

Research Proposal Component #3

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Research questions or hypotheses

This study seeks to understand the perspectives, opinions, and experiences of library users surrounding social services and programs within the public library system. Our target demographics include those that have utilized programs as well as library users that have not. Because we seek to gather opinions from two groups, we have two research questions. Our questions surrounding this study will be:

1. What are the experiences of users who have utilized social programs through the library?
2. What perceptions do library users have within the community surrounding libraries that house social services and programs?

After gathering responses, we will use the collected data to determine whether perceptions of these services are positive or negative. These responses will help libraries know whether these services and programs have been beneficial to provide and allow libraries that do not currently have these programs in place to decide whether implementing similar programs will be beneficial to their communities.

Design and method(s) of data collection

For our research, we have chosen an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach. This method will allow us to use qualitative analysis to better understand our quantitative findings. In a study such as this, using quantitative data alone would not provide a clear enough picture of how social workers can impact libraries. Understanding the experiences of library patrons, library staff, and social workers is key to determining whether these services need to be implemented. It is also important to gather feedback from people who do not regularly use the library, as the inclusion of a social worker on the staff could affect their desire to seek out library services.

To accomplish this study, we'll conduct a survey of social services patrons to determine how they see the social program(s) effectiveness in helping them, we'll survey the librarians and/or social workers at the library, and we'll compare the results to determine the similarities or differences of perception on the effectiveness of the social programs.

The survey for patrons of social services will collect information about their experiences and perceptions of being in the program. The survey for librarians and/or social workers will collect information about their experiences and perceptions of providing social services to patrons. Both surveys will use a Likert scale to gather responses, and both surveys will contain questions that will facilitate a comparison of the effectiveness of the social program as perceived by each group.

Population, sampling, and participants

For this research proposal, our group has decided to focus on an explanatory sequential design utilizing stratified sampling. This approach fits best because we are interested in gaining perspectives from different groups of library stakeholders: library staff, library board members, library social workers, patrons that utilize social worker assistance within the library, and patrons that do not utilize social worker assistance within the library. This method of sampling will ensure we are hearing perspectives from each strata and are creating a clearer representation of the population within our community of study. As alluded to with the mention of using an explanatory sequential design, we will start with the quantitative method of surveying, followed by the qualitative method of case study.

The survey will be accessible by public library stakeholders both in hard copy format, as well as electronically, to reach not only our brick-and-mortar stakeholders, but also our remote access patron base. Surveys will also be emailed out to library staff and board members, as well

as those subscribed to our library newsletter. Additionally, surveys will be offered to patrons that choose to access services from the library social worker on site. Offering multiple ways to access this survey increases the likelihood that we will get feedback from each of our intended population samples.

After the survey results have been collected and analyzed, we will identify participants from the results to create a case study group made up of participants from each strata that have varying opinions on the effectiveness of social workers within libraries. The purpose of this case study group is to give humanity to the numbers collected from the quantitative survey, and to offer a well-rounded, person-first perspective of the various impacts of social workers in our public library system.