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A Macro Sketch of Users' Needs, Satisfaction, and Library Performance: A Survey of University Libraries in Pakistan

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Abstract

It is a survey of large public sector university libraries of the Punjab Province and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) of Pakistan. The basic purpose is to get a broader understanding of users' perceptions about the library services. The survey is based on a questionnaire containing both open and close ended questions. The data were collected through mail, e-mail and personal visits. The study reveals that although respondents have shown their overall satisfaction with the library services, but the analysis of the data about users' satisfaction with major library services shows that they were not fully satisfied with

their respective library services. The library users have also highlighted many problems, which they believed should be corrected. Findings of the study can be helpful for the library authorities and professionals for revisiting their library services and sources.

Keywords: Pakistan, Library and Informational Services, Punjab and ICT, University Libraries, Library Users' Satisfaction.

Background of the Study

Library and information service providers in the new millennium are taking a growing interest in understanding and meeting the changing needs of their users. In an era of downsizing and budget cuts, user satisfaction and optimization of resources have become important areas for libraries to maintain awareness of, and to be able to change as user needs change. As well, libraries that understand the needs of their user base can not only work better to meet those needs, but can also market their services in a more effective fashion.

Rapid changes in library services and operations, demands for internal institutional accountability, and assessment expectations by external accrediting agencies have contributed to further development and application of user studies within academic libraries during the past decades.

According to Siatri (1999), user studies in library and information sciences emerged in the late 1940s and have continued to progress rapidly since then in conjunction with research developments in other related fields. Indeed, a look at the current amount of source material available to guide in the development and evaluation of user surveys in the information science field is staggering (Kim, 2003).
There are also studies available in library literature, which evaluate service quality and user satisfaction through confirmation-disconfirmation theory by using their level of satisfaction with current services. The purpose of library service quality is to know the information needs of library users and help them to fulfil their information needs based on their perceptions and expectations with library services. It also helps the administration for making decisions about the allocation of resources and future funding for the improvement of its services. Service quality affects the re-purchase intentions of customers (Ghobadian, Speller, & Jones, 1994). Customers who have experienced poor services will reveal their experience to other people, and therefore this is likely to lead to a reduction in potential customers (Horovitz, 1990). While public sector customers may not have the choices available in the private sector, poor service can still have a negative effect on reputation. Another possible result of delivering poor quality services may affect the university's overall reputation with the community at large, including funding bodies and employers organizations (Smith, Smith, & Clarke, 2007).

According to Hernon, Nitecki, and Altman (1999) academic institutions try to ensure students' academic success by providing them best teaching faculty and excellent quality supporting services: libraries, residential facilities, food services. These services not only increase their satisfaction but also create very pleasant image of the campus. Students' satisfaction with these services helps to convince both students and their parents that the educational program and campus services provide value for the money spent. Better service reputation of the institution helps in getting donations. High quality service creates loyal customers. Students and parents also give weightage to the institutes which have good library facilities.

Library service quality is also necessary for accreditation standards (Hernon, et al., 1999).
In user satisfaction literature expectations are defined as predictions of performance, while the service quality literature defines expectations as desires or wants. The predictions, wants or desires of the customer essentially become a standard against which the perceived, actual experience is contrasted. When service quality is lower than expected, expectations are disconfirmed negatively and the customer is likely to feel disappointed to some degree. Conversely, when perceptions are higher than expectations, positive disconfirmation results; the customer is delighted with the experience and service quality perception and satisfaction grow. When the experience confirms the expectation or standard, a neutral reaction results (Cook, 2001).

While it may be argued that we live in an 'evaluation culture' generally, certainly library and information service providers in the new millennium are taking a growing interest in understanding and meeting the changing needs of their users. In an era of downsizing and budget cuts, user satisfaction and optimization of resources have become important areas for libraries to maintain awareness of, and to be able to change as user needs change. As well, libraries that understand the needs of their user base can not only work better to meet those needs, but can also market their services in a more effective fashion. Jankowska, Hertel, and Young (2006) investigated graduate expectations and satisfaction with library services. After reviewing the related literature he summarized the following key findings from previous studies:

- Graduate students are unaware of the full range of library services and resources.
- Graduate students need and/or desire help in using library resources.
- Faculty greatly influences how and if graduate students use the library.
- Faculty/librarian collaborations have proven effective in assisting graduate students in their information needs.
- Graduate students are heavy users of e-resources, particularly e-journals.
- Graduate students prefer access to networked-based library resources and services.

