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## Library Anxiety among Undergraduate Students: A case study of faculty of Management Science, University of Peshawar

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# **Library Anxiety among Undergraduate Students: A case study of faculty of Management Science, University of Peshawar**

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

This study aims to examine the impact of Library anxiety on the academic performance of undergraduate students at the faculty of management sciences, university of Peshawar.

### **Design/Methodology/Approach**

Library anxiety is a psychological barrier to academic success among college students. A questionnaire was designed and distributed among 262 students of the faculty of management science at the University of Peshawar; 244 questionnaires were collected with a response rate of 93.12 based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample size determination.

### **Findings**

The results indicate that the students were more anxious about library staff than other factors. Thus it can be inferred that the attitude of library staff made a significant contribution to the degree of library anxiety among students, which made them unable to utilize library resources and services effectively. Such behaviour also contributed to other areas of library anxiety-like non-use or avoidance of the library by students, resulting in poor academic grades.

### **Practical implications**

The finding of this study is helpful for other faculties at the University of Peshawar and provinces exclusively. The study is unique; no other studies have been conducted by anyone earlier at this faculty. This study provides a holistic sketch of literature on the same issue.

### **Originality/value**

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On the one hand, this study initially provides the use of libraries in the faculty of management science at the University of Peshawar. Still, on the other hand, it also provides a remedial measurement of library anxiety and its usage. The study will be helpful for background knowledge in future research and stakeholders, academia and scholars in the field may get optimal knowledge on the same issues in future.

**Keywords:** Library Anxiety, Undergraduate Students, University of Peshawar, Librarian behaviour. The attitude of Students, Library uses.

### **Introduction and background of the study**

In present-day society, education at all levels can be promoted more effectively and efficiently with well-equipped libraries, perfected as the principal vehicle for carrying forward and making available the intellectual resources of the nations and the world. Thus, the old concept of libraries and librarianship has changed. The need for libraries to move away from the traditional book centred approach and toward information centred libraries is felt. In the present-day world, libraries serve as information centres serving their users with electronic and non-electronic means. Libraries are the primary sources of research conducted using different technological tools. With the increased use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) in libraries, a massive collection of books and non-book material, sophisticated information dissemination and retrieval techniques and vast and complex multistoried designs of library buildings, the problem of library anxiety is being observed among library users (Rehman, Soroya and Awan 2016, Gogoi, Singson & Thiyagarajan (2021).

The term "anxiety" is used mainly in psychology and describes a state of fear or unease that a person experiences in a particular situation. It is manifested by subjective and psychological characteristics (Gardijan 2021). The idea of "library anxiety" has been around since the 1970s. However, the term "Library Anxiety" was coined by Mellon in 1986 and has existed as a theory since then (Abusin & Zainab 2010, Jan, Anwar & Warraich 2016, Asghar & Bhatti 2017 and Guardian 2021). Library anxiety is a common phenomenon among undergraduate students characterized by feelings of negative emotions, including uneasiness, self-defeating thoughts, fear, tension, physical and mental stress, ruminations and a state of inferiority complex. Likewise, Onwuegbuzie & Jiao (1997), Asgharpour & Sajid (2013), Noori, Tareen & Mashwani (2017) and Anjaline (2020) describe library anxiety as a psychological barrier to the success of students in their academic career which could have serious adverse effects on students' educational performance and quantity and quality of their academic productions. Fraser and Bartlett (2018) argue that undergraduate students often experience discomfort or anxious feelings when interacting with the library and its resources and services and library staff. Such fear or discomfort while interacting with the library and its resources is termed library anxiety. According to Jiao & Onwuegbuzie (1999) and Onwuegbuzie, Jiao & Bostick (2004), library anxiety occurs in some special circumstances or contexts; therefore, students experience library anxiety are not anxious outside of the library. Thus, their finding establishes a link between library anxiety and university success.

Academic libraries are considered the largest resources serving students, teachers, and the institution concerned: Hussain, A (2021). Teachers and students of all grades rely heavily on the academic libraries for study, teaching and research. However, it has been observed that many undergraduate students initially fear or avoid interacting with the services and resources of these libraries (Black 2016). They felt lost, overwhelmed and unable to locate their required resources while using the library. Library anxiety causes students to experience adverse reactions toward the library, limiting their intellectual potential and developing the required research skills. Persons related to LIS have felt the need to examine and measure library anxiety quantitatively among different strata of library readers. Hence developed some quantitative tools. Bostick was the first who develop a tool in 1992 called Bostick Library Anxiety Scale (LAS). The Multi-dimensional Anxiety Scale followed this by Kampen in 2004. In 2012, Anwar et al. (2012) developed the AQAK library anxiety scale based on LAS. The present study is based on the AQAK library scale. It examines the overall anxiety level and the differences in library anxiety levels based on gender and study levels among undergraduate students of the management and information sciences faculty of the University of Peshawar, Pakistan. The study also examines the interaction of undergraduate students with the library and provides an essential new perspective on students' achievement and reveals various ways the academic libraries can decrease the barriers to their resources and services.

