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Mahe Bushra Asghar

Assistant Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, mahebushraasghar@gmail.com

Rubina Bhatti

Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Salman Bin Naeem

Associate Professor, Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur

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Library Anxiety of LIS Students in Universities of Pakistan: A Measurement Using MLAS

Mahe Bushra Asghar

Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Email: mahebushraasghar@gmail.com

Rubina Bhatti

Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Email: dr.rubytariq@gmail.com

Salman Bin Naeem

Department of Library and Information Science, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur
Email: salmanbaluch@gmail.com

Abstract

The present study was conducted with an aim to determine the level of library anxiety among the graduate students of Library and Information Science enrolled in public sector universities of Pakistan. The Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale developed and validated by Dr. Doris Van Kampen, was used for this study. The data was collected from 511 students of MLIS studying in different library schools of Pakistan. The collected data was then analyzed statistically by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The findings of the study indicated that graduate students of Library and Information Science exhibited overall a mild level of library anxiety on all the six dimensions of MLAS. There was statistically no significant difference in the level of library anxiety among male and female graduate students of LIS and also in the frequency of library use, on the level of library anxiety. The study also provides recommendations to overcome the library anxiety.

Keywords: Library Anxiety, Academic Libraries, Library and Information Science, MLIS, MLAS, Library Avoidance

Introduction

Libraries are created to serve their patrons by providing different type of reliable resources to learning community and play a vital role to satisfy their information needs effectively (Rasul & Singh, 2010). University libraries are gateways to information which provide support for educational and research activities. Students of all levels of university education are required to use library to fulfil their educational or research needs.

Effective use of library resources has a correlation and an impact on students' successful completion of education. Therefore, it is indispensable for them to acquire skills to use library resources effectively and complete their educational careers successfully. Some students feel that they lack expertise and appropriate knowledge to utilize library resources and search for a piece of required information resource (Grimes & Charters, 2000). This feeling creates hesitation among the students. They even do not know how and where to begin their information search and locate valid information related to their area of interest (Mellon, 1988). Lack of awareness either demotivates students or leaves them with a negative feeling towards libraries (Bostick, 1992; Lu & Adkins, 2012) leading them towards the fear of using library resources and meeting library anxiety. Constance Mellon was the first who originated the term Library Anxiety (LA) for this phenomenon. Mellon's theory opened the doors for more research in this area (Bowers, 2010). In the year 1992 Sharon Bostick devised and validated "Library Anxiety Scale (LAS)". Based on Mellon's study, it was a five dimension scale which could measure the phenomenon among students quantitatively. LAS made library anxiety a striking topic for the researchers of Library and Information Science and for those who preferred quantitative research methods (Van Scoyoc, 2003). The present study has been undertaken to measure the level of Library Anxiety (LA) among the graduate students of

Library and Information Science (LIS) by employing the Multidimensional library Anxiety Scale (MLAS).

Research Questions

1. What is the level of library anxiety among the graduate students of LIS in public sector universities of Pakistan
2. What is the difference in the level of library anxiety among male and female LIS students in public sector universities of Pakistan?
3. What is the difference between level of library anxiety among LIS students and their frequency of library use in public sector universities of Pakistan?

Literature Review

Library anxiety is a feeling of fear, angst and hopelessness that students feel when they enter library for the purpose of research or finding information on an assignment. This anxiety can be so incapacitating that often students fail to approach an assignment in a logical manner. Students usually get confused how to initiate search on their topics and find information related to their particular subject. Students who encounter fear or anxiety regarding the use of library receive a substantial impact on their learning abilities (Mellon, 1986, 1988). Library anxiety as a construct is conceptually distinct from other academic related anxieties. This was empirically discovered in a qualitative research by Constance A. Mellon in 1986. The study acknowledged the existence of anxiety among students. Students (75-85%) admitted to have experienced anxiety when they initially started library research. Mellon identified that students were reluctant to seek help from the personnel of the library. It was noted that most students avoided asking basic questions about library due to fear of embarrassment or not feeling literate enough in front of their fellows.

