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Hussain, Mohammad; Parveen, Ansa; and Faqir, Dr. Khan, "The Status of Resources and Services in the Public Libraries of Sindh, Pakistan: A Study" (2022). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 6963.
<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/6963>

The Status of Resources and Services in the Public Libraries of Sindh, Pakistan: A Study

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Abstract

Purpose: This study assessed the public libraries of Sindh in terms of information and human resources, services and the problems faced by the libraries in the delivery of services.

Methodology: The study was quantitative in nature and survey research method was used to achieve the desired objectives. There were 30 public libraries, which constituted the study's population and data was collected from heads/incharge of libraries through the questionnaire. The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.

Results: The heads of most libraries were non-professionals, and some libraries were worked with very few staff. The availability of information resources was found inadequate and resources such as maps, reports, theses & dissertations, rare books, and e-books were found in very few libraries. The services such as open shelf, circulation, reference and current awareness services were offered by most libraries; however, SDI, audiovisual, document reservation, interlibrary loan, orientation and scanning services were offered by few libraries. The major problems faced by the libraries were lack of training opportunities, non-availability of integrated library software, insufficient information, human and financial resources, limited e-resources and lack of commitment from the management.

Implications: The study's findings could be beneficial to the concerned authorities. The key points to be considered include 1) information resources should be procured both in printed and electronic formats, 2) the existing facilities and services should be upgraded and extended to other libraries and, 3) sufficient funds should be provided to acquire information resources, develop proper infrastructure and launched new services.

Originality: This is the first study in the province to assess the various aspects of public libraries. It will fill the literature gap and guide the researchers to explore the other aspects of public libraries.

Keywords: Information Resources, Library Services, Public Libraries, Human Resources, Sindh,

Pakistan

Introduction

Public libraries play a key role in developing any society (Saleh & Lasisi, 2011). It is a democratic institution and provides services to all residents of any community to improve their individual, family and community lives (Scott, 2011). Akanwa (2010) defined the public library as a library that provides information resources, services and recreational outlets to the citizens, including the young, the old, the literate and the non-literate. According to IFLA (2001), public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community, either through local, regional, or national government or through some other form of community organization. According to Aina (2004); Gill (2001), unlike other libraries that cater services to a specific demographic, the public library is open to everyone and provide services to a wide range of people, including young, children, the disabled, prisoners, the aged, nursing mothers, organizations and people in government. Wijetunge (2000) opined that public library is a place where community members can get free and easy access to a wide range of information and knowledge.

The fundamental goal of the public library is to provide resources and services to individuals and organizations to meet their educational, informational, and recreational requirements (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010). Because they are public, social, and community institutions, public libraries link the government and its citizens (Buschman, 2012; Johnson, 2012; Sigler et al., 2011). These are strong institutions that can affect society (Black & Muddiman, 2017). The functions of the public library are discussed by Handa (2011), which include providing access to information, imparting informal education, promoting cultural and social activities, preserving local literature, and strengthening the democratic spirit of the citizens. Adebayo (2012) argued that public libraries could help in reducing the level of unemployment by engaging the youth in the activities like, organize seminars and workshops in collaboration with government agencies, giving training to youth, starting their own business, creating awareness in youth, providing mobile services in rural areas, increase literacy, promote adult and continuing education, re-engineer the youth for the purpose to use their energy for the betterment of the society and provide the accurate and latest information to the policymakers to facilitate them in the decision-making process.

Sindh is one of the four provinces of Pakistan and is in the southeastern region of the country. It is the third-largest province of county by area and the second largest province by population after Punjab. According to the census of 2017 the population of the province is approximately 47.85 million. The economy of Sindh is the second-largest in Pakistan after the

province of Punjab; its provincial capital of Karachi is the most populous city in the country and its main financial hub. Sindh is home to a sizable portion of Pakistan's industrial sector and contains two of the country's busiest commercial seaports: Port Qasim and Karachi. Sindh's remaining economy is based on agriculture, producing fruits, consumer goods and vegetables for the rest of the country (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2021). According to the Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement (PSLM), the literacy rate of the province is 58% which includes 68% male and 47% female; moreover, the literacy rate of rural areas is 39%, while urban areas is 73% (Government of Pakistan, 2021).

