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The National Library of Pakistan: A Survey of Users' Satisfaction

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Abstract

This study aims to assess users' satisfaction with the National Library of Pakistan (NLP). The study variables include facilities, collection, services, and attitude/behavior of staff along with demographics and open-ended comments. To carry out the objectives of the study, a semi-structured paper questionnaire using a modified Likert-type scale is administered personally by the principal researcher. Responses from one hundred (100) users are obtained employing a non-probability (accidental, voluntary) sampling technique. The majority of users show their satisfaction against all the variables. The users in open-ended comments suggest further improvement in facilities and services. This study may be helpful for the NLP administration to plan and proceed accordingly. Other national libraries especially in developing countries like Pakistan may also conduct user satisfaction surveys to assess their resources following the example of this study.

Keywords: National Library of Pakistan, NLP, User satisfaction survey, Library facilities, Library collection, Library services, Library staff.

Introduction

There is minor disagreement among Pakistani library experts on the year of establishment of the National Library of Pakistan. However, the majority agree upon 1949 as the founding year (Anwar, 1993). Though the National Library of Pakistan (NLP) was established in 1949, it existed on paper only and was without any physical building. The National Library started building its collection in 1967 with copyright receipts and began purchasing books in the mid-1970s when it got its first-ever budget. The Library was moved among various buildings, mostly rented, in Islamabad and Rawalpindi from 1968 to 1988. The initial plan for the construction of the National Library's building at Islamabad was prepared in 1968, revised in 1973, and finally approved in 1980. Construction started in 1982 and was completed in December 1988 costing PKR 130,322 million. The collection of 70,000 volumes that had already been acquired under copyright law and through purchases was then moved to the new building. The NLP was formally opened to the public on 24 August 1993 (Ahmad, 2008).

The National Library of Pakistan, a four-level building, has a covered area of 168,844 square feet with a seating capacity of 250 users. Major sections include Acquisition Section (books), Acquisition Section (serial publications), Technical Processing Section, Reference and Information Services, National Bibliographic Unit, Library Cooperation and Promotion, and Planning and Research Section. The collection of more than 400,000 volumes is based on books, personal collections, rare books, serial publications, and other materials. The government is spending a huge amount of budget on the National Library of Pakistan. It is high time to assess its facilities and services in terms of users' satisfaction.

Objectives of the Study
The objectives of this study are to:
1). Determine the users' perceptions in terms of their satisfaction with the National Library of Pakistan across certain, different dimensions.
2). Seek users' feedback through open-ended comments for further improvement.

Literature Review
Online Dictionary for Library and Information Science (ODLIS, 2020) defines a national library as "A library designated and funded by a national government to serve the nation by maintaining a comprehensive collection of the published and unpublished literary output of the nation as a whole, including publications of the government itself. Most national libraries are also responsible for compiling a national bibliography, and some serve as the legal depository for works protected by copyright in the country." The National Library of Pakistan (NLP) is also performing the same functions as defined above.

The user is the primary determinant of a library's quality to satisfy their declared and unspoken needs. A user satisfaction survey is regarded as an important aspect to assess the worth of the library's facilities and services. A satisfied user is likely to continue using the library resources in the future. There are multiple methods to obtain users' perceptions regarding their satisfaction with the library. A user survey is a commonly used method. According to ODLIS (2020), a user survey is "a questionnaire administered to users of a library or library system to find out what brings them to the library, how they normally use the resources and services it provides, their subjective evaluation of the quality of their library experiences, and any suggestions for improvement (feedback)."

A user's perception is formed based on his/her experience of using the resources and services of a library and interacting with the library staff. According to ODLIS (2020), user experience is defined as the "perceptions and response of a person, resulting from his/her use or anticipated use of a product, system, or service…it includes the user's subjective response (feelings, beliefs, preferences), as well as perceptions of utility, efficiency, and ease of use. Three factors influence user experience: the person's previous experience and inner state at the time of use; the properties of the product, system, or service; and context of use." This study also endeavors to address these factors. However, there are very few studies found on users' satisfaction surveys in a national library setting. The available studies are reviewed below.