Jiao and Onwuegbuzie, (1997a, 1997b) conducted a series of research on Library Anxiety and its various aspects. They examined 522 students of public universities to explore the factors of using a library and reasons behind the library anxiety. Results of the study indicated that students frequently used library for test preparation and course assignments. The study found that those students who visited library on regular basis exhibited lower level of library anxiety (Jiao & Onwuegbuize, 1997b). In another study Jiao & Onwuegbuize, (1997a) observed that in most of the cases library anxiety is found in new students. In case of university, this level is higher in male than female students. It was further noted that library anxiety was associated with the hurdles of using electronic machines such as computers etc.

Jacobson (1991) explored the correlation between computer anxiety and library anxiety and their relationship with gender. Forty senior secondary school students were chosen for the study. She developed an instrument using a seven point Likert scale. The scale was divided into four parts labelled "library anxiety, computer anxiety, using computers for library research anxiety, and general interest in using computers for library research". The study concluded that male students exhibit greater library anxiety as compared to female.

Sullivan-Windle (1993) qualitatively investigated the factors impeding students to use the library and aspects helpful in using the library effectively. The study revealed that students were not comfortable with library staff. They didn't find them helpful and supportive in their search for information. Swope and Katzer (1972), Kosa (1982) and Rosen et.al (2013) noted similar kind of feeling in students, in their studies. They observed that under such circumstances students often resort to seek help from other people than librarians. Sullivan-Windle (1993) suggested that academic librarians can provide better library environment based on the understanding of problems and feelings of students.

Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (2002) conducted a study to validate the effectiveness of Bostick's Library Anxiety Scale (1992). They found that barrier with staff was the most prevailing factor

in predicting library anxiety. These findings were valid because similar kind of results was observed by Bostick in her PhD study in 1992.

The characteristics of college students were studied by Jiao, Onwuegbuzie, & Lichtenstein (1996) to ascertain those factors which instigate the level of library anxiety among them. The study found that frequency of library visits, age, and year of study, gender, native language, employment status, grade point average, and purpose of using the library were correlated with library anxiety. The study also found that freshmen were hesitant to ask librarian for help and had highest level of library anxiety. They also noted that male students exhibited more anxious behavior than female. Cultural differences and language barriers for foreign students were among key problems that led to the prevalence of library anxiety. The study suggested library instruction program at high school level and trainings for teachers to improve their library learning skills.

A quantitative research study was carried out to explore library anxiety among 664 students of B.Ed, enrolled in Israeli colleges. The modified version of Bostick’s LAS was used for this study. The findings evinced that anxiety level was comparatively higher in females than male students. Apart from it, students falling in the age range of 18-24 years exhibited more anxiety than in the age range of 25 & above. This shows that senior students experience lower level of anxiety than juniors. The study suggested to the public and school libraries to develop programs to inculcate necessary library skills in students and prepare them to meet the requirements of the information world. Moreover, academic libraries should develop instruction programs and flexible polices to maximize the use of libraries (Shoham & Mizrachi, 2001).

Anwar, Al-Kandari & Al-Qallaf (2004) explored the level of library anxiety amongst the students of Faculty of Science, at Kuwait University. The study used modified version of LAS to measure the intensity of library anxiety among the students. Some statements were removed from the original scale to make it according to the local needs. Four statements from personal “safety factor” and “mechanical barriers” and “library environment” were deleted limiting the final version of LAS to 34 statements. The study found no association between library anxiety and gender. It was also noted that library usage experience in schools did not affect library anxiety. The study recommended the following linear five-level scale to quantitatively measure the extent of library anxiety among students.

