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Information professionals' hiring and retention: Pakistani librarians' perspectives

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to shed light on the problems faced by IPs working in Pakistani academic libraries. It lays out the challenges that academic libraries confront when trying to hire qualified IPs and suggests solutions for doing so in today's fast-paced academic setting. It also includes a list of desirable qualities that universities and colleges seek when employing IPs. We conducted semi-structured interviews with ten hiring-process-involved libraries in charge at five public and private universities. Based on the results, it seems that in the present and future, interpersonal skills are the most sought after quality in IP hires, followed by topic knowledge and an IT orientation. Good compensation, a welcoming workplace with opportunities for learning and professional growth, and quick promotions were cited as important factors in attracting and retaining the best people in academic libraries.

Introduction

Human resource (HR) personnel are an organization's most valuable asset, but they can be costly to hire and keep. When librarians are well-trained, respected in their field, and compensated decently, White (1999) writes, "We cannot have good libraries until we have first good librarians" (p. 30). Since the quality of work and services provided by a library greatly rely on its staff, it is in everyone's best interest for the library to invest in the recruitment of qualified and ambitious information professionals (IPs) (Mech, 1989). Competent HR at university libraries is increasingly important as they strive to meet the rising demands of patrons in today's fast-paced digital landscape. According to Fitz-enz (2000), human resources play a crucial role by:

Only living beings possess the inherent ability to create value. The other factors are purely passive. They don't contribute anything by definition, and they can't contribute anything unless a human person puts their potential to use. (p. xii).

Once an employment choice has been made, it is difficult to go back on it without incurring significant time, money, and quality of service losses. It takes too long for most universities' libraries to bring on new librarians, which makes it difficult to keep good staff. Positions sit vacant for longer periods of time, promising candidates leave for other jobs, and current employees have

to work harder to make up for the gaps caused by these risk-averse hiring practices (Raschke, 2003).

In addition, hiring standards shift drastically depending on the nature of the position being filled. In academic libraries in particular, the recruitment process is heavily impacted by the diversity of desired skills and traits including knowledge, interest, and ability. According to research, university libraries with a less cumbersome employment procedure, which places an emphasis on maintaining exceptional employees and supporting and developing local talent, will be able to attract and retain a higher caliber of employee (Charbonneau and Freeman, 2016).

There are numerous opportunities for a service organization's investment in its workforce to go wrong. There must be careful planning, communication, support, and protection at every stage of the hiring, retention, and professional development of intellectual property (IP) to guarantee high-quality library services (Redrup-May, 2010).

This article describes the challenges faced by academic libraries when trying to find and hire qualified intellectual property specialists, and it examines the underlying causes of these difficulties. It also examines practical techniques to enhance academic libraries' recruiting, professional development, and retention models of intellectual property (IP) librarians, as well as the qualities academic libraries are seeking for when hiring IPs.

Literature review

Choosing the appropriate people to hire is crucial because mistakes in this area can have lasting effects. Success in business can be foreseen with the help of careful preparation and a methodology that is both proactive and strategic in its approach to hiring and supervising employees. Good recruitment results come from well-planned initiatives; Woo (2007) stressed. However, Nawe (1992) noted the absence of strategy in library staffing and recruitment. Hayes (2007) provided a description of HRM's significance by drawing parallels to the role of financial management in library collections. The author argues that while some degree of financial mismanagement is forgivable, the disastrous effects of human resources mismanagement on libraries cannot be overstated.

Retirements and job loss due to an ageing library workforce; stagnant or falling enrollment in library science graduate programmes; decreased pay and greater competition from other industries, including the private sector, corporate libraries, and technology; and a lack of attractive benefits have all been cited as contributing factors in studies conducted in the United Kingdom (UK), the

United States of America (USA), Canada, and Australia (Studies by Schrader (2005), Davis (2005), and Woo (2007). The supply/demand mismatch in academic libraries is exacerbated by a lack of qualified MLIS graduates, a growing retirement population, and low pay. Schrader (2005) stated, " Despite the shrinking job market, the demand for qualified librarians to fill the void left by retiring baby boomers remains high (born between 1946 and 1964)." According to Davis's (2005) predictions, the largest wave of Americans retiring would happen between 2010 and 2020, at a rate of 45%. He foresaw that competition for library jobs would heat up in the United States as a result of rising demand for librarians and shifts in the structure of the library industry.

