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# **Pervasiveness of Library Anxiety among the Students of Library and Information Science: An Assessment**

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## **Abstract:**

Library anxiety is a real and prevalent phenomenon. Some students feel uncomfortable or discouraging while using or contemplating the use of library. These feelings may affect the academic performance of students, cause library avoidance and impede them from getting the best out of library resources. The present study is conducted with an aim to assess the pervasiveness of library anxiety among the graduate students of Library and Information Science enrolled in public sector universities of Pakistan. . The Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale, consisting of six dimensions which are divided into 53 statements, was used for this study. The Cronbach's alpha value of overall MLAS was .88. The findings of the study confirmed the presence of a mild level of library anxiety on all the six dimensions of MLAS among the students of Library and Information Science. The study suggests measures to mitigate library anxiety among the students.

**Keywords:** Academic Libraries, Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale, Library Anxiety, Library and Information Science, MLIS, MLAS, Library Avoidance, Library Fear

## **Introduction**

Library Anxiety is a feeling of fear, tension, nervousness or apprehension experienced by a user when they are intimidated by the library setting or whilst using or contemplating the use of library. It is a psychological obstruction that impedes students' access to information. The term was defined by Jiao and Onwuegbuzie as "library anxiety is an uncomfortable feeling or emotional disposition, experienced in a library setting, which has cognitive, affective, physiological, and behavioural ramifications. It is characterized by ruminations, tension, fear, feelings of uncertainty and helplessness, negative self-defeating thoughts, and mental disorganization" (1996, P. 152).

The term library anxiety was originated in the United States as an emerging research area. Constance A. Mellon was the first who identified the negative feelings of students towards library and developed the grounded theory of library anxiety in her paper titled "Library Anxiety: A Grounded Theory and Its Development". The feelings of six thousand students were explored as they used an academic library for the first time for their research. It was a qualitative study conducted at a southern university. The study indicated that approximately "75 to 85%" of the respondents reported their first response to library research in terms of "Fear" (Mellon, 1986).

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 theory, 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).

Primarily research studies were conducted in the United States to explore and measure library anxiety level of different students' population. There emerged two pinions on one hand the librarians and the library instructors admitted the presence and prevalence of library anxiety amongst the students, but on the other hand many were doubtful and resentful about the presence of library anxiety as real. The later believes that the importance of library anxiety among graduate students is particularly challenged as there is a supposition that the students who are enrolled in graduate programs can use library adequately (Onwuegbuzie, 1997a; Hoffman, Antwi-Nsiah, Feng, & Stanley, 2008) but quite surprisingly it was noted that library anxiety is not only prevalent in undergraduate students but very common amongst graduate students as well. This anxiousness acts as a hurdle in the effective research of the students (Onwuegbuzie, 1997b, Noor & Ansari, 2010). Graduate students are often expected to do extensive research by using library resources, in order to complete their courses of study (Bowers, 2010, Hamade & Al-Yousef, 2010).

The present study is conducted with an aim to determine the level of library anxiety among the graduate students of Library and Information Science enrolled in nine public sector universities of Pakistan.

### **Hypotheses of the Study**

1. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in the level of library anxiety among LIS students of different semesters.
2. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in comfort with using the library among LIS students of different semesters.
3. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in library or information search anxiety among LIS students of different semesters.
4. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in barriers with staff among LIS students of different semesters
5. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in perceived importance of knowing how to utilize the library among LIS students of different semesters.
6. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in comfort with library technology among LIS students of different semesters.
7. H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in comfort with the physical library among LIS students of different semesters.

### **Literature Review**

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. Through an assessment of research journals of 6,000 students of English composition class, she identified that most documented anxiety and fear was related to library usage. The study acknowledged the existence of anxiety among students. Students (75-85%) admitted to have experienced anxiety when they initially started library research. Terms like "scary, overpowering, lost, helpless, confused and fear of unknown appeared frequently". Bostick's development regarding the quantitative methods to examine the qualitative theory of Mellon made it a more striking topic of research for the library science scholars as well, who usually prefer the techniques of quantitative research method (Scoyoc, 2003).

Researchers have conducted various studies to assess level of library anxiety on diverse population (Jiao, Onwuegbuzie, and Bostick 2006; Mech and Brooks 1995), finding linked to the attitudes of students (Onwuegbuzie and Jiao 2000), recognizing the analytical traits (Jiao, Onwuegbuzie, and Lichtenstein 1996; Mech and Brooks 1995), and evaluating if specific treatments can lessen it (Mohundro 1999; Van Scoyoc 2003; Battle 2004; McPherson, 2015) are few to mention.