Information needs and expectations are continuously changing in the rapidly changing information scenario. Libraries need to re-orient their collections, services, and facilities to keep pace with these advancements. User feedback is considered as a more reliable factor in measuring the utility and effectiveness of any library. By making user surveys a regular part of the library's functions, librarians can provide a comparative 'snapshot' of usage in various temporal contexts (King, 2005). The goal of most surveys is quite similar: to gauge users' perceptions of library effectiveness regarding services, resources, and activities (Majid, Anwar, & Eisenschitz, 2001).

Hiller (2001) has discussed the fact that library user satisfaction surveys have become widespread in academic libraries during the past twenty years. Surveys have often been used as a tool to assess service quality and user satisfaction. User surveys can be designed and administered in a number of ways. Self-administered surveys are often employed to reach a large number of potential respondents with a minimum of direct contact and cost. Individuals are given or sent surveys to complete and return and the responses turned into data that can be analyzed. Surveys can range from broad and comprehensive to those narrowly focused on specific services or activities. When properly designed and administered, user surveys can provide both quantitative and qualitative data directly from the target population. Lancaster University library (2006) for example, regularly conducts user satisfaction surveys as a means of identifying areas for service improvement and ensuring that it remains responsive to the University community. Loughborough University Library (2005) in its annual user survey for the academic year 2004/ 2005 focused on the quality of customer care and information provided by the Circulation Desk, Support Services desk and Enquiry Desks. The Lingnan University Library (2010) conducts its annual user satisfaction surveys every rear. The Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) Library undertook a series of user satisfaction surveys. These surveys were comprising of responses from staff and both undergraduate and postgraduate students from all MMU sites (Manchester Metropolitan University Library, 2009).

Library Users' Satisfaction Surveys: The Pakistani Perspective

For searching on user satisfaction survey literature on Pakistan, the researchers consulted indexes of Pakistan Library Bulletin (Now Pakistan Library and Information Science Journal), PULSAA News and other periodical literature published in and/or about Pakistan. The union list of theses of five Library schools enlisted in "Library and Information Science Research in Pakistani Universities" and other local and online sources were also consulted.

Libraries are investing large amount of budget on resources and services to improve efficiency. There is high demand for fund raising on the part of libraries to yield user satisfied services. User satisfaction

helps in justifying resources and improving the services. The practices of conducting user satisfaction surveys in order to determine users' level of agreement with library services is not a norm here in Pakistan at any level. The few user studies were reported in the literature.

For example, Saeed and Ramzan (2003) conducted a questionnaire survey to find out the students satisfaction with library services at Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS). The analysis of 350 responses shows that the students were heavily using the library for various purposes such as class assignments, research and group discussions .They expressed high level of satisfaction with the library services. They suggested extending the loan period of library material, increasing library hours and acquiring of more books on the literature and computer sciences. Khan (2006) explored the students' perceptions about the reference librarians and how do they approach them for services at the Peshawar University Library. The author presented the analysis and findings of 153 responses and gave his recommendations for further improvements. Rehman, Mahmood, Arif, & Rafiq (2009) surveyed the Punjab University Library and investigated the users' satisfaction with various attributes of library services. They collected the data from 456 library users and highlighted many problems which need improvement. Rehman, Shafiq, and Mahmood (2010) conducted a survey to analyze the library users' perceptions about reference services in Pakistan. They found that university libraries of Pakistan do not have proper concept of reference services with exception of few libraries. According to Haider and Mahmood (2007), Shireen Gul is working on "User satisfaction in the use of library and information services: a comparative study of four university libraries in Sindh'' as a PhD topic from University of Sind, Jamshoro.

A look at the library services provided by the academic libraries does not present an encouraging picture. According to Haider (2004), the university libraries in Pakistan are beset with an abundance of problems like inadequate library collection, absence of reader services, absence of competent personnel for top management, inadequate physical facilities, and financial problems, absence of resource sharing and limited application of computer technology. In this perspective the need of conducting user satisfaction surveys becomes inevitable.