Woo (2007) outlined many challenges associated with attracting and retaining qualified staff in university libraries. To examine the supply and demand for academic librarians, the author conducted a literature review. The study's main concerns were the, and the lack of trained workers. It also revealed that the hiring process, which was slow and involved, made it hard to pick the top candidates.

Some businesses, as outlined by Maatta (2006), are being forced to "do more with fewer personnel" due to the "phenomenon of many duties" and the declining job market. Holt and Strock (2005) also highlighted the importance of bringing in fresh perspectives, noting that only about 11% of library positions in the United States were open to inexperienced candidates.

In 1992, Nawe described the challenges faced by university librarians in Tanzania, including a lack of personnel, excessive turnover, hiring the wrong individuals, and professional stagnation. He went on to discuss the causes, which include ineffective recruitment practices, lengthy and time-consuming hiring processes, and inadequate job analysis and appraisal methods that fail to fulfil the expectations of both employers and workers. Internships, traineeships, residencies, and fellowships in libraries were reportedly implemented to address staffing shortages. With the guidance of an instructor, interns gain real-world experience outside of the classroom that helps them mature into responsible adults. However, in a 1996 study, Wilson and Gibbens on a survey of various UK internship programmes and criticized them for failing to adequately provide trainees with mentorship and feedback.

They found that students and trainees were sometimes treated as though they were merely junior aides, which did little to boost their self-esteem or sense of responsibility. When it comes to employing new employees, Dinerman (1995) explains how to do so with the help of the DISRAELI approach. Diversity, initiative, abilities, responsibilities, accomplishments, enthusiasm, loyalty,

and integrity are all distilled into one system. Priority setting should take into account the person's loyalty, adaptability, and honesty. Talent, ability, and intelligence are all things that may be taught with practice, but the aforementioned traits are notoriously difficult to cultivate because they are innate. While interviewing potential library staff, he focused more on their demeanor and attitude than their credentials.

Keeping the current library staff on campus is more cost-effective than hiring new people to work at the library. The library can save money by reducing the number of new hires and training sessions. Even though retaining employees is just as important as hiring them, many businesses put in considerable effort and resources into finding the ideal candidate for a position but fail to appreciate the importance of retaining them once they've found them.

The "duration of new professionals staying in their jobs and progressing further in their careers " is significantly correlated (Usherwood et al., 2000). They discovered that public libraries in the UK have a natural tendency toward employee retention. One-third of employees departed due to lack of advancement opportunities, while 25% left due to the company culture. In addition to financial incentives, Antwi and Nwali (1990) argued that providing library workers with opportunities for professional growth is crucial to keeping them in their jobs.

In 2003, Annis revealed the results of a research she conducted on staff retention in NHS libraries in the northwestern region of England. Many workers have complained that they are unable to advance in their careers because they lack the necessary skills and expertise. As more workers left, it negatively impacted those who stayed, according to Moyo (1996). Extra duties were thrust upon them. Even if non-professionals were promoted to fill in for absentees, the influx of labor caused complications. Time and effort from the professional personnel was being diverted away from providing the necessary services in order to deal with ad hoc issues and prepare for possible futures. Stress, frustration, and low morale were the inevitable results. All of these issues played a role in the exodus of employees, whether directly or indirectly. By looking back at the several iterations of staffing at the University of Zimbabwe Library, his research focused on the issues raised by rapid personnel turnover. Human resource (HR) In order to keep talented workers on board, it's been suggested to invest in them through training and development programmes, incentive programmes, structural changes within the company, and pay them at a rate that is competitive with the market.