Jiao and Onwuegbuzie conducted many research studies on library anxiety and its different aspects. Findings indicated that the students who exhibited lower extent of library anxiety were

those who visited the library regularly, loved to study by themselves in isolation or those who stayed long in the library (Jiao & Onwuegbuize, 1997b). It was also found that new students were more library anxious than the senior students and male students of the university were highly anxious compared to the female students. On the other hand, upperclassmen are much more anxious than the underclassmen. It was also found that library anxiety is associated with the hurdles of using the electronic machines such as computers etc. (Jiao & Onwuegbuize, 1997a). Barriers with staff was the most prevailing factor in predicting LA (2002). Jiao, Onwuegbuize, & Lichtenstein (1996) found eight variables i.e. frequency of library visits, age, year of study, gender, native language, employment status, grade point average, and purpose to use the library which were correlated with library anxiety. Bhatti, Batool and Malik (2013) conducted a study with the students of Library and Information Science (LIS) at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) to evaluate the pervasiveness and purposes of library use. Results of the study reported that non-cooperative behavior of staff, electricity failure, scarcity of computers, slow internet speed, less awareness regarding library usage are some problems faced by the students. 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. Shoham & Mizrahi (2001) used the modified version of Bostick's LAS that was translated into Hebrew. The findings evinced that anxiety level was comparatively high in females than male students. Students between the age of 18-24 years exhibited more anxiety than the students of 25 & above years of age. It was also noted that junior students had higher level of anxiety as compared to senior students. Kampen (2003) developed and validated Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale (MLAS) which is based on Bostick's LAS to measure the level of library anxiety among the doctoral students. The study found evidence of library anxiety among the doctoral students. They faced higher anxiety regarding their comfort level in using the library, ask a librarian for help, and feeling comfortable in the library and less anxious to know about how to begin the research process. Furthermore, doctoral students who were at early phase of the dissertation experienced less confidence in their ability to use the library and likely to have greater level of library anxiety as compared to those students who were at advance stages of their dissertation process. Bowers (2010) employed MLAS to know the level of library anxiety of law students. No significance difference was found among male and female students on library anxiety scale. The findings declared the presence of overall moderate level of library anxiety among law students and varying levels of library anxiety on the six factors of MLAS. Świgoń (2011) concluded that overall level of general library anxiety was low among the Polish students. Research study of Song, Zhang & Clarke (2014) revealed that the phenomenon of library anxiety existed among university students of China. Resource and retrieval factors turned out to be the actual causes of greater library anxiety as compared to affection factor which showed lower anxiety rate amongst the students. The study also proved that the students who attended library instruction sessions exhibited less library anxiety. The study also reported that male students exhibited more library anxiety than female students. Doris, Provata & Vraimaki (2017) also found that anxiety level was higher amongst male respondents as compared to female respondents. Anwar, Al-Qallaf, Al-Kandari & Al-Ansari (2012) & Lu and Adkins (2012) found no correlation between library anxiety and gender. Asghar and Bhatti (2017) conducted a study to assess the intensity of library anxiety of the postgraduate university students of Southern Punjab, Pakistan. The results of the study confirmed the existence of library anxiety among the students. The findings of the study showed that level of library anxiety was not correlated with gender, semester and institute of the respondents. The students experienced difficulties with the behavior of library staff, library services, library environment and resources. Jan, Anwar, & Warraich (2020) found that library anxiety impacted the academic performance of the students. Students with

high level of library anxiety got low GPA while less library anxious students got high GPA. 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

Survey research is the most suitable and widely used method of social science research. The present study is also based on the cross-sectional survey design. The population of this study was consisted of Master of Library and Information Science students studying in the library schools of public-sector universities of Pakistan. Census method was used i.e. all the population were included to collect the data for this study. Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale developed and validated by Van Kampen was adopted for this study. There are 53 items of MLAS scale. The sum of its subscales ranges from 53 to 265 points. Van Kampen (2003) reported that alpha value of overall MLAS was .88. The collected data analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v-22 and reported in descriptive and inferential statistics.

### Data Analysis

#### Demographic Information of the Students

Table. 1. shows that 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  $\chi^2(4) = 28.035, p = .000$ .

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  $\chi^2(3) = 18.931, p = .000$ .