The researchers found that no research work has been conducted on the public libraries of Sindh. This study is carried out to fill the literature gap, bring public libraries into research circles, and provide a base for future researchers to assess other aspects of public libraries. This study examined the public libraries of the province in term of human resources, information resources, services and the problems faced by the staff in the delivery of services.

Literature Review

The public library is a cultural institution with the goal of meeting the information needs of its patrons (Zhong, 2007). Public libraries play an important role in educating society. They can serve as a person's first point of contact with books outside of the home (Shafawi & Hassan, 2018). As expressed by Bashir, Soroya, Soroya and Khanum (2016); Kenney (2013), public libraries should be designed to meet the diverse information needs of 21st-century users by assembling collections that are useful to the general public. According to Rafi, Ali, and Ahmad (2016), public libraries should have high-quality, well-balanced collections covering a wide range of disciplines and formats.

Hussain and Parveen (2021) reported inadequate information resources in the public libraries of Balochistan, Pakistan. According to Warraich, Malik and Ameen (2018), public libraries in Punjab, Pakistan, had meager information resources. Because 54% of the libraries were small with a collection of up to 5000 books and 70% of libraries were acquiring 1-5 newspapers. Abdulahi, Yaya and Saidu, (2020) explored the information resources of the public libraries in Katsina, Nigeria and reported that the collection was composed of books, journals, directories, newspapers, magazines, films and audio visual materials. They also found that the available resources were obsolete and do not fulfill the needs of the society. Therefore, sufficient funds were suggested to be allotted to acquire the latest printed and e-resources. Ghalavand and Karimi (2020)

found that very few public libraries in Iranian cultural centers had e-books, audiobooks, access to full-text databases and digital library. Taufiq, Rehman and Ashiq (2020) recommended that the collection of public libraries need improvement and should subscribe the bibliographic database and procure digital contents for their users. Rana and Bhatti (2020) evaluated the resources and services of five public libraries in the Punjab, Pakistan. Though the surveyed libraries had adequate information resources in various formats, it was suggested that the library could serve more effectively by acquiring the most recent and up-to-date information on various subjects and local history and culture.

A study was conducted by Kasimani and Rajendran (2019) to gauge the resources and services. The library offered services like circulation, internet, reference, photocopying and assistance in the use of the library. Idhalama (2019) viewed that the library should provide services to all classes of users irrespective of age, sex, color and disability. It was ascertained how public libraries could satisfy the information needs of physically challenged users, solve their challenges and guide them to benefit from the library services. The majority of public libraries in Punjab, Pakistan, as mentioned by Waheed, Rafiq and Soroya (2017), offered traditional libraries services, including reference services (79.3%), current awareness services (55.2%), photocopying services (51.7%) and internet services (55.2%). However, most of these did not offer services such as SDI (65.5%), document delivery services (72.4%) and digitizing services (75.9%). Hussain and Parveen (2021) found that majority of the libraries in Punjab Pakistan, did not offer services such as reference, orientation, photocopying, indexing, discussion rooms and scanning facilities

Nawaz (2016) presented an overview of the Liaqat Memorial Library Karachi, Pakistan and stated that the library is serving society by organizing a variety of information resources and offerings services to researchers, children, women and the general public. The library also offered spaces in an auditorium where workshops, seminars and conferences were organized on educational, social and religious topics. Rizvi (2016) talked about the services and materials available at the Punjab Public library Lahore. The library has three reading halls, one each in reference, children and newspapers sections. The library offered a wide variety of services, including book circulation, reference services, internet access, photocopying, scanning, digital, SDI, CAS and OPAC access. The library also has an auditorium where educational, religious and cultural programs or events are arranged.