Managers often assume that employees leave their jobs because of high salaries, but Kaye and Jordan-Evans (2005) argued that "keeping good staff is all about providing an environment that offers work that is meaningful and challenging; where there is provision for learning and development; fair remuneration; recognition for a job well done; and a boss who respects and listens to staff and a collegial atmosphere." Additionally, they stated that many workers leave because their managers do not care about the quality of their working conditions, the specifics of their work, or their professional development opportunities. Kawasaki (2007) advised libraries to create a programme designed to keep employees around, consisting of things like training, mentoring, and orientation. But if you do, you'll find that having a strategy in place allows you to build a stronger library that better serves the bigger institution it serves as a hub for. It's possible that your library is able to keep hold of new hires, but that they're quickly becoming dissatisfied with their position. An investment in a retention programme has the potential to mitigate or even reverse this discontent if implemented soon enough. It's not just the new employee's retention and productivity that are impacted by a negative work environment, but the morale of everyone in the library as a whole as well. There will be benefits for everyone if the library takes the effort to make the new librarian feel welcome and a part of the team. Companies that invest in some sort of retention program—be it formalized training and mentoring or more casual activities—tend to see lower turnover and savings on recruitment and induction.

According to Chapman (2009), staff are more likely to stay in their positions if they have received proper orientation and are already familiar with the library's environment and organizational culture. The proposed orientation workshops will aid in the transmission of tacit knowledge from more senior staff to their new junior counterparts. In a competitive job market, such as the one in the United States and Europe, this would assist libraries recruit, engage, and retain workers.

Also, in underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, where most library practices are not codified and instead rely on the tacit knowledge of personnel accumulated over time, such orientation programmes have the potential to be implemented and keep employees.

To handle emergencies, boost morale and productivity at work, and facilitate work-life harmony, Brewer (2004) proposed using EAPs in LIS facilities. Professionals are much easier to keep on staff when EPAs are in place.

The discipline of library and information science (LIS) in Pakistan has produced studies by experts in the country that address some of the fundamental tribulations facing the profession today, including a lack of leadership, an excess of supply over demand at the entry level, inadequate training, an absence challenges with service delivery and compensation, a lack of motivated human resources (HR), a scarcity of qualified information and communications technology (ICT) personnel, a lack of library-based research, and a general lack of interest among library staff It has been argued (Anwar, 1992; Mahmood, 2002; Ameen, 2006). In addition, the abilities of LIS grads are not up to par with the requirements of the modern information marketplace. No effort is being made to increase their marketability to employers (Warraich, 2008). The research aims to determine what measures universities might take to draw and keep talented IPs on campus.

Research questions

The primary purpose of this research is to identify and analyze the most pressing human resource management problems confronting Pakistan's academic libraries. This study aimed to accomplish the following, which led to the development of research questions:

 RQ1: What kinds of expertise do universities expect from their IPs?

RQ 2: Why don't more universities recruit intellectual property experts?

RQ 3: How do academic libraries keep intellectual property?

Research methods

Interviews with participants were semi-structured university library incharge and administration were undertaken as part of a qualitative research strategy to learn more about the phenomenon under study. Open-ended questions formed the basis of the interview agenda. Every respondent was asked the identical set of questions, in the same order, to eliminate any possibility of bias. Time, effort, and money constraints led to the adoption of a convenient-purposive sampling strategy. Each participant in the seven cities of the Punjab was sent an email including the interview schedule and the itinerary for in-person meetings prior to the interviews.

A total of ten interviews were recorded with the participants' informed consent. As the interview began, the researcher briefed the interviewees on the purpose of the study and how the interview would be conducted. These methods of getting to know each other served to keep the interviewer and interviewees on good terms.

Respondents were assured that their privacy would be protected and their personal information would be kept secret. As a result, they were very open with their thoughts and data. Depending on the questions asked and the subjects' availability, the recorded interviews lasted anywhere from 40 to 60 minutes. Transcriptions of the interviews were evaluated for their substance. Over the course of content analysis, a number of common threads and recurring ideas surfaced. According to the frequency distribution, the results are provided in tables, and they are elaborated with quotes taken directly data collected through interviews.

Discussion and analysis of the data

Demographic information

Ten respondents were polled from five different universities. There were three respondents with an MLIS, five with MPhil, and two with a PhD in LIS. Average age was between 35 and 55 years old. Everybody there was either the head librarian or someone in charge of the library.