### **Literature review**

The work of Swope and Katzer entitled "Why don't they ask questions" is considered the first-ever study on library anxiety in which they examined why college students were reluctant to use their college library and avoided asking questions to the librarian due to a lack of confidence or due to the fear that it might disturb the librarian (Onwuegbuzie & Jiao, 1997). It was Mellon (1986) who introduced the term "library anxiety" for the first time in his article "library anxiety: A grounded theory and its development", published in *College and Research Libraries* in 1986 and set the stage for further research on the topic. The subsequent major work on library anxiety was Bostick, who developed a valid and reliable instrument to measure library anxiety as defined in Mellon's theory (Battle 2004). Following Bostick's work, in 1988, Kuhlthau confirmed the library anxiety of students and it was recognized in library circles that the students' library anxiety increases due to their unfamiliarity with library resources and services and with the use of sophisticated technological tools in library routines (Jan, Anwar & Warraich 2016). Literature. Similarly, Abusin & Zainab (2010), Fraser & Bartiett (2018) and Gogoi, Singson & Thiyagarajan (2021) found that library anxiety increases among undergraduate students when faced with barriers, particularly with staff and sophisticated technological use in libraries.

Karim & Ansari (2017) conducted a study to know the level of anxiety among Malaysian undergraduate students. The study's primary objective was to dig out the factors that play a role in the level of library anxiety among students. The study reported that gender is a moderate factor, followed by nationality and library instructions that play a role in the level of library anxiety among undergraduate students. The study indicated a need to provide

extensive library instructions to the students to train them to use the library correctly. Hussain, A (2018). This will not only change students' negative perceptions about the library but will also help in reducing the level of library anxiety. Similar findings have also been reported by Van (2003), Bown et al. (2004) and Bargmann (2007). They suggested that user instructions play a crucial role in lowering library anxiety among students and encouraging them to utilize the library resources and services more frequently.

The study of Asghar and Bhatti (2017) found that library anxiety was not co-related to the gender, discipline or year of study. Students felt library anxiety due to a lack of library awareness and motivation from their peers to utilize the library and explore its resources. The study found that the rude and unfriendly behaviour of librarians and other library staff was the main reason for library anxiety among students. Other reasons for non-usage of the library were found to be the lack of up-to-date library resources,

A study conducted by Noori, Tareen & Mashwani (2017), citing Alicia, reported several contributed factors responsible for library anxiety among students. These factors include uncertainty, confusion, helplessness, technological barriers and outdated books. The study recognized the lack of library knowledge barriers, the inability of the students to locate their required resources and the usage of online catalogues as the chief features among students resulting in library anxiety. Ahmed and Aziz (2017) found that university students experience library anxiety based on their technological proficiency.

Shehata and Elgallab (2019) conducted a study on library anxiety among Egypt and Saudi Arabia undergraduate students. The study also examined the factors that affect library anxiety among undergraduate students in university libraries. The study reported that lack of training, information literacy skills, unavailability of user education programs, and lack of instructions in the library trigger students' anxiety levels. The study results showed that a number of the undergraduate students were embarrassed by being unable to utilize their library in a proper and lifting manner which is usually caused by not getting library orientation or library instructions and thereby making the usage of the library complicated.

In their study on library anxiety among marginalized university students in India, Gogoi, Singson & Thiyagaragan (2021) concluded that many university students experience library anxiety. The study found the lack of students' information literacy skills was the primary cause of library anxiety among university students. Their study indicated that other reasons that triggered library anxiety among students included unfriendly behaviour of the library staff and the feeling of inadequacy.

### **Research objectives**

The study has the following three primary objectives:

- To find out the various levels of library anxiety among undergraduate students of the Faculty of Management and Information Science, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.

- To examine if there exists any statistically significant difference among undergraduate students based on their gender.
- To examine if there exists any statistically significant difference among undergraduate students based on their study level.