Objectives and Methodology of the Study

Keeping the gaps and need of the time in view, the basic purpose of this survey was to gather a broad understanding of how users perceive the library services they receive at their university libraries and their satisfaction with these services. It does not intend an in-depth exploration of users' satisfaction with the services of individual libraries. Following are the major objectives of this study:

1. To explore the status of existence of major library services in public sector university libraries of Pakistan.
2. To find out the level of users' satisfaction with these library services.
3. To find out the users' opinion about the required library resources.
4. To furnish the recommendations.

The survey was limited to the well-known public sector university libraries of the Punjab province and Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), with a reasonable collection, and professional staff. More than one hundred questionnaires were distributed in each university library of the sample. Librarians of the respective libraries helped in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were received by the authors through mail, email (scanned copy of the filled questionnaires) and personal visits. The questionnaire was concise and designed to take no more than ten minutes to complete. A pilot study was also conducted before the actual survey and necessary changes were made in the survey tool. The reliability test was executed on the Scale used in the questionnaire; the Cronbach's Alpha 0.864 shows that the scale is reliable. As the questionnaire was containing both open and close ended questions, so was analyzed both qualitatively and quantitatively to reach at conclusions. Quantitative analysis was done with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-version 17).

Limitations of the Survey

The survey was limited to the larger universities of Punjab Province and Islamabad Capital Territory. Only the performance of the central libraries from each university was assessed, departmental/branch libraries were not included in the survey. The intension is to explore the general trend of library users' satisfaction in the university libraries rather than making any generalizations of the results.
The survey response did not allow the researchers further use of inferential statistics (i.e. the response received from participant universities was not comparable). However the study can be used as a foundation for the future studies in Pakistan.

Data Analysis and Related Discussion

Personal Profile of the Respondents

Acquired responses reveal that in total 515 respondents (i.e., 290 (56.3%) males and 225 (43.7%) females) from different university libraries responded against the questionnaire (Table 1). Table 2 presents the frequency distribution of responses collected from each university. Most of the responses were received from University of the Punjab, Lahore (139, 27%) and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (72, 14%) due to the personal visits by the authors. Of the 515 respondents, 467 (90.7%) were students, and 42 were (8.2%) faculty members (Table 3).

Table 1. *Frequency Distribution of the Responses Acquired from each University*

Rank	Names of Responded University Libraries	Frequency	Percent
1.	University of the Punjab Lahore	139	27
2.	Islamia University of Bahawalpur	72	14
3.	Government College University Lahore	57	11
4.	University of Engineering and Technology Lahore	46	8.9
5.	Bahaudin Zakria University Multan	45	8.7
6.	University of Gujrat	39	7.6
7.	Allama Iqbal Open University Islamabad	34	6.6
8.	Government College University Faisalabad	30	5.8
9.	University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences Lahore	30	5.8
10.	International Islamic University	23	4.5
	Total	515	100

Table 2 *Frequency distribution Gender*

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	290	56.3
Female	225	43.7
Total	515	100.0

Table 3 *Frequency distribution of Respondents' Status*

Respondents	Frequency	Percent
Student	467	90.7
Faculty	42	8.2
Missing	06	1.2
Total	515	100

Frequency of Library Visits

Table 4 shows the frequency with which the respondents were visiting the library. The response shows a good trend of library visits because most of them were daily (240, 46.6%) visitors of the library. On the other hand the results show that 154 (29.9%) respondents were visiting their respective libraries twice a week. Only 34 (6.6%) were visiting it rarely and 33 (6.6%) fortnightly.

Table 4 *Frequency of Library Visit*

Library Visits	Frequency	Percent
Daily	240	46.6
Twice a week	154	29.9
Rarely	34	6.6
Fortnightly	33	6.6
Missing	29	5.6
Monthly	25	4.9

User Satisfaction with Major Library Services

Respondents were asked to give their opinion about major library services, i.e. circulation, reference and collection etc. The ratio scale was used for this purpose, while the option of non-availability of a certain service was also included in the scale. The results presented in Table 5 show that the respondents of the survey were to some extent satisfied with all major library services i.e. Circulation (mean=3.25), ask a librarian (mean= 3.21), reference (mean= 3.19), Electronic reservation (mean= 2.78), Library collection (Print) (mean= 2.76), digital collection (mean= 2.67), Govt. document collection (mean= 2.60) and interlibrary loan (mean= 2.54). See Table 5.