Proposed levels of anxiety	
Levels of anxiety	Range of mean scores
No anxiety	0.00–2.21
Low anxiety	2.22–2.65
Mild anxiety	2.66–3.54
Moderate anxiety	3.55–3.98
Severe anxiety	3.99–5.00

Figure 2. Proposed Levels of Anxiety

Bowers (2010) investigated library anxiety among the law students of a private Midwestern university, USA. “Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale” was administered to assess the level of library anxiety among the students. Findings revealed the existence of moderate level of library anxiety among law students. Moreover, varying levels of library anxiety was observed on the six factors of MLAS. It was noted that students who used library infrequently (in-person or online) showed greater level of library anxiety. The study found no significance difference in the levels of anxiety of male and female students on MLAS scale.

Lee (2012) studied the status of library anxiety of students of developmental education. Comparative results of quantitative and qualitative data revealed higher level of library anxiety among those students who less often visited the library. The study suggested that with the help of faculty and library staff, exposure of students to the library can mitigate library anxiety among them. Singsonl, Firdaus and Thiyagarajan (2015) conducted a survey of 110 post-

graduate students of Pondicherry University, India to investigate their level of library anxiety. They observed that since students were familiar with the use of technology at Pondicherry University, therefore their level of library anxiety was commendably low. Similarly Rehman, Soroya and Awan (2015) steered a study of undergraduate students at university of the Punjab to assess their level of library anxiety. On AQAK scale, they found mild level of anxiety (2.66-3.54) among the students. They emphasized on the need of orientation programs and information literacy sessions for student to reduce library anxiety among them.

Lu and Adkins (2012) conducted a pilot study to evaluate which subscale had major impact on library anxiety level of graduate international students. Findings of study showed that “barriers with staff and affective barriers” had a major impact on students’ library anxiety level. Contrary to the study of Jiao & Onwuegbuzie (1999b), it was observed that international graduate students experienced lower level of anxiety with mechanical barriers. The study found no difference in the anxiety levels of both male and female international graduate students.

McPherson (2015) surveyed undergraduates of University of West Indies to assess the extent of library anxiety. The study confirmed the existence of library anxiety among the students due to personal and institutional factors. The major contributory factor of library anxiety at institutional level was the absence of suitable information literacy skills. Apart from it, lack of previous library usage, ignorance and confusion were the personal factors on the part of the students. Students also mentioned that size of the building, organization of library material, lack of computers and inappropriate signage were other institutional factors contributing to the problem. The study provided evidence that library anxiety had a negative impact on the performance of students making them unable to complete class assignments and attempt a good paper. Orientation and information literacy programs, user-friendly directory outlining the resources available in different floors, proper signage, and training of library staff were some recommendations drawn on the basis of findings.

Sheih (2011) conducted an interview based study to assess the negative feelings of readers in a university library. The study found that libraries’ regulations, environment, personnel, ICT and software used were the main causes of anxiety among students.

Vankampen and Cooke (2015) concluded that most of the undergraduate students were satisfied with library services. A survey was conducted to get the response of the undergraduate students by using Undergraduate Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale (UMLAS). Results showed that despite need, students often do not ask librarian for help. It was suggested that library staff should develop friendly relationships with users and faculty members to lessen their anxiety.

Asghar and Bhatti (2017) conducted a study to measure the intensity of library anxiety among the postgraduate university students of Southern Punjab, Pakistan. A questionnaire, after comprehensive literature review and consulting previous scales, was designed and administered to 292 students by using convenience sampling method. The results of the study revealed the existence of library anxiety among the postgraduate students of South Punjab. The level of library anxiety was not correlated with gender, semester and institute of the respondents. The main causes of anxiety were the behavior of library staff, library services, environment and resources. The study provides many recommendations to alleviate the level of library anxiety among the students suggesting library administration to maintain conducive environment in the library. Apart from it, library staff should be friendly and easily approachable to the students. Instructors should encourage students to use library on regular basis. The study expected libraries to provide relevant and up-to-date study materials to students and promote specialized services to the patrons. It was also proposed that user education and information literacy programs should be conducted on regular bases to alleviate library anxiety among the students.