### Material and Method

A survey method of research was employed to conduct this research study. The total population of the study consists of 843 undergraduate students of the faculty of Management and Information Science, University of Peshawar. Based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table of sample size determination, a sample size of 262 was drawn. A convenient sampling technique was used. The questionnaire was administered by hand to all the sampled population, out of which 244 questionnaires, with a response rate of 93.12%, could be collected dully filled in, of which 240 questionnaires were found valid for the analysis of this study.

The study utilized the AQAK library anxiety scale of Anwar et al. (2012). The Cronbach's Alpha (CA) value was calculated in Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS-19) to check the scale's reliability used for this study. The overall CA value for all five factors of the scale was .82, which is considered good, advocating that the scale was reliable. This scale was primarily developed and successfully validated on undergraduate students and had 82% reliability. The AQAK scale has five significant factors and consists of 40 statements. Factor-1 is related to the 'library staff' consisting of ten items, factor-2 is concerned with 'library resources' and has 25 items, factor-3 is 'related to the 'users' knowledge' and has 12 items, factor-4 is 'user education' which has 5 items while factor-5 is related to the library environment and has 7 items. Each statement measured library anxiety on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1-5 (1-agree strongly disagree to 5-strongly). The study used the criterion employed by Ahmed, Ameen and Ullah (2016) for measuring the level of library anxiety based on the mean scores. The 5 points Likert scale formula with the following labels was utilized to measure the overall and facor-wise library anxiety of undergraduate students of the faculty of management and information science of the University of Peshawar, based on a mean score where 1=no anxiety, 2 is low anxiety, 3=mild anxiety, 4=moderate anxiety and 5=sever anxiety. A demographic profile of all the study respondents was collected regarding gender, age and year/semester.

**Table-1, population and sample size**

S. No	Department/Instiute	Population	Sample size
1	College of Home Economics (CHE)	315	173
2	Institute of Management Studies (IMS)	224	141
3	Quaid-e-Azam College of Commerce (QCC)	224	141
4	Department Journalism and Mass Communication (DJMC)	80	66
Total		843	262

### Results

**Demographics:** As given in table-2, 64.58% were male, while 35.41% were female respondents. The year-wise distribution of the study participants shows that 33.75% of the participants were enrolled in 1<sup>st</sup> year (semester 1-2), followed by 28.33% of respondents who were in year-2 (3-4<sup>th</sup> semester). In year-3 (5-6<sup>th</sup> semester), there were 20.83% of students, While in the final year (semester 7-8<sup>th</sup>), there were 17.08% of respondents.

Table-2, Demographics n=240

Group	Number of respondents	Percent
<b>Gender</b>		
Males	155	64.58
females	85	35.41
<b>Year of study</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> year (semester 1-2)	81	33.75
2 <sup>nd</sup> year (semester 3-4)	68	28.33
3 <sup>rd</sup> year (semester 5-6)	50	20.83
4 <sup>th</sup> year (semester 7-8)	41	17.08

**Factor wise library anxiety of the study participants:** As depicted in table-3 below, the overall library anxiety means a score of the total respondents was found to be 3.01 with SD of 0.24, which is a neutral value as per the AQAK scale and falls in the level of mild anxiety. Thus our findings suggest that all the study participants possessed mild library anxiety.

The study also measured factor wise library anxiety of all the study participants. Table-4 provides a descriptive statistical analysis of the sub-factors of library anxiety. These sub-factors are library staff, user education, information resources, the environment of the library, and knowledge of users about the library. The study participants had a mean score of 3.22 and 3.16 had a little higher library anxiety for library staff and users' education. Results also pointed out that the factor "users' knowledge" was the lower reason for library anxiety, with a mean score of 2.64. However, overall results depicted that factor "library staff" was the highest while "library environment" and "users knowledge" were the lowest reasons for library anxiety for study participants.

Table-3, Respondents' overall library anxiety level, n = 240

Statistics	Statistical value
Mean	3.01
SD	0.24
Maximum	2.88
Minimum	2.54

Sub factors	Mean value (SD.)	Min	Max
Library staff	3.22 (.38)	2.28	3.96
User education	3.16 (.44)	2.24	4.18
Information resources	3.10 (.40)	2.11	3.98

Library environment	2.88 (.52)	2.11	3.78
User knowledge	2.64 (.36)	2.01	1.88

Table-4, Factor wise descriptive stats of library anxiety, n = 240

### Students' library anxiety by gender

Gender wise analysis of the study participants was also carried out, which is given in table-5. Results showed that female participants had a high score (2.90) compared to male participants, whose mean score was 2.88. A simple t-test was performed on mean scores of library anxiety for both male and female participants to measure the significant difference in their opinion about overall library anxiety. The criteria of .05 as a significant difference was set to measure the results. As depicted in table 5, results showed no significant difference based on the means of overall library anxiety for males (Mean: 2.88) and females (Mean: 2.90) having t-test value of  $.204 = (.188)$ , ( $p=0.711$ ).