**Table 1.**

#### Demographic Information

	Frequency	Percent	$\chi^2$	p-value
<b>Gender of the Respondents</b>				
Male	224	43.8%	-	-
Female	287	56.2%		
Total	511	100.0%		
<b>Age of the respondents</b>				
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%		
<b>Respondents' studying in Annual System</b>				
First Year	40	7.8%	-	-
Second Year	61	11.9%		
Total	101	19.7%		
<b>Respondents' Studying in Semester System</b>				
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%

**H1 There is a statistically significant difference in the level of library anxiety among LIS students of different semesters.**

The results of Kruskal Wallis statistics revealed statistically no significant difference in library anxiety among the students of four different semesters i.e. 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters ( $X^2 (3) 1.992, p=.574$ ). The mean ranks (157.91 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 116.83 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 165.12 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 149.90 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that the level of library anxiety was higher among the students of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester as compared to those in other semesters. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis that there is a statistically significant different in the level of library anxiety among LIS students of different semester was rejected and the alternate null hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 2.**

**Difference between Levels of Library Anxiety among LIS Graduate Students enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	113	157.91	1.992	3	.574
2nd Semester	3	116.83			
3rd Semester	93	165.12			
4th Semester	104	149.90			
Total	313				

P= .05 >, df=3

**H1 There is a statistically significant difference in comfort and confidence when using the library among LIS students of different semesters.**

The findings of Kruskal Wallis statistical test found no significant difference in the comfort level of LIS students enrolled in different semesters ( $X^2 (3) 1.537, p=.674$ ) while using the library. The mean ranks (187.40 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 215.83 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 203.04 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 189.08 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that the comfort level of the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester was higher than the students of other three semesters while using the library. However, differences in the comfort level while using the library among the students of four different semesters was not statistically significant. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3.**

**Difference in Comfort Level While Using the Library among LIS Students Enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	147	187.40	1.537	3	.674
2nd Semester	3	215.83			
3rd Semester	106	203.04			
4th Semester	128	189.08			
Total	384				

P= .05 >, df=3

**H1 There is a statistically significant difference in Information Search Process and general library anxiety among LIS students of different semesters.**

The values of Kruskal Wallis statistics found no significant difference in the information search process and general library anxiety among LIS students enrolled in four different semesters ( $X^2 (3) 2.373, p=.499$ ). The mean ranks (168.18 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 132.50 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 181.43 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 184.43 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that general library or information search anxiety was higher among the students of 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters as compared to the students of 1<sup>st</sup> and

2<sup>nd</sup> semesters. Results further showed that the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester exhibited least general library or information search anxiety as compared to the students of other semesters. However, the difference among the students of different semesters about general library or information search anxiety was not statistically significant. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 4.**  
**Difference in Library or Information Search Anxiety among LIS Students Enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	133	168.18	2.373	3	.499
2nd Semester	3	132.50			
3rd Semester	102	181.43			
4th Semester	115	184.43			
Total	353				

P= .05 >, df=3

**H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in barriers concerning staff among LIS students of different semesters.**

The study found no significant difference regarding the barriers with the library staff members among LIS students enrolled in different semesters ( $X^2(3) .164, p=.983$ ). The mean ranks (191.11 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 205.17 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 186.65 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 189.57 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> semester faced more barriers with the library staff than the students of other semesters. However, the differences in barriers among the students of four different semesters were not statistically significant. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 5.**  
**Difference in Barriers with the Library Staff Members among LIS Students Enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	146	191.11	.164	3	.983
2nd Semester	3	205.17			
3rd Semester	102	186.65			
4th Semester	127	189.57			
Total	378				

P= .05 >, df=3

**H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in importance of understanding how to use the library among LIS students of different semesters.**

The results of running a Kruskal Wallis statistics found statistically no significant difference in importance of understanding how to use the library among LIS students enrolled in different semesters ( $X^2(3) .521, p=.914$ ). The mean ranks (196.30 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 169.00 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 197.04 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 189.30 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that the perceived importance of knowing how to utilize the library was higher among the students of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> semesters as compared to students who were enrolled in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters but this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 6.**  
**Difference between Perceived Importance of Knowing how to utilize the Library among LIS Students enrolled in Different Semesters.**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	149	196.30	.521	3	.914
2nd Semester	3	169.00			
3rd Semester	108	197.04			

4th Semester	127	189.30
Total	387	

P= .05 >, df=3

**H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in comfort level with technology among LIS students of different semesters.**

Using a Kruskal Wallis statistics we found a statistically no significant difference in the level of comfort with library technology among LIS students enrolled in four different semesters ( $X^2(3) 3.078, p=.380$ ). The mean ranks (203.39 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 162.17 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 202.45 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 182.74 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that level of comfort with library technology was higher among the students of 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters as compared to the students of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> semesters. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, alternate hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 7.**