Platt and Platt (2013) carried out a study to assess the extent of library anxiety among undergraduate students of a research method course in psychology. Revised MLAS (Van Kampen, 2011) was used for survey. Pretest and Posttest method was used. Students were required to attend dual 50 minutes information literacy session. It was found that students who were involved in research face less anxiety as compared to those who did not take research courses. The study concluded that information literacy sessions decrease the level of library anxiety among the users.

In 2004 a study was conducted by Ashrafi-rizi, Sajad, Rahmani, Bahrami and Papi to measure library anxiety by employing LAS (Bostick, 1992) at two universities of Iran. A sample of 375 students were selected for this study through stratified random sampling technique. The result of this study indicated that the great source of library anxiety among the students of “Isfahan University of Medical Sciences and Shiraz University of Medical Sciences” was the staff and mechanical barriers. To diminish library anxiety, it was suggested that high school students should be provided library orientations and information literacy instructions before joining college or university. Keefer (1993) suggested that academic librarians should consider students’ feelings of anxiety and apprehension as normal. This can be decreased by providing them welcoming environment. They may involve with those students who appear to be distressed and strengthen human connection with them to reduce their level of anxiety.

Priyanto (2017) discussed the importance of library and users’ feelings of hesitation when they plan to use or first time enter a library. Priyanto proposed that interactive technology can be used for library services and providing information to the users to lower their anxiety. An interactive catalogue providing shelf information, location of room or availability of seats and library collection are some services that may be provided through simple technology. In this regard libraries should also arrange digital literacy programs (Sabzwari, Bhatti & Ahmed, 2012) and training sessions for the students on how to use e-books, online journals and databases (Khan, Bhatti & Khan, 2011). It is also necessary to train library staff in these areas to increase the use of electronic resources and services (Khan, Bhatti, Khan & Ismail, 2014). Erfanmanesh (2011) measured the extent of library anxiety of students of Education and Psychology school, Shiraz University. “Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale” by Van Kampen (2003) was employed in the survey. The findings of study indicated that 79% respondents encountered an average to high level of library anxiety. However, male respondents showed higher level of anxiety than female. The study participants were the students of different majors and it was found that students of “Library and Information Science” indicated lowest level of library anxiety while students of Physical Education and Special Education showed higher level of library anxiety.

Bhatti, Batool and Malik (2013) assessed the pervasiveness and purposes of library use by the students of “Library and Information Science (LIS) at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB)”. They discovered that non-cooperative behavior of staff, electricity failure, limited number of computers, slow internet speed, less awareness regarding library usage are some problems faced by the students.

Using LAS with minor changes, Ahmed and Aziz (2017) explored the existence of library anxiety among the students of Dhaka University, Bangladesh. This was the first time ever application of LAS in a Bangladeshi environment. The findings verified that library anxiety was an existent phenomenon among the students of Dhaka University. The subscale “barrier with staff” was considered the main element instigating library anxiety among university students followed by lack of knowledge of the library which yielded highest mean score. These finding showed consistency with the previous researches (Bostick, 1992; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie 1997, 1999a, 1999b, 2004; Jerabek et al. 2001; Onwuegbuzie & Jiao 1998, 2000, Jiao et al. 2004, 2006; and Karim & Ansari, 2010). This study indicated that LAS can be used to measure library anxiety of users of academic libraries in a developing countries like Bangladesh,