Hussain and Idrees (2021) opined that public libraries in Pakistan faced numerous challenges, included lack of electronic and information resources, insufficient human resources, limited financial resources, power interruptions; lack of technical support and IT-literate staff. Rana and Bhatti (2020) found that the public libraries of Punjab had limited information resources, poor ICT facilities and limited LIS and IT staff. It was advised that the libraries should acquire more information resources and ensure the recruitment of skilled staff. Taufiq et al. (2020) evaluated user satisfaction with public libraries' resources and services and found that frequent visits to the library have a positive relationship with users' satisfaction. The respondents were not satisfied with printed information resources and with the catalogue of the libraries. Sinha and Datta (2018) identified 25 public libraries in Tripura, India, which offered services such as lending service, general reading facility, newspaper reading service, reading facility for children, women & senior citizens and information searching facility. There was no library to provide internet facility and reprographic service to their users.

Objectives of the Study

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives: -

1. To see the status of information resources in the public libraries of Sindh
2. To know about the human resources in public libraries of Sindh
3. To examine the services offered by the public libraries of Sindh
4. To highlight the problems faced by the libraries in the delivery of services.

Research Design and Methodology

The quantitative research design was used, and survey was conducted to accomplish the objectives of the study. It was appropriate because many researchers used this method in such type of studies (Hussain & Idrees, 2021; Kumar & Kumar, 2010; Rehman et al., 2011). The population of the study were the public libraries of Sindh worked under the administrative control of Culture, Tourism, Antiquities & Archives Department, Sindh. These libraries were chosen because they are in better condition cooperatively than libraries worked under the supervision of local and district governments, which in most districts are merely reading rooms. Furthermore, these libraries have some physical infrastructure, resources, and also provide some services to the community, whereas libraries under the control of the local government just get newspapers and operate as reading rooms and do not provide library services. A total of 30 such libraries were identified; therefore,

the census-based approach was used to collect data from the whole population. Moreover, the required data was gathered from the librarians/incharge of libraries.

After conducting a thorough review of the literature, the questionnaire was drafted. Most of the questions were derived from questionnaires and studies used in previous research (Ahmed et al., 2016; Hussain, 2014; Baqi, 2016; Mirza, 2010). The questionnaire was used as a research instrument to collect necessary data for the study because the population was geographically spread over a large area. Furthermore, it was used because the study's objectives could easily be achieved through this tool. Moreover, it was chosen because it is cost-effective, anonymous, saves time and removes the respondent's bias (Busha & Harter, 1980; Powell & Connaway, 2004).

The structured questionnaires were distributed among the heads/incharge of public libraries and 28 fully filled questionnaires were received with a response rate of 97.14%. The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (version-23) and descriptive statistics were applied to analyze the data and interpret the results.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The collected data was analyzed, and the results are presented in tables with interpretation.

Demographic Information of the Respondents

This section presents demographic information of the respondents regarding their designations, qualifications and experience. Table 1 demonstrates that the director headed one library, additional directors headed 3 (10.7%), deputy directors 8 (28.6%) libraries and 6 (21.4%) libraries were headed by assistant directors. It was also observed that 9 (32.1%) were headed by "others," including cataloguer, library assistant, clerk, or other non-professional staff. The data shows that the heads/incharge of 24 (85.7%) libraries had the educational background of library science with the degree of Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS) and BLIS degree, while 4 (14.1%) heads/incharge of libraries were non-professional with master's and bachelor's degrees in other disciplines. The data also indicates that 9 (32.1%) respondents had up to 5 years' experience, 6 (21.4%) had 6-10, 10 (35.7%) had 11-15 years and 2 (7.1%) respondents had more than 20 years' experience.