Ekeng & Esin (2021) investigated users' satisfaction with library facilities and the attitude of staff in the national library of Cross River State, Nigeria. They randomly sampled 554 participants for the questionnaire survey. The t-tests revealed users' satisfaction with library facilities and attitude of staff significantly high. The study recommended the friendliness of staff towards users and uninterrupted power supply.

Kadir et al. (2016) examined the factors influencing the usage of electronic resources at the National Library of Malaysia (NLM). They selected four factors for their study: individual behavior, library staff, library services, and library technology. A total of 218 library visitors participated in the questionnaire survey. Findings indicate that the library technology and

library staff are having the strongest relationships with user satisfaction. Results indicate that user experience cannot be belittled as it would determine their interest and willingness to consistently use the NLM electronic resources.

Shabi, Oyedapo, & Osaniyi (2016) studied the level of users' satisfaction with the library services rendered at the National Library of Nigeria through a questionnaire survey against a convenient sample of 100 users. Most of the respondents were single, male students, and teenagers. The overall level of satisfaction with library services was found to be low (44%). Suggestions for improvement included improved collection, provision of functional computer workstations with the internet, reprographics facilities, and increased opening hours. The authors recommended that library staff members, though competent, needed to pay more attention to human relations.

Oh, Lim, & Yeo (2006) analyzed the gap between users' perceptions and staff expectations about dimensions of library service quality (library staff, service supports. materials and resources, and facilities and equipment), service value, user satisfaction, royalty in the National Libray of Korea (NLK). They administered a questionnaire survey on 614 users and 100 staff members of the NLK. Users evaluated service quality lower but evaluated service value, satisfaction. and loyalty higher. In terms of showing complaining behaviors, users were less than the staff expected. For users. only the dimension of library staff influenced significantly the service value, satisfaction, complaining behavior, and loyalty.

Mohammadi et al. (2016) investigated user satisfaction in different libraries of Iran including the manuscript department's services of the national library using a questionnaire survey. The study dimensions comprised the provision of IT applications including the information retrieval system in the library. The study found that users were overall satisfied with library services. The full-text article in the Persian language could not be translated owing to the image format.

Methodology and Limitations

This study is a quantitative survey to assess the users' satisfaction with the National Library of Pakistan (NLP) across certain dimensions. A semi-structured questionnaire is constructed based on a review of relevant, scholarly literature. The questionnaire consists of three parts, demographics, perceptions, and open-ended comments. The second part measures the perceptions of NLP users on a modified Likert-type scale. The questionnaire was also piloted after review by the selected experts. The principal researcher personally visited the NLP many times occasionally to administer the paper questionnaire to meet the target of obtaining responses/feedback from an accidental, voluntary sample of 100 users. The data are analyzed quantitatively using frequency counts. Limitations include a non-probability sample of 100 users and simple data analysis in frequency counts. The result of scale reliability analysis checked with SPSS-22 suggests the instrument's high trustworthiness (Table 1).

Table 1. Scale Reliability Analysis (n = 100)

Sr#	Users' perceptions	Cronbach's alpha
1	Satisfaction with library facilities (9 items)	.919
2	Satisfaction with library collection (7 items)	.922
3	Satisfaction with library services (9 items)	.921
4	Satisfaction with library staff (5 items)	.915

Findings of the Study

   This section analyses and interprets the collected data starting with demographics and followed by perceptions and open-ended comments.

Demographics

   The majority of users comprise females, below 30 years of age, undergraduates, and students. Table 2 shows the demographic frequency of the surveyed users.

Table 2. Demographics (n = 100)

Sr#	Demographic	Frequency
1	Gender	Male = 44 Female = 56
2	Age	Below 30 years = 62 30 years and above = 38
3	Qualification	Graduate = 37 Undergraduate = 63
4	Occupation	Student = 42 Teacher = 20 Journalist = 11 Other = 27

Purpose and frequency of using NLP

   The majority of users visit NLP almost daily for academic study. Also, they have been visiting the NLP for more than a year (Table 3).

Table 3. Purpose / Frequency of Using NLP (n = 100)

Sr#	Frequency / purpose	Count
1	Purpose of using NLP	Academic study = 41 Research = 32 Competitive exams = 15 Recreation/time-pass = 12
2	Frequency of using NLP	Less than a year = 19 One or more years = 81
3	Frequency of visiting NLP	Almost daily = 63 Occasionally = 37

Satisfaction with NLP facilities

   The majority of users show satisfaction with all relevant items.

Table 4. Satisfaction with Library Facilities (n = 100)

Sr#	Facility type	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied
1	Enough space for individual learning and social activities	82	10	8
2	Location of the library is approachable	77	16	7
3	Research rooms facility	77	16	7
4	Central air conditioning (heating and cooling)	79	14	7
5	Conducive study environment	78	11	11
6	Sufficient lighting	79	11	10
7	Cleanliness	82	7	11
8	Overall library environment	79	13	8
9	Library hours	76	7	17

Satisfaction with NLP collection

The majority of users show satisfaction with all relevant items.

Table 5. Satisfaction with Library Collection (n = 100)

Sr#	Collection type	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied	Never used
1	Serial publications	81	7	10	2
2	General books	83	8	8	1
3	Reference books	77	9	13	1
4	Theses / dissertations	69	13	15	3
5	Rare books & manuscripts	64	12	17	7
6	Digital resources (offline/ CD Rom)	64	10	20	6
7	Digital resources (online)	65	7	22	6

Satisfaction with NLP services

The majority of users show satisfaction with all relevant items.

Table 6. Satisfaction with Library Services (n = 100)

Sr#	Service type	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied	Never used
1	Reference services	84	11	4	1
2	Library catalogue (OPAC)	67	11	19	3
3	Photocopying service	65	11	21	3
4	Scanning service	64	11	21	4
5	Computing service	72	8	18	2
6	Internet/Wi-Fi service	74	8	16	2
7	User orientation service	69	17	13	1
8	Fresh arrivals display	69	13	17	1
9	Current awareness service	69	12	19	0

Satisfaction with attitude/behavior of NLP staff

The majority of users show satisfaction with all relevant items.

Table 7. Satisfaction with Library Staff (n = 100)

Sr#	Attitude/behavior	Satisfied	Neutral	Not satisfied
1	Courteous to users	79	11	10
2	Empathy towards users	79	14	7
3	Readiness to respond to user requests	79	17	4
4	Prompt service	78	9	13
5	Neat and decent appearance	82	10	8

Open-ended comments

Out of 100 respondents, 25 furnished suggestions for further improvement. These suggestions are arranged into two themes along with users' feedback below.

Facilities:
- Improvement in the centrally air-conditioning (heating and cooling) facility according to weather.
- Renovation of building.
- Reduced photocopying rates.
- More lighting, furniture, and study carrels.
- Provision of separate reading space for women.
- Provision of a separate section in the canteen for women.
- Extension in library hours.
- Improvement in cleanliness especially the restrooms.

Services:
- Provision of faster Wi-Fi service.
- 24/7 availability OPAC; sometimes found down.
- Provision of online tutorial video on OPAC searching.

Conclusion

This study sought users' satisfaction with NLP facilities, collection, services, and attitude/behavior of staff. A semi-structured questionnaire comprising demographic and perception variables along with open-ended comments was administered. A convenient sample of 100 users participated in the survey because of the low number of daily visitors in a pandemic situation. Owing to the non-probability sample, the findings of this study should be used with caution. The majority of the users showed their satisfaction against all the variables. This is said that the majority of people generally opt for a positive opinion. However, they also furnished some suggestions for further improvement. These suggestions might be from the users who opted to be neutral or not satisfied with the relevant questionnaire items. They suggested improvement in the air-conditioning system, renovation of the building, reduced photocopying charges, more lighting, furniture, and study carrels, provision of separate reading space and section in the canteen for women, extension in library hours, cleanliness especially the restrooms, faster Wi-Fi, and 24/7 availability OPAC along with its tutorial.

Usually, one library in a country serves as a national library as is the case in Pakistan as well. The government of Pakistan is spending millions of rupees on NLP annually. One of the objectives of NLP is to serve the nation. This survey may be helpful for the NLP administration to make informed decisions for further improvement. This study may also motivate other researchers to survey their national libraries, especially in countries with similar conditions. These types of surveys are also necessary for developing countries where users' expectations might usually be higher than the human and financial resources of the library. Studies should also be conducted to know how the NLP is meeting its other objectives.

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