IIPL and help these libraries to develop.

Acknowledgments

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