without providing psychometric reliability. The study provided many recommendations for library administration to reduce or overcome library anxiety. It was suggested that regular orientation programs should be organized for new students to alleviate library anxiety among them. Moreover, ongoing information literacy programs should be designed for users to develop their necessary skills for library research. The study urged the need to develop new library anxiety scales according to the needs of local environment preferably in native languages. Aziz and Binte (2014) also investigated library anxiety among the 350 postgraduate and undergraduate students of Dhaka University and observed the existence of library anxiety among them. The study found no significant difference between the level of library anxiety of male and female students. Same significance was noted on the basis of age. Library layout, cleanliness, ventilation, seating arrangements, security, disturbances, shortage of library lockers, offensive smells, overcrowding, language barriers, inadequate library regulations and services and lack of current reference material were some problems mentioned by students that intensified library anxiety among them. Ahmed, Ismail & Khan (2021) conducted a study of medical students of the Khyber Medical College (KMC), Peshawar to explore the frequency of the library anxiety. AQAK library anxiety scale was used to measure the level of library anxiety among the students. The study found that medical students of KMC exhibited mild level of library anxiety with all five factors. Students were more conscious with the library staff factor as compare to other factors. It was also reported that female students exhibited more library anxiety than male students and students of first year were more anxious than the final year students. The study recommends the information literacy programs for medical science students to overcome library anxiety. It was also recommended to provide training on personality development and communication skills to library staff so they can better understand users and serve them effectively.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on the cross-sectional survey design. Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale (VanKampen, 2003) was used to collect data from the graduate students of Library and Information Science enrolled in the public sector universities of Pakistan. The scale consists of six-dimensions which are intended to measure an individual's perception of an academic library and information search process. The MLAS includes 53 statements. No sample was drawn for this study; instead census method was used in which data was collected from every member of the population.

Findings

Demographic Information of the Respondents

Out of the 511 respondents, majority 287 (56.2%) were male and 224 (43.8%) were female. Most 261 (51.1%) of the respondents age were between 20-22 years, followed by 23-25 years of age group. Using a Chi-square statistics a significant different was found in the gender distribution of the respondents in different age groups $\chi^2(4) = 28.035, p = .000$. Eighty-nine (39.7%) male respondents were in the age group 20-22 years as compared to 172 (59.9%) respondents in the same age group (see Table A1 in Appendix).

Of the 511 respondents, 101 (19.7%) were studying through annual systems and majority 395 (77.3%) students were studying in semester system. A statistical significant different found in the gender distribution of the respondents in four different semesters $\chi^2(3) = 18.931, p = .000$. Most of the female 107(44.4%) respondents were in the 1st semester as compared to 45 (29.2%) male respondents. Similarly, 70 (29%) female respondents were in 3rd semester as compared to 39 (25.3%) male respondents (see Table. A2 in Appendix).

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percent	χ^2	p-value
Gender of the Respondents				
Male	224	43.8%	-	-
Female	287	56.2%		
Total	511	100.0%		
Age of the respondents				
Below 20	13	2.5%	28.035	.000
20-22	261	51.1%		
23-25	163	31.9%		
26-28	39	7.6%		
28 and above	35	6.8%		
Total	511	100.0%		
Respondents' studying in Annual System				
First Year	40	7.8%	-	-
Second Year	61	11.9%		
Total	101	19.7%		
Respondents' Studying in Semester System				
1st Semester	152	29.7%	18.931	.000
2nd Semester	3	.6%		
3rd Semester	109	21.3%		
4th Semester	131	25.6%		
Total	395	77.3%		

Library Use in Person

The researcher assessed the frequency of in person library use of the MLIS students. Majority of respondents 278 (54.4%) go in person to the library one or more times per week. Eighty (15.7%) respondents use once every 2-3 weeks while 61 (11.9%) use library once in a month. As can be seen in fig.1.

