

# Students and Libraries: The Perspectives of Faculty in a Pakistani University

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to explore student library use from the perspective of the faculty. An already developed instrument was used to collect data from full-time faculty members working in a private university located in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. The faculty strongly supported the idea of library based learning, student library use, assigning library-based tasks, and the crucial role of librarians in promoting a library culture. The respondents were not satisfied with the students' library use skills, availability of relevant and current data or the promotion of library use by the institution's top management. The current research is first of its kind in Pakistan and is based on data collected from a single university. Future research might be extended to other universities in the Pakistani or South Asian higher education sector. The study could be helpful to higher education policy to design customer-driven marketing strategies while marketing libraries to stakeholders.*

**Keywords:** *library use, private universities, faculty perceptions, assignments, marketing strategies.*

## Introduction

Libraries are hidden treasures not only because of their books and other resources. They also stimulate the intellectual capacity of their users and are also a great source of preserving knowledge as their absence will

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make it difficult to store useful literature which can serve as a guide for human development.

The library provides many advantages for its users. In higher education institutions, students at all levels are the major target market for libraries. They use libraries for many reasons, especially to help in their studies. Students mainly use libraries to complete course based assignments and for personal development (Baker, 1997). However, the mere existence of the library is not the real challenge. The issue is the regular and effective use of libraries by students and faculty. The role of the faculty is very important as they can not only motivate the students to use libraries but can also trigger usage by assigning library based tasks. To stimulate learning and development, awareness among the faculty and the administration of a university is a critical factor that can enhance knowledge by developing students' personalities (Baker, 1997).

The faculty in any university can hinder or stimulate the need to attend a library regularly and the faculty's awareness regarding library literature has a positive relationship with students' attendance at academic libraries (Popoola, 2008). The faculty is the most appropriate unit of analysis for promoting the library culture in universities and despite many research studies, there is still a need to explore the causes of limited library attendance by students in Asian universities (Ahmad, 2009). The literature addresses this issue from an Asian country's perspective and a study conducted by Adnan and Mumtaz (2005) identifies the factors which trigger the faculty's motivation to promote library based studies in Malaysia. However, library use studies with a focus on Pakistan are scarce and there is a strong need to explore this phenomenon in this part of the world (Saima, 2009). This study is intended to measure the importance faculty members place on the role of libraries in student learning, the motivation to promote libraries and the role of librarians in increasing library traffic in Pakistan. The study focused on answering the following research questions:

- What is the faculty's perception of the students' library use?
- What is the role of library-based assignments which will stimulate the use of the library?
- What role can faculty members play in ensuring students' library use?
- What is the faculty's perception of the role librarians can play in influencing students' library use?

## **Literature Review**

It is a commonly held belief that libraries are a great source of knowledge that can be retrieved by the public for the benefit of society (Wiegand, 2008). Academic libraries are perceived as containing merely academic information which limits their use and is the major reason why they are trying to market themselves as a source of knowledge instead of merely providing academic information (Neuhaus, 2003). A study conducted by Kaur and Rani (2008) examined library use and found that 94 percent of respondents agreed that libraries must be marketed for multiple uses instead of providing only a platform for academic researchers and students. Researchers believe that when most data is accessed through the internet, modern tools and techniques must be adopted (Tenopir, 2003).

Guskin (1996) reported that library use promotes active learning and thus contributes towards students' ability to think critically. There have been many studies investigating the type of users by classifying the active, irregular, and occasional users. Williams (1995) surveyed the extent of library use among undergraduate students at a Canadian university and found that active learners who participated more in classes and read, write and study more are regular and active library users. Olanlokun (1982) found that students use the library for several purposes such as class work, research activities, discussions, and leisure (to sit in groups). Students who do not appreciate the value of a library are at a disadvantage and may visit the library for the purpose of merely preparing for examinations (Ajayi, 1993). The faculty has a major responsibility to drive library traffic and surely can encourage students to visit a library on a regular basis (Unomah, 1998).

It has been observed that the major driver of student library use is the amount of work provided by classroom instructors (Hardesty, 1995) and that is only possible when the faculty members themselves acknowledge the role of library use in students' learning and personality development (Wrice, 1996). Library services provided to faculty members may be a motivating factor in designing library based assignments (Hardy, 1992). Baker (1997) investigated the role that faculty members and librarians can play in encouraging students to use the library. He concluded that faculty consider library use as important for students but are unable to justify their 'library-using logic'. Similarly, librarians are unable to develop a liaison with the faculty (Baker, 1997).

Another factor in the frequency of library use is the students' skill in retrieving information from library databases (Sellen, 1984). In another study by Kunkel, Weaver and Cook (1996), it was found that while working on assignments students who had low grades felt confused about how much help the library could provide them in preparing for exams and in improving their grades. The students also felt embarrassed, confused and defenceless while using the library for assignments and research papers (Mellon, 1986).

The importance of reference groups cannot be ignored in a consumer's choice of a brand. In the case of student library use, the opinion of faculty members is important. In addition, faculty also perceive their role as 'very important' in generating library traffic (Adnan & Mumtaz, 2006). Kunkel et al. (1996) argued that faculty not only can motivate students to visit the library but can also guide them in developing the skills required to use them. Another study concluded that there is a positive relationship between the number of writing assignments and library use (Whitmore, 2001). Andrews (1991) found that there is a perception among faculty members that students can learn how to use the library effectively by working in groups and that faculty do not have a major role to play in understanding their library use. Wells (1995) found that undergraduate students' use of library depends upon teaching methods, expectations of instructors and the acknowledgment of extra knowledge in the form of better grades.

Physical evidence always plays an important role in differentiating the service quality of an organization from competing organizations. Ajibero (1998), and Aguolu and Aguolu (2002) found that Nigerian university libraries do not meet user expectations as a majority of the students do not learn how to use the library and are not aware of the relationship of the library to the academic and professional literature. Andaleeb and Simmonds (1998) found that students' expectations of libraries vary, making it imperative to better understand and define specific students' needs. Christopher and Menon (1995) observed that one element of high quality library service is the "incorporation of user personal needs and expectations into the development of customized programs and services" and the continued success of a service organization depends on the organization's ability to adjust its products and services with respect to a user's needs. The library must be present and available to the students and there must be enough space so that students can use it. Goje (1995) noted that students must have access to all resources available in the library and this will increase the probability of using the library. If, on

the other hand, students perceive that their university library does not have the required relevant material, the frequency of visiting the library for academic purposes decreases.

The librarian's knowledge and expertise also plays a key role in guiding students to benefit from the services provided. Librarians must teach the students how to use library resources so that confusion about the complexities of using the library can be reduced (McNally & Kuhlthau, 1994). Al-Qallaf (2000) found that students value library based work but there is a lack of collaboration among students, librarians and faculty and this is a major hindrance to increasing library traffic. There are some studies where a lack of communication among faculty and librarians is reported and librarians complained that faculty members do not really understand the importance of librarians in teaching courses (Julien & Given, 2002). Faculty members are also confused about developing a library centered classroom teaching approach and this can hinder the use of libraries (Mosley, 1998). Baker (1997) concluded that librarians are the real 'driving force' in creating a great classroom experience for students and faculty and they must play their role from front by collaborating with the students and the faculty.

Investigations of faculty perceptions of student library use are scarce. Although these constructs have been measured separately, there is a study by Baker (1996) which investigated the phenomenon. Mumtaz and Adnan (2005) recommended that such studies in different contexts should be conducted to further explore the relationships among students, librarians and faculty