Table-5, Students'library' anxiety results by gender

Gender	Number of respondents	M	SD	Min.	Max.	Significance
Male	155	2.88	0.46	2	3	0.711
Female	85	2.90	0.34	2	3	

When the wise factor analysis of library anxiety of the respondents was conducted by gender, no significant difference was found for any factor between males and females. Details of the descriptive statistics and the t-test are given in table 6.

Table-6, Factor wise library anxiety by gender

No.	Factors	Gender	M (SD)	Minimum	Maximum	Significance
1.	Library staff	Male	3.18 (.38)	3	4	.152
		Female	3.20 (.34)	2	4	
2.	Users' education	Male	3.21 (.45)	2	4	.129
		Female	3.19 (.55)	2	4	
3.	Information sources	Male	2.98 (.35)	2	4	.868
		Female	2.92 (.42)	2	4	
4.	Library environment	Male	2.64 (.32)	2	4	.766
		Female	2.54 (.44)	2	4	
5.	Users' knowledge	Male	2.52 (.48)	2	4	.248
		Female	2.50 (.50)	2	4	

### Library anxiety among undergraduate students based on their year of study



The library anxiety of the undergraduate students based on their year of study was also examined. In order to know about the overall library anxiety of the study participants, different levels of their LA were compared on the overall library anxiety scale. As shown in table-7, the overall mean scores of 1<sup>st</sup>-year students were higher than the rest with a mean score of 3.44 and SD of 0.361, Whereas the overall LA of the final year students was the lowest with a mean score of 2.86 and standard deviation of 0.38. Thus our results indicated that 1<sup>st</sup>-year students were more anxious than those studying in the final year. The overall scores of the rest of the category of students were a bit closer to each other, reflecting the minimum difference in their overall LA level. ANOVA was also used to check the significant difference between the groups. As provided in table-8, the results show no significant difference between the mean scores of all the four groups for the overall LA,  $F(3,220) = 2.29$ ,  $p = .066$ . Thus, it can be inferred that all postgraduate students of the Management and Information Sciences faculty possess a mild level of factor-wise LA.

Table-7, Library anxiety among undergraduate students based on their year of study

Year	M (SD)	Minimum	Maximum
1 <sup>st</sup> year	3.44 (.61)	2.42	3.54
2 <sup>nd</sup> Year	3.21 (.58)	2.40	3.36
3 <sup>rd</sup> Year	3.01 (.32)	2.34	3.44
4 <sup>th</sup> Year	2.86 (.38)	2.28	3.51

Table-8, Library anxiety among undergraduate students based on their year of study (One way ANOVA)

	Sum of sq	DF	Mean sq	F	Sig.
Between groups	3.36	3	2.12	2.29	.066
Within groups	221.1	220	.92		
Total	224.72	239			

### Major findings

1. With a mean of 3.19 and 3.18, the respondents scored a little high anxiety for 'library staff' and 'user education, respectively. It also shows that the subfactor 'user knowledge' remained the minor source of library anxiety with a mean score of 2.53.
2. Thus it can be inferred that, on average, most of the undergraduate students of FMUS had mild library anxiety.
3. Our statistical analysis showed that female respondents scored higher on the AQAK scale than male respondents. The study found no significant difference based on the means of overall library anxiety for males ( $M=2.88$ ,  $SD=0.46$ ) and females ( $M=2.90$ ,  $SD=0.34$ ), with  $t(226) = (.168)$ , ( $p=0.711$ ).
4. First-year students were more anxious than the final year students concerning 'library staff', 'information resources', and 'user education. Thus, all the postgraduate students of the Management and Information Science faculty possessed almost the same level of factor-wise library anxiety.

## Discussion

The study participants with a mean score of 3.22 and 3.16 scored a little high anxiety for 'library staff' and 'user education. Thus, they were not comfortable with the sub-factors 'library staff' and 'user education. They had difficulty interacting with the library staff and had a general feeling of being stressed and overwhelmed when using the library. Frazer and Barter also found that students experienced the highest level of library anxiety when interacting with the library staff. Their unfriendly behaviour led students to avoid them for getting research assistance. Several studies have shown that students avoid interacting with the library staff because they consider them unreachable, rude and unfriendly (Ross 2003, Black 2016 and Gogoi, Singson & thiyagarajan 2021). These findings suggest that librarians who wish to bring more students to the library and utilize their information resources to the optimum level should develop soft skills and establish a friendly relationship with the students. Gardijan (2021) stated that a friendly, communicative, and skilled librarian is a critical factor in preventing and alleviating library anxiety. Librarian and their staff can alleviate anxiety among students by establishing friendly relations with the students, providing proactive reference services, organizing user education programs, bibliographic instruction sessions and virtual tours, all of which aim at maintaining a positive image of the role played by the academic library and its staff in enhancing students' information literacy and academic performance amid the development of ICTs.