Textual analysis

How professionals in libraries and archives might improve their skills to better serve their patrons Any company's success on its ability to recruit and retain high-caliber workers who are also a suitable cultural match for the open roles. Successful businesses know the importance of hiring qualified people if they want to achieve their goals. It was thus desirable to learn what library in charge thought were the most important qualities in a LIS practitioner. Table I lists the abilities, in descending order of frequency of occurrence, that respondents believe LIS professionals need to have in order to meet current and projected needs.

When asked to choose the most important talent for a LIS professional to have, respondents repeatedly pointed out the importance of being able to effectively communicate with others. All agreed that effective communication is crucial for LIS personnel.

Being well-versed in the topic is the second most highly valued skill. Core librarianship abilities, subject knowledge, and improved entry-level education were rated as the most valuable by respondents. IT orientation ranked as the third most important skill for LIS practitioners. Seven respondents highlighted the significance of management skills for LIS practitioners.

Leadership and analytical prowess were ranked equally by respondents. The respondents also stressed the importance of training new LIS professionals in leadership. Professionals in the research field need strong analytic abilities because a false conclusion could result from incompetently assessing the research topic.

55% of respondents felt that marketing knowledge was extremely important for LIS professionals. A total of six respondents highlighted the need of professionalism among LIS workers of all ages in delivering high-quality, timely services to clients.

Strategies for Recruiting Qualified Staff for Academic Libraries (ULs)

Knowledge of methods by which a university library can recruit qualified personnel is essential. Methods for recruiting qualified LIS specialists to ULs are suggested by the responders. The incentives they proposed can be seen in Table II.

Of the total sample, 9 felt that competitive compensation packages, including salaries and bonuses, were critical in attracting and retaining top talent. Ten people gave their thoughts on how to improve the service structure and speed up the marketing. Additionally, it was thought that creating a pleasant workplace would help attract and retain top talent.

Sr.#	Themes	Frequency
1	Ability to Express Oneself (oral and written)	10
2	familiarity with the field	8
3	Focus on ICT	8
4	Ability to manage	7
5	Qualities of a good leader	6
6	Competence in analysis	6
7	Competence in analysis	5
8	Carrying yourself with professionalism	6
9	Infrastructure Development	1

Table I
Competencies in LIS Professionals Needed N=10

Sr.#	Themes	Frequency
1	a generous compensation package	9
2	Arrangement of Services	8
3	Comfortable and productive workplace	5
4	Recognition	6
5	Professional advancement possibilities	4
6	Reputation of the organization	5
7	influence on public	2
8	Maintenance of a healthy work-life equilibrium	1

Table II
Strategies for Recruiting Qualified Library and Information Scientists at ULs =10

Respect for oneself and one's professional accomplishments were cited by five respondents as crucial factors in recruiting top talent. Four of the respondents emphasized the significance of

offering employees the chance to advance in their careers when discussing the importance of doing so when trying to hire qualified staff. Respondents were split on whether or not employers should try to help workers through personal issues that get in the way of their doing their jobs effectively. They worried that the work-life balance of their employees would suffer if they didn't have access to family-friendly benefits.

Sr.#	Themes	Frequency
1	Chances for Continuing Professional Development	6
2	Opportunities for Continuing Education and Skills Improvement	6
3	Top-Notch Place to Work and Employment Conditions	5
4	Self-respect	5
5	A more effective service structure and method of delivering it	4
6	Provisions for Old Age	4
7	Creative atmosphere	1
8	Employees' deep feelings of attachment to their employers	1

Table III

LIS Staff Retention Strategies at University Libraries N=10

Strategies for Keeping University Librarians on Staff

In order to get to the bottom of the brain drain problem in Pakistan, we asked respondents to offer suggestions for retaining skilled workers (Table III). A total of 6 respondents agreed that CPD and career advancement opportunities are significant in retaining LIS professionals; Six of the respondents thought that offering enticing and competitive salaries was a good tactic. When asked what factors would help keep professionals in ULs, five respondents mentioned good working conditions. Five respondents felt that university library staff should have a more adaptable service structure; The importance of retirement benefits was cited by four respondents as a key factor in retaining skilled workers. Respondent #1 believes that a professional's emotional connection to an organization is a key factor in employee retention.