Table 1
Demographic Information of Respondents

Designation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Director	1	3.6
Additional Director	3	10.7
Deputy Director	8	28.6
Assistant Director	6	21.4
Junior Librarian	1	3.6
Others	9	32.1
Qualifications		
MLIS	22	78.6
Bachelor Degree	1	3.6
Master	3	10.7
BLIS	2	7.1
Experience		
Up to 5 Years	9	32.1
6-10 Years	6	21.4
11-15 Years	10	35.7
16-20 Years	1	3.6
> 20 Years	2	7.1

Human Resource in Libraries

This section presents information about the human resources in the surveyed libraries, including LIS professionals, LIS para-professionals, non-professional employees and total staff members. The statistics in Table 2 shows that 16 (57.1%) libraries had no LIS professionals, 10 (35.7%) libraries worked with 1 LIS professional, and one library had 2-3 LIS professionals. As the data indicates, 12 (42.9%) libraries had no LIS para-professional staff, 14 (50 %) libraries worked with just one member and 1(3.6%) libraries with 2-3 and another one worked with 4-5 paraprofessional staff. There were 12 (42.9%) libraries that worked with just 2-3 non-professional staff, 3 (10.7%) libraries with 4-6, 5 (17.9%) libraries and five libraries worked with 7-10 members. There were 10 (35.8%) libraries with more than 10 non-professional staff; out of these, 5(10.7%) worked with 11-14 staff and 3 (10.7%) libraries had more than 14 non-professional staff. It is evident from the data that the libraries had a shortage of staff because the entire staff of 15 (53.6%) libraries was ranged from 3-9, and 13 (46.4%) libraries worked with more than 10 staff members.

Table 2
Status of Human Resources

LIS Professionals	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0	16	57.1
1	10	35.7
2-3	1	7.12
LIS Para-Professionals		
0	12	42.9
1	14	50.0
2-3	1	3.6
4-5	1	3.6
Non-Professionals		
2-4	12	42.9
4-6	3	10.7
7-10	5	17.9
11-14	5	17.9
>14	3	10.7
Total Staff		
3	3	10.7
4- 5	5	17.9
6-9	7	25.0
10-13	4	14.3
14-17	3	10.7
18-21	3	10.7
>21	3	10.7

Information Resources in the Libraries

This section gives statistics about the available printed and digital information resources.

Book Collection in Libraries

Table 3 demonstrates information about the number of books available in the surveyed libraries. There were 14 (50%) libraries with up to 6,000 books, out of which 3 (10.7%) libraries had up to 3,000 books, 5 (17.9%) libraries with 1001-3000 books and 6 (21.4%) libraries had books ranged from 3001-6000. There were 13 (46.4%) libraries with more than 10000 books, among these 2 (7.1%) had books ranged from 10001-15000, 2 (7.1%) with from 15001-20000, one with up to 25000, 3 (10.7%) with books from 25001-30000, one library had up to 40000 books and one library had more than 50000 book collection.

Table 3
Number of Books

Number of Books	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Up to 1000	3	10.7
1001-3000	5	17.9
3001-6000	6	21.4
6001-10000	1	3.6
10001-15000	2	7.1
15001-20000	2	7.1
20001-25000	1	3.6
25001-30000	3	10.7
30001-40000	1	3.6
> 50000	4	14.3

Periodicals Publications Procured by the Libraries

The respondents were asked to give information about the periodical publications acquired for the libraries. The data in Table 4 demonstrates that 3 (10.7%) libraries did not procure any magazine, 11 (39.3%) libraries acquired 2-3, 7 (25%) libraries procured 4-5 magazines and 7 libraries acquired more than 5 magazines. The data also specifies the number of newspapers procured by the libraries. Out of 28 libraries, 27 libraries procured newspapers in varied numbers from 1 to more than 14 newspapers. 2 libraries 2 (7.1%) procured 1 newspaper, 4 (14.3%) libraries 2-4 newspapers, 8 (28.6%) libraries 5-7 newspapers, 4 (14.3%) libraries 11-14 newspapers and 8 (28.6%) libraries acquired more than 14 newspapers. It was amazing to know that 22 libraries did not subscribe any journal while only 6 libraries subscribed research journals.