Our results showed that female undergraduate students scored slightly higher than male students. However, no significant difference was found in the level of anxiety when the mean scores of both genders were compared using a t-test. This finding is in accordance with the finding of previous research conducted by Anwar, Alkandari & Alqallaf (2004), Khosravi, Jahromi and Hosseini (2014), Noori, Tareen & Mashwani (2017), Rehman, Soroya and Anwar (2016), Khan, Anwar & Naveed (2021) and Chutia & Nath (2021) who found a moderately low level of library anxiety among students where the students' demographic profile didn't show any significant effect on their level of library anxiety. However, Erfanmanesh (2012) study on library anxiety among students at Malaya University reported a high level of library anxiety among male students than female students. Similarly, these findings are also in conflict with Jiao and Onwuegbuzie (1997), who stated that male students had a higher level of library anxiety than females.

Our study reported that first-year students were more anxious than final year students as the mean score of overall library anxiety for the first year students was a little higher than the second year, third year and fourth-year students. This gradual decrease in the library anxiety score of the students seems to be the result of the frequent use of the library. One way ANOVA test was also used on the mean scores of the LA factors of the 1<sup>st</sup> year to 4<sup>th</sup> year students in order to find out the significant difference in the anxiety level of the study participants. The results indicated no statistically significant difference in the mean scores concerning overall and factor wise LA. These findings corroborate the findings of Jiao (1998), who reported that first year and second-year students were more library anxious than students of higher classes. However, our findings conflicted with Rehman, Soroya and

Anwar (2016) and Mizrachi and Shoham (2015), who reported a statistically significant difference between LA and the year of study. Thus, it would be more appropriate to introduce library instructions and organize user education programs as early as possible to prepare undergraduate students for becoming efficient library users.

### **Conclusion and recommendations**

From a cursory examination of the available literature, there is a shortage of literature on library anxiety among Pakistani undergraduate students. Few studies such as those conducted by Rehman, Soroya and Anwar (2016), Jan, Anwar, and Warriach (2016), Asghar and Bhatti (2017), Ahmad, Ismail & Khan (2021) and Khan, Anwar & Naveed (2021) were found; however, most of these studies have examined the library anxiety among Pakistani students or research scholars in general. It is essential to find out how to overcome library anxiety among students. The present study and the previous studies conducted elsewhere provide compelling evidence to suggest that many student populations experience library anxiety. Most of them lack the confidence and communication skills to interact with the library staff and seek their help for effectively using the library. Although our study found that the overall library anxiety score among the students was moderate, the results indicated that the students were more anxious about the library staff than other factors. Thus it can be inferred that the un-friendly behaviour of the library staff made a significant contribution to the degree of library anxiety among students, which made them unable to utilize library resources and services effectively. The un-friendly behaviour of library staff also contributed to other areas of library anxiety, such as non-use or avoidance of the library by students, resulting in poor academic grades. Year-wise findings of the study showed that first-year students were more anxious than their seniors. This finding is a bit satisfying, showing that undergraduate students reduced library anxiety as they progressed in their study level despite no or less frequent library users' education programs. Thus it can be concluded that for proper and effective use of library resources and services and best academic performance, it is essential that the students be free from library anxiety.

Several students studying the universities of Pakistan in general and KP, in particular, come from rural areas. Their schooling background and unfamiliarity with the library resources and services contributed significantly to their level of library anxiety. Some of the students may be familiar with the library systems and their operations while studying in their previous college or school; however, their present university's existing resources and services may differ. Therefore, it is essential to provide library instructions and routinely organize user education programs for newly enrolled students. It is also recommended that the central library and various library associations organize workshops and seminars for students about the awareness of the HEC database, electronic resources and different searching techniques from time to time. Moreover, soft skills training and personality development programs should be organized for the library staff to better interact with the library users. This will help educate the students to be self-reliant in using the library and become life learners.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The study is confined only to the undergraduate students of the management and information sciences faculty of the University of Peshawar. Therefore, the study's findings cannot be generalized to the students studying in other disciplines or universities.

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