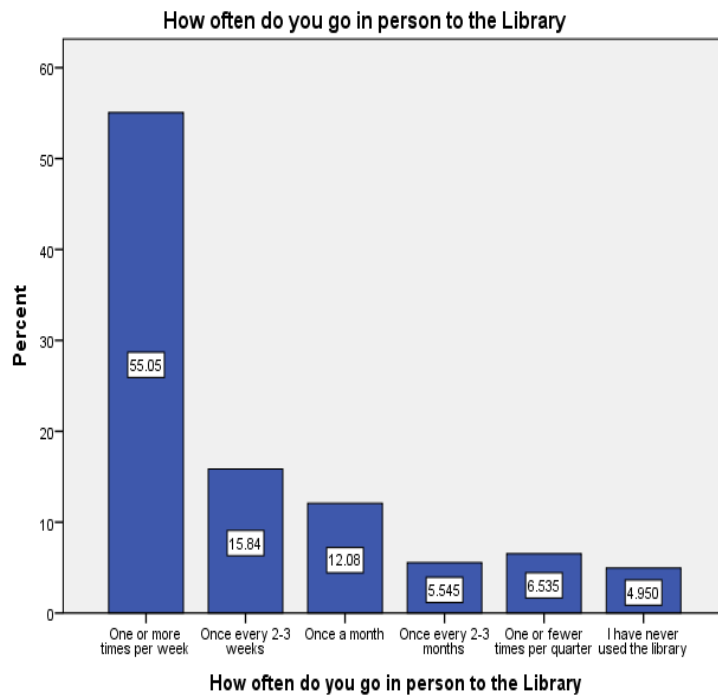


Figure 1. How often do you go in person to the library?

Level of library anxiety among the students of MLIS in public sector universities of Pakistan

The data of this study revealed that mean score on 53 statements ranges from 2.51 to 4.26 which indicated some level of library anxiety among the students. In order to assess the overall level of library anxiety, composite mean score of 53 items was calculated. The findings showed that the graduate students of LIS exhibited library anxiety. Overall mean for six dimensions was 3.32 and SD 1.18 which indicated the presence of mild level of library anxiety among the graduate students of LIS. Of the six dimensions (perceived importance of knowing how to utilize the library, comfort level while in the library, the information search process and general library anxiety, comfort with technology in the library, barriers with library staff and comfort with and confidence in using the library) on which data were collected, the third dimension received the highest score 47.79, indicating that most of the respondents faced the information search process and general library anxiety (SM=47.79, SD=6.694).

Table 2. Library Anxiety Score on all Six Dimensions

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Dimension 1	19.78	3.578
Dimension 2	22.10	3.816
Dimension 3	47.79	6.694
Dimension 4	20.34	3.856
Dimension 5	25.38	4.728
Dimension 6	18.35	3.544

Difference in Level of Library Anxiety among Male and Female Students

In order to identify the difference in the scores of library anxiety between male and female students, we used Independent Sample t-test. Table 3 shows that the mean scores of the female students are higher as compared to male students (M=176.87, SD=16.65 vs M=174.50, SD=22.55). However this difference is statistically not significant $t(398) = 1.210, p < .05$. Therefore, statistically no significant difference existed in the level of anxiety between male and female respondents, it means that the level of anxiety between male and female respondents were the same (see Table A3 in Appendix).

Table 3. Difference in Level of Library Anxiety between Male and Female Students

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	F	t	p-value
Male	174	174.5000	22.55264	1.70971	10.025	-1.210	.227
Female	226	176.8717	16.65857	1.10811			

$P = > 0.05$

Difference between Frequency of Library Use and Level of Library Anxiety among Students

In order to find the difference in the frequency of library use on the levels of library anxiety among the graduate LIS students we used One Way ANOVA statistics. Table 4. Shows a statistically no significant difference in the frequency of library use on the level of library anxiety of the LIS graduate students $F(5, 391) = 2.90, p = .919$ (see Table A4 in Appendix).