Table 4
Number of Periodicals Publications

No. of Magazines	Frequency	Percentage (%)
0	3	10.7
2-3	11	39.3
4-5	7	25.0
>5	7	25.0
No. of Newspapers		
0	1	3.6
1	2	7.1
2-4	4	14.3
5-7	8	28.6
8-10	1	3.6
11-14	4	14.3
> 14	8	28.6
No. of Research Journals		
0	22	78.6
1-2	3	10.7
3-4	2	7.1
> 4	1	3.6

Miscellaneous Printed Resources

The information obtained from the surveyed libraries about the various printed information resources is listed in Table 5. It was amazing to know that out of 28 libraries, only 3 libraries had both maps and reports in their collection, 2 libraries had bound volumes of journals, and one library both had theses & dissertations and rare books in their collection.

Table 5
Availability of Miscellaneous Printed Resources in Libraries

Name of Resources	Yes (%)	No (%)
Maps	3(10.7)	25(89.3)
Reports	3(10.7)	25(89.3)
Theses & dissertations	1(3.6)	27(96.4)
Journals (Bound Volumes)	2(7.1)	26(92.9)
Manuscripts	1(3.6)	27(96.4)
Rare books	0	28(100)

Electronic Information Resources in Libraries

Electronic information resources are the electronic representation of information; these are available in various forms like e-books, digital libraries, databases, e-journals, e-zines, theses, research reports and conference papers (Moyo, 2004; Nicholas et al., 2007; Thanuskodi & Ravi,

2011). The data collected from the public libraries regarding the availability of various e-resources are enumerated in Table 6. The data specifies that out of 28 libraries only 4 libraries had e-books while none of the library had the subscription of bibliographic and full text databases, moreover CD ROM & DVD databases and electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) were not found in any public library.

Table 6
Availability of e-resources

E-resources	Yes (%)	No (%)
E-books	4(14.3)	24(85.7)
Access of Databases	0(0)	28(100)
CD ROM Database	0(0)	28(100)
DVD Databases	0(0)	28(100)
Electronic Theses & Dissertations (ETDs)	0(0)	28(100)

Services offered by Public Libraries

Karur and Walia (2016) stated that the public library should provide the opportunity for adults and children to remain up-to-date and informed about progress in the sciences and arts. A set of eighteen statements were asked from the heads/incharge of public libraries regarding the availability of various services on the dichotomous scale (Yes, No). The data in Table 7 shows that most libraries offered services, including open shelf (96.4%), circulation (92.9%), reference (89.3%) and current awareness services (57.1%). It was also found that there were significant libraries that offered some services such as orientation services (46.4%), photocopying facilities (46.4%), SDI services (42.9%), discussion rooms facility (28.6%) and scanning facilities (25%). As specified in Table 7, some services were offered in very few libraries or not offered in any library, including document reservation (10.7%), abstracting (10.7%), OPAC of the information resources (7.1%), audiovisual services (3.6%), interlibrary loan (3.6%) indexing services (3.6%), CD and DVD writing (3.6%) and scanning facilities (3.6%), book bank (0%) and translation services (0%).

Table 7
Services offered by Public Libraries

Service	Frequency (%)	Percentage (%)
	Yes	No
The books are displayed in shelves	27(96.4)	01(3.6)
Circulation service	26(92.9)	02(7.1)
Reference service	25(89.3)	03(10.7)
Current awareness service (CAS)	16(57.1)	12(42.9)
Orientation services	13(46.4)	15(53.6)
Photocopying facility	13(46.4)	15(53.6)
Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)	12(42.9)	16(57.1)
Discussion room facility	08(28.6)	20(71.4)
Scanning facility	07(25)	21(75)
Document reservation service	03(10.7)	25(89.3)
Abstracting service	03(10.7)	25(89.3)
Online Public Access Catalogue (OPAC)	02(7.1)	26(92.9)
Audio visual services	01(3.6)	27(94.6)
Interlibrary loan service	01(3.6)	27(94.6)
Indexing service	01(3.6)	27(94.6)
CD and DVD writing facility	01(3.6)	27(94.6)
The book bank facility	0(00)	28(100)
Translation facility of any document	0(00)	28(100)