Discussion

In order to effectively communicate with clients and superiors, professionals, according to the majority of respondents, need to be adept in both oral and written communication. Findings

from this study corroborate those Including the works of Hernon et al. (2003), Mahmood (2003), Rehman (2008), and Ameen (2009).

Quite a few people have responded stressed the importance of being able to communicate with users in both Urdu and English. The ability to speak English is a factor in the hiring of LIS experts, especially in Pakistan. Academic and scientific institutions cannot function without adopting English as their official language. Though most respondents identified their primary language as Punjabi, many reported learning both English and Urdu in formal education settings. In addition, most respondents agreed that librarians absolutely must have subject expertise. Librarians' familiarity with many fields of study allows them to better serve their patrons by meeting their information demands. Knowledge domains, specifically technical and library operations know-how, were also identified by Hernon et al. (2003) as being crucial.

In addition, the value of a focus on IT was emphasized. " The minimum expectation for them is IT competence," the chief librarian said. Five library directors, on the other hand, believe that IT should be used to facilitate the development of services that are welcoming to patrons.

It was stated that " knowledge, systems, and people should all be under the control of professionals" in the library setting. One counterargument suggested that competent management could help get around the financial hurdle. The head librarian at a large public university library recently emphasized the importance of budgeting and planning for LIS professionals at all levels of administration.

One respondent suggested that LIS programmes work with other university management departments to jointly introduce interdisciplinary courses. Information literacy skills can be taught to management majors by the LIS faculty, and vice versa for LIS majors.

In order to help with decision-making and accommodating a wide range of users with varying requirements, one respondent suggested "training the professionals as business managers."".

Like many other developing nations, Pakistan suffers from an absence of qualified individuals in positions of leadership within academic libraries. The majority of respondents felt that young professionals were the future leaders of library associations and university libraries. There is some discussion as to whether or not leaders are born or developed. The grounds for Pakistan's library leadership crisis were highlighted by Ameen (2007). She stressed the importance of leadership development programmes for LIS alums.

Users today are savvier, more discerning, and more likely to make use of the many available resources to satisfy their information requirements. A librarian's role is to serve as a facilitator and to tailor the information presented to each individual user.

The employee's professionalism and upbeat attitude are more important than their technical abilities. Although one's knowledge and abilities can be improved upon, one's outlook is not. This was also reaffirmed by Moy and Lam (2004), and the "hire for attitude" adage was emphasized by Freiberg (1998). Issues with attitude are a major barrier to training employees and providing flexible service to customers.

One interviewee argued that the They felt that the LIS community and professionals did not do enough to instill professional values in their students, and they were critical of the role that educators played in this area. Professionalism in the workplace is something that can be taught, and LIS teachers can help by introducing students to a code of ethics and encouraging them to work with more seasoned colleagues.

Educated and capable individuals are in scarce supply in our industry.

Finding qualified individuals is challenging.

A chief librarian once opined that a more equitable distribution of LIS graduates across the labour market would help to maintain a higher standard of living for those in the field. There is an imbalance between the number of available jobs and the number of available recent LIS graduates, a fact that has been noted by researchers such as Rehman (1992) and Ameen (2007). The unplanned introduction of new library schools also contributes to the oversupply.

In a survey of how to best attract and retain talent in ULs, only one respondent mentioned the importance of work-life balance. Even in developing nations like Pakistan, the difficulty of striking a work-life balance is expected to rise to the forefront of HRM's list of emerging issues.

When asked what factors were most important in attracting LIS professionals to ULs in Pakistan, the majority of respondents cited salary and benefits packages, while about half cited opportunities for professional growth.

An overwhelming majority of interviewees reaffirmed the importance of offering competitive salaries in attracting and retaining top talent. The majority of respondents agreed that HRD initiatives are critical to the success of LIS departments in attracting and retaining qualified staff. Employee training and advancement opportunities should be considered a core component of any effective retention strategy, as Moyo (1996) echoed. It needs to be ongoing, and it needs to

be part of the HR budget. Employee commitment and loyalty may be strengthened through ongoing professional development programs.