Table 5 *Satisfaction with Library Services*

Statements	N	Mean	SD
Library staff is respectful and helpful	510	3.96	1.071
Opening hours meet my needs	501	3.90	1.071
Borrowing books from the library is easy	498	3.87	1.105
Library's environment (noise level, heating / cooling, lights, furniture, cleanliness, etc.) is conducive to study	504	3.81	1.151
Library membership procedure is convenient	500	3.72	1.082
Library staff is knowledgeable and competent	502	3.69	2.150
Library collection is adequate for my needs	509	3.54	1.178
Photocopying facility is adequate	503	3.53	1.331
Library has appropriate reference materials for locating information	504	3.52	1.074

Respondents' Perception about Overall Library Services

It was also tried to find out the library users' opinion about different services, staff and environment etc. The respondents were asked to show their level of agreement or disagreement with different statements related to the library. The results presented in Table 6 show that they agreed with the following statements: Library staff is respectful and helpful; Opening hours meet my needs; Borrowing books from the library is easy; Library's environment (noise level, heating / cooling, lights; furniture, cleanliness, etc.) is conducive to study; Library membership procedure is convenient; Library staff is knowledgeable and competent; Library collection is adequate for my needs; Photocopying facility is adequate; Library has appropriate reference materials for locating information (Mean values are 3.96, 3.90, 3.87, 3.81, 3.72, 3.69, 3.54, 3.53, 3.52 respectively). On the other hand they remained undecided about the following statements: There are adequate popular books, magazines for pleasure and news; Library's collections are well-organized and easy to find; Library provides good Internet facility; Library Web pages are informative, helpful, easy-to-use; Journals collection is adequate; Electronic catalog is easy to use;

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Library provides access to adequate electronic journals for research and information; Library provides adequate training on the library use (Mean values are 3.48, 3.44, 3.43, 3.35, 3.32, 3.31, 3.17 and 3.02 respectively).

Table 6 *Respondents' Overall Perception of Library Services*

There are adequate popular books, magazines for pleasure and news	506	3.48	1.149
Library's collections are well-organized and easy to find	509	3.44	1.224
Library provides good Internet facility	503	3.43	1.311
Library Web pages are informative, helpful, easy-to-use	501	3.35	1.190
Journals collection is adequate	506	3.32	1.057
Electronic catalog is easy to use	502	3.31	1.215
Library provides access to adequate e-journals for research and information	505	3.17	1.190
Library provides adequate training on the library use	508	3.02	1.250
Overall Satisfaction			
I am satisfied with the overall quality of library services	505	3.61	1.222

Overall Satisfaction

The mean of overall satisfaction shows that the respondents were satisfied with the overall quality of their respective library services (mean= 3.61).

Table 6.1 *Descriptive Statistics of Satisfaction with Major Library Services*

Name of Services	Mean	SD
Circulation	3.25	1.270
Ask a librarian	3.21	1.351
Reference	3.19	1.211
Electronic reservation	2.78	1.258
Library collection (Print)	2.76	1.251
Digital collection	2.67	1.218
Govt. document collection	2.60	1.239
Interlibrary loan	2.54	1.171

Scale: 5= Highly Satisfactory, 4= Satisfactory, 3= To Some Extent Satisfactory, 2= Not Satisfactory at all, 1= Service not available.

Resources which Respondents Would Like the Library to Offer

The results presented in table 7 show that of the 515 respondents, 366 (71.1%) respondents recommended the provision of more books and 355 (68.9%) recommended for more books. Similarly 220 (42.7%) recommended for electronic books, 203 (39.4%) for online databases, 198 (38.4%) for online periodicals, 188 (36.5%) for newspapers and 181 (35.1%) for print periodicals. One hundred and thirty seven (26.6%) respondents recommended for staffing and 82 (15.9%) for microfilming facility. Other related services than those already offered were also recommended by 119 (23.1%) respondents. Respondents recommended the provision of more up-to-date books in the following subject areas: Fiction, Poetry and English, Urdu novels (n= 20); Mass com, Computer Science, History, General knowledge (n= 5); Law, Education, Applied microbiology, Immunology, Parasitology, Mycology, Virology (n=4); Art & Music, Political sciences, Engineering, Sciences, Pakistani languages, Current affairs and Economy of Pakistan (n= 3); International relations, Arabic, Islamic finance, Commerce, Islamic books, Molecular technology, Psychology, Chemical engineering, and Business administration (n= 2).