**Difference in Level of Comfort with Library Technology among LIS Students Enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	151	203.39	3.078	3	.380
2nd Semester	3	162.17			
3rd Semester	108	202.45			
4th Semester	129	182.74			
Total	391				

P= .05 >, df=3

**H<sub>1</sub> There is a statistically significant difference in comfort level while inside the library building among LIS students of different semesters.**

The findings of running a Kruskal Wallis statistics revealed a statistically significant difference in the comfort level of students of all semesters with the physical library facilities ( $X^2(3) 12.589, p=.006$ ). The mean ranks (210.17 1<sup>st</sup> Semester, 136.33 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, 186.04 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, and 164.57 4<sup>th</sup> Semester) indicated that the level of comfort with the physical library facilities was higher among the students of 1<sup>st</sup> semester as compared to the students of other semesters. The difference was statistically significant; therefore, alternate hypothesis was accepted.

**Table 8.**

**Difference between the Comforts with the Physical Library Facility among LIS Students Enrolled in Different Semesters**

Semester	N	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	df	p-value
1st Semester	140	210.17	12.589	3	.006
2nd Semester	3	136.33			
3rd Semester	106	186.04			
4th Semester	125	164.57			
Total	374				

P= < .05, df=3

**Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations**

Results of the present study showed that majority of the respondents, 56.2% were female while 43.8% were male. These results are similar to the study of Malik's (2014) on graduate students and contrary to Bowers's study (2010) where more male respondents (52.4%) participated than female (47.6%). Most of the female 107(44.4%) respondents were in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester followed by 3<sup>rd</sup> semester 70 (29%). The ratio of male students in 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> semesters, was 45 (29.2%) and 39 (25.3%) respectively.

Majority of the respondents (51.1%) were in the age group of 20-22 years followed by (31.9%) in the range of 23-25-years. About 7% respondents were above 28 years of age. Only 13(2.5%) respondents fall below the age of 20. These findings represent a similar replication of the results of the studies of (Malik, 2014) and (Bowers, 2010) where most of the graduate respondents were in the age group of 20-25 and 25-29 years respectively. Majority of the respondents participated from 1<sup>st</sup> semester 152(29.7%) and 4<sup>th</sup> semester 131(25.6%) followed by 109 (21.3%) students of 3<sup>rd</sup> semester. Only 3(0.6%) respondents took part from 2<sup>nd</sup> semester in the survey. About 8% of first year and 12% students studying in the second year of their education participated in the study.

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. Previous research studies also reported existence of library anxiety among the graduate and undergraduate students. 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 findings of present study also revealed that graduate students of LIS exhibited mild level of library anxiety on all six dimensions. The study found statistically no significant difference in the comfort level while using the library, information search process and general library anxiety, barriers with the library staff, importance of understanding how to use the library and comfort with library technology among LIS students, enrolled in four different semesters. However, there is a statistically significant difference in the comfort with the physical library facilities among LIS students enrolled in four different semesters. The mean scores of all dimensions indicated that students experienced highest level of anxiety on information search process and general library anxiety as compare to other subscales. The overall mean score for this dimension was 47.79 which indicated that students experienced mild anxiety with information search process and general library anxiety. The previous studies support the findings of this study. The findings of Bowers (2010) study indicated three factors including information search process and general library anxiety as the main source of library anxiety among Law students. The results of Kampen-Breit, Campbell, Gould and Glaesser (2018) study are consistent with the finding of the present study. While findings of the other studies contradict the results of the present study and found barriers with library staff (Bostick, 1992; Jiao & Onwuegbuzie, 2002; Yu, 2009; Lu & Adkins, 2012; Ashrafi-rizi, Sajad, Rahmani, Bahrami&Papi, 2014) and mechanical barriers ( Yu, 2009; Bowers, 2010; Lu & Adkins, 2012; Ashrafi-rizi, Sajad, Rahmani, Bahrami & Papi, 2014) as major source of library anxiety among the students. The findings of the study also reported no significant difference in the level of library anxiety among LIS students of different semesters. The findings are consistent with the studies of Malik, (2014) and Asghar & Bhatti, (2017).

The study concludes that graduate students of Library and Information Science revealed overall mild level of library anxiety on Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale. 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 study suggests some of the practical implications to address the challenge of library anxiety. Academic librarians should organize information literacy (IL) sessions to educate students about library resources and services. Library instruction programs are the most effective way to alleviate library anxiety among students. University administrations and faculty should also motivate students for the maximum usage of library services and resources through course assignments and presentations.

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