Responses outlined ideal working conditions as:

"More important than pay is a positive learning environment and a place to grow professionally. "A more pleasant and inspiring workplace leads to higher productivity from its staff.".

"Rewarding workers at every rung of the career ladder in accordance with Maslow's philosophy.

According to one respondent, the secret to a productive workplace is open lines of communication between employees and upper management. According to Warraich and Ahmad (2011), Communication with coworkers is a major source of inspiration for library and information science (LIS) professionals (equality and transparency in the sharing of knowledge between employees and superiors). Employees who feel like they belong in the company are vital to its success, according to the respondents. They advocated "self-respect and acknowledgment of a person" as a key tactic to keep LIS workers around. Staff members who felt their efforts were recognized would see themselves as valuable contributors.

Many employees have to wait many years in order to be considered for a promotion (to a higher position) in the company. It appears to run counter to the results of the current study's prior sections on leadership crises. In reality, promotion from within is not the sole route to more senior positions in libraries; open competition also plays a role in filling roles like chief librarian. In certain ULs, where opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) are scarce, working professionals who want to be promoted do not have the requisite abilities but instead insist on being recognized for their years of service alone.

Professionals are more likely to remain in one organization over time if they are provided with a solid support system and ample opportunity for career advancement. Incorrect service structures might lead to professional stagnation.

Retirement packages were cited as a key factor in keeping professionals happy by 50% of respondents. Respondents over the age of 50 who identified as Confucian were more appreciative of retirement benefits (The Concept of Lifetime Employment) and it gives them a sense of certainty about their future.

This trend, according to one respondent, "creates stagnation in the organization and the individual's career also."

Most respondents believed that employment opportunities were scarce, and that most people lacked the courage to pursue more challenging roles. Given this, it's easy to see why some people choose to spend their entire lives in a library. Among the senior faculty, there was one individual who made loyalty and commitment among workers a priority. Knowledge management theorists, according to the literature, agree. The respondents believed that the importance of the emotional bond between the employee and the organization in keeping them was significant. Commitment encompasses feelings of trust, friendship, and loyalty to the group as a whole. A worker's dedication to their job improves in proportion to the intensity of their feelings toward their employer.

An innovative work environment is beneficial in keeping employees engaged in their work and committed to the company over the long term. However, experts are unable to implement original plans because of their workloads. They will become exhausted by the monotony of the work. An interviewee expressed the belief that many LIS professionals are too afraid of the additional work and peer criticism that would result from trying something new and potentially failing to share their creative ideas with higher authorities. Their emphasis on the need of an inventive work environment for inspiring and motivating people to stay with the company was clear.

Conclusion

It provides a qualitative study of interviews with library professionals to provide light on current HRM practices in ULs, such as the qualifications required of LIS workers, how to find and recruit qualified staff, and what to do to keep them around. Some of the most frequently mentioned qualities among respondents are the ability to communicate effectively, subject knowledge, an interest in technology, and the ability to effectively manage others. The demand made by libraries was significantly impacted by the shortage of qualified applicants. Service delivery efficiency and survival in today's information economy are dependent on the availability of professionals with these abilities. Participants suggested enticing salaries, a well-organized system for delivering services, and a friendly workplace where employees felt comfortable asking questions and exploring potential answers as ways to attract and retain skilled workers. Opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD), competitive salaries, the best work environment, recognition, and a more favorable service structure were cited as particularly effective retention

strategies by those interviewed. Retirement plans, a creative work atmosphere, and a strong sense of belonging are a few more factors.

Professionals in ULs are hard to come by, and it has been argued that training and development programmes are crucial to attracting and retaining them. Overprotected job policies in the public sector led to a lack of professionalism and management abilities, while a politicized work atmosphere and nepotism impair HRM methods. It has been emphasized that effective retention strategies can be valuable resources for the newly hired employee and are necessary to demonstrate the company's dedication to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

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