Table 7 *Frequency Distribution of Responses About the Resources Which Respondents Would Like the Library to Offer*

Rank	Suggestions	Frequency
1.	More library facilities and services should be provided	105
2.	Collection should be rich and updated in all subjects	89
3.	Staff should be well trained and behave well with users	61
4.	Internet and other ICT facilities/need good Internet speed	58
5.	Environment should be conducive for research and study	33
6.	Library material should be processed and arranged properly	26
7.	More print/e-journals should be subscribed by the library	23
8.	Books issue and return should be according to the rules	16
9.	OPAC should be provided	13
10.	More trained staff should be appointed	10
11.	Library timings should be increased	10
12.	User education programs should be started	8
13.	Departmental libraries should be developed	6
14.	Canteen should be near the library	3

Additional Comments and Suggestions Provided by the Respondents

Of the 515 respondents, 275 (35.4%) respondents provided with additional comments and suggestions. They suggested that more library facilities and services should be provided (n= 105); collection should be rich and updated in all subjects (n= 89); library staff should be well trained and behave well with users (n= 61); Internet speed and other ICT facilities should be enhanced (n= 58); library environment should be conducive for research and study (n= 33); library material should be processed and arranged properly (n= 26); more print/e-journals should be subscribed by the library (n= 23); books transaction (issue and return) should be according to the rules (n= 16); OPAC should be provided (n= 13); more trained staff should be appointed (n= 10); library timings should be increased (n= 10); user education programs should be started (n= 8); departmental libraries should be developed (n= 6); and canteen should be near the library (n= 3). See Table 8.

Table 8 *Frequency Distribution of Suggestions Provided by the Respondents*

Name of Resources	Frequency	Percentage
More Computers	366	71.1
More Books	355	68.9
Electronic Books	220	42.7
Online Databases	203	39.4
Online Periodicals	198	38.4
Newspaper	188	36.5
Print Periodicals	181	35.1
Staffing	137	26.6
Others	119	23.1
Microforms	82	15.9

Findings

The study reveals that although respondents have shown their overall satisfaction with the library services, but the analysis of the data about users' satisfaction with major library services shows that they were not fully satisfied with their respective library services. It was also found that the users' perception about the library, its services, staff and environment was to some extent satisfactory. It is encouraging to note that most of the users were using the libraries daily or at-least twice a week. This high use of library services might be due to the implementation of semester system in universities of Pakistan. Satisfaction with digital collection and further high demand for online books, databases, and

periodical literature beside the print books might be the impact of available digital resources provided to the university libraries by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan (HEC). A review of open ended suggestions/comments indicates that the users have highlighted many problems, which need immediate attention of the library staff and administration. These problems could be attributed as the cause of their dissatisfaction with the library services. The low response from most of the universities could be due to the non existence of users' satisfaction survey norms in universities of Pakistan.

Conclusion and Recommendations

We are living in the information age, where information explosion and customer care are one of the major challenges. In this context, it is inevitable for a library to provide richer information diets to their customers for fulfilling their information needs. This reality is very well felt by the developed world and in those countries library and information services have seen revolutionary changes to meet the new challenges of information age. In this perspective the library user surveys have become a regular part of their library services. In Pakistan there is dearth of literature on library users' satisfaction surveys; keeping this reality in view the survey was an initial step for gaining broader understanding about the library users' satisfaction in the public sector universities of the largest province (Punjab) and capital city (Islamabad) of Pakistan. On the bases of findings of the study some recommendations are made, which are as followed:

1. In-depth user satisfaction surveys should be conducted by the university libraries of Pakistan regularly.
2. Such studies should be conducted more frequently; other provinces of the country are also needed to be studied for generalization of the results.
3. Library schools should train the future librarians in conducting the user satisfaction surveys by giving them the assignments.
4. Libraries should pay special attention on the provision of good collection, staff and services in their libraries.
5. New ICT based services i.e., electronic or virtual reference services should be introduced by the libraries.
6. University libraries should consider the features of "user friendliness and helpfulness" while designing online or electronic services for their users.
7. The concept of "customer care" should be introduced at the libraries and library schools as well.
8. Findings of the study should be considered by the relevant individual university libraries in particular and other libraries in general for the improvement of their services.

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