Problems faced by Libraries

The heads/incharge of libraries were asked about the problems they faced in the delivery of services. The data in Table 8 reveals that the surveyed libraries faced many problems because almost all the statements received higher mean value than 4.00. The major problems identified by the respondents were that most of libraries were facing these problems more frequently. These statements were lack of training opportunities ($\mu=4.50$), non-availability of integrated library software ($\mu=4.50$), insufficient IT literate staff ($\mu=4.50$), insufficient LIS professionals ($\mu=4.46$), limited human resources ($\mu=4.46$) and non-availability of technical support ($\mu=4.50$). The other problems highlighted by the respondents were limited e-resources ($\mu=4.32$), interrupted power supply ($\mu=4.28$), lack of IT expertise among library users ($\mu=4.25$), lack of financial resources ($\mu=4$) reluctance among LIS professionals to use IT ($\mu=3.96$) and limited information resources ($\mu=3.67$).

Table 8
Problems of Libraries

Statement	Rank	Mean	SD	Variance
Lack of training opportunities	1	4.50	1.07	1.14
Non availability of integrated library software	1	4.50	1.00	1.00
Insufficient IT literate staff	1	4.50	.793	.630
Insufficient LIS professionals	2	4.46	.881	.776
Limited human resources	2	4.46	.922	.851
Non-availability of technical support	2	4.46	.838	.702
Limited electronic resources	3	4.32	1.18	1.41
Interrupted power supply	4	4.28	1.11	1.24
Lack of IT expertise among library users	5	4.25	.887	.787
Reluctance among library users to use IT	5	4.25	.927	.861
Lack of awareness about the potential of IT among LIS professionals	6	4.14	1.11	1.23
Lack of financial resources	7	4.00	1.08	1.18
Reluctance among LIS professionals to use IT	8	3.96	.999	.999
Lack of initiative among LIS professionals in introducing IT based resources & services.	9	3.89	1.16	1.35
Limited information resources	10	3.67	1.36	1.85
Lack of commitment from the management	11	3.64	1.47	2.16
Inadequate infrastructure	12	3.03	1.26	1.59
Outdated collection	13	2.64	.911	.831

Note: 1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5=Strongly Agree

Discussion

Public library is known as a people's university and not restricted to any group of users. All kinds of people are expected to be served, including young children and people with disabilities (Abdulahi, Yaya and Saidu, 2020). The current study examined the human resources, services and the problems faced by the public libraries in Sindh, Pakistan. It was found that the designations used for the heads/incharge of public libraries in Sindh was of director/additional director/deputy director/assistant directors. Most libraries' heads (85.7%) had the educational background of library science with the degree of Master in Library and Information Science (MLIS) and BLIS degree, while 4 (14.4%) heads/incharge of libraries were non-professional with master's and bachelor's degrees in other disciplines. Hussain (2014); Hussain and Nayab (2021) reported that the higher qualifications of libraries heads in public libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was MLIS

and similar results was supported by Hashmi (20), whose study was based on the public libraries of Islamabad. IFLA recommends that public libraries be led by qualified librarians who have completed a degree or post-graduate courses at a school of library and information studies (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010). According to the standards and guidelines for Australian public libraries, the head of a public library should have a library and information science educational background and be qualified, capable and motivated to perform library operations (APLA & ALIA, 2021). Similarly, following Illinois Public Library standards, a good public library employs qualified staff to manage the library effectively (Illinois Library Association, 2020).