Table 4. Difference between Frequency of Library Use and Level of Library Anxiety among Students

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	555.330	5	111.066	.290	.919
Within Groups	149882.121	391	383.330		
Total	150437.451	396			

Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions

The study showed that the students of Library and Information Science exhibited library anxiety. The overall mean for all six dimensions was 3.32 which indicated the presence of mild level of library anxiety among the graduate students of LIS. The data further indicated that the mean scores on all 53 statements were ranging from 2.51 to 4.26. The level of library anxiety was not higher among the graduate students of LIS. The reason might be the nature of their subject. Previous research studies also reported existence of library anxiety among the graduate and undergraduate students. Van Kampen (2003) developed MLAS to measure the library anxiety among doctoral students and confirmed the presence of library anxiety among PhD students. Bowers (2010) found that law students exhibited moderate level of library anxiety. The mean values ranged from 2.68 to 4.72 and the overall mean value for all 53 statements of MLAS was 3.74 which indicated moderate anxiety. Erfanmanesh (2011) also confirmed the presence of library anxiety among the graduate students of different majors. Findings of his study found average level of library anxiety with mean scores ranging from 2.54 to 3.04 on all eight factors. He also reported that the students of Library and Information Science showed the lowest level of library anxiety as compared to other majors. The study of Swigon (2011) also provided the evidence of low level of library anxiety among the Polish students with average mean score for library anxiety as 2.35. Findings of Song, Zhang & Clarke (2014) also declared the existence of moderate level of library anxiety among Chinese students. The study yielded an overall mean score of 2.78.

The data revealed no difference in the level of library anxiety among male and female graduate students of Library and Information Science. The results of independent t-test indicated that the mean scores of the female students ($M= 176.87$) are higher than male ($M= 174.50$). But no statistical significance difference was observed between the level of library anxieties of female and male graduate students of Library and Information Science. Past studies conducted on library anxiety have showed mixed results about gender differences. The first quantitative study by Bostick (1992) revealed no difference in the level of library anxiety among male ($M= 116.77$) and female ($M= 117.68$) respondents. Similarly, the results of the studies of Mech & Brooks (1995), Anwar, Al-Kandari & Al-Qallaf (2004), Bowers (2010), Swigon, (2011), Lu & Adkins (2012), Aziz, & Binte (2014), Ramírez (2015), and Asghar & Bhatti, (2017) support the result of the present study regarding gender based library anxiety. Jacobson (1991), Jiao and Onwuegbuzie, (1997a, 1997b), Erfanmanesh (2011), Song, Zhang & Clarke (2014), Jan, Anwar & Warraich (2016), and Doris, Provata & Vraimaki (2017) found that male students exhibited higher level of library anxiety than female students. The results of Shoham & Mizrahi (2001) and Ahmed, Ismail & Khan (2021) study indicated that female students had higher level of library anxiety than male students.

The results of the current study also found no significant difference in the frequency of library use on the level of library anxiety. The participants of the study exhibited no difference whether they used the library daily or once in a month. These results are surprising as compare to the findings of the previous studies. The previous studies proved a negative relationship between the frequency of library use and level of library anxiety of students. Jiao, Onwuegbuzie, and Lichtenstein (1996), Bowers (2010) & Jan, Anwar & Warraich (2016) found that those students who frequently used the library had low level of library anxiety and the students who infrequently used the library exhibited higher level of library anxiety.

The study concludes that graduate students of Library and Information Science revealed overall mild level of anxiety on Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale. All six factors of MLAS were found to effect library anxiety. The students exhibited mild level of anxiety on all six subscales. The level of anxiety was comparatively high with information search process and general library anxiety subscale.

The findings of the study proved that library anxiety is a real phenomenon and existed among the graduate students of Library and Information Science. Appropriate measures should be taken to overcome or decrease the level library anxiety. Bibliographic instruction programs should be designed for library patrons to understand the complex organization of library. Faculty should encourage students to frequently visit the library. The academic librarians and graduate faculty should work collaboratively to create a liaison between library and students to mitigate their anxiety about library. Library administration should also focus on developing the interpersonal soft skills of library staff in order to provide better services to library patrons. It will help to diminish the library anxiety among university students.

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