The most important asset of organization is the human resource and other assets become meaningful only when the people transform them into a usable resource (Wani, 2006). It was found that 57.1% libraries had no LIS professionals while 35.7% libraries worked with only one professional staff; moreover, the libraries also had a shortage of staff because the entire staff of 53.6% libraries was ranged from 3-9 members. Mahmood (2006) also argued that 20-30% of public libraries in Pakistan had professional staff while the remaining were run by the non-professional and clerical staff. Warraich, Haq and Ameen (2016) identified 11 libraries in Rawalpindi and found that the heads of only three libraries were professionals. Similar Singh (2012) wrote that only 36% public libraries in Punjab, India was run by professional staff. Hussain (2014) ; Baqi (2016) also highlighted the shortage of staff in the public libraries. Warraich et al. (2016) also explored that most of the libraries in Rawalpindi worked with significantly less staff. Saleh and Lasisi (2011) study's findings also revealed the shortage of staff in the Nigerian public libraries.

It was also observed that the surveyed libraries had insufficient printed information resources including books, periodicals, magazines, maps and reports. The results are consistent with the previous research and stated that most of the libraries were small in terms of the printed collection of books, less subscription of periodicals and newspapers (Hussain, 2014; Malik, 2019; Warraich et al., 2018). The findings were also supported by Abdulahi et al. (2020); Iwhiwhu and Okorodudu (2012), who also reported that available information resources were insufficient and obsolete in public libraries Nigeria. It was observed that 85.7% libraries did not have any e-book while resources such as CD ROM & DVD databases and electronic theses and dissertations (ETDs) were also not found in any public library.

Most libraries offered services such as an open shelf, circulation, reference and current awareness services, while most libraries did not offer orientation services, interlibrary loans, SDI services, document reservation services, indexing and abstracting services. A few libraries offered the services and facilities such as photocopying, discussion rooms and scanning facilities, OPAC of the information resources, audiovisual services, CD and DVD writing facilities, book bank, and translation services. These findings were like those revealed in the previous studies (Hashmi, 2019; Hussain, 2014; Kaur & Walia, 2015; Marwat & Khan, 2015; Warraich et al., 2016). Fati and Yelwa (2015) also found that public libraries in Plateau state, Nigeria, did not provide relevant information services to the ruler citizens.

The major problems identified by the heads/incharge of libraries were lack of training opportunities, non-availability of integrated library software, insufficient IT literate and LIS professionals, limited human resources, limited e-resources, lack of financial resources and limited information resources. The previous studies conducted at the national, provincial and districts levels in Pakistan also identified similar types of problems of public libraries, including insufficient and irregular finance, lack of facilities, lack of IT infrastructure, limited information resources, non-availability of e-resources, lack of experienced LIS professional (Bhatti, 2010; Haider, 2007; Hussain & Idrees, 2021; Khan & Bawden, 2005; Mahmood et al., 2005)

Recommendations

Based on the finding of the study the following suggestions are given for the improvement of public libraries:-

- All the components of the existing public libraries need much improvement; therefore, the government should provide all the necessary resources and facilities. Moreover, the governments must ensure the minimum standard required for public libraries as specified by professional bodies such as IFLA and UNESCO.
- The staff in the libraries also need much improvement; therefore, LIS professional staff must be recruited; also, the head of each library must have a professional degree in library and information science.
- The libraries should procure the latest books; the journals may also be subscribed to provide scholarly information to the researchers. The resources such as magazines, maps and reports should also be acquired.

- The libraries should also acquire e-resources such as e-books, e-journals and ETDs. Moreover, all libraries should have the subscription of the HEC digital library to give access to the world's scholarly literature.
- An appropriate budget should be provided to all public libraries to run the libraries smoothly. The librarians/ incharge should have the power and freedom to spend the budget based on the users' needs.
- The library services must be improved and quality-based services should be offered to the public. Moreover, the libraries should introduce new services to full fill the information needs of the people.
- The library authorities should work to create awareness among the public about the libraries and also make efforts to improve the image of library in the society.
- It was observed that the public libraries faced several issues; therefore, the government and the departments concerned should work and make necessary arrangements to overcome all these difficulties so that these information hubs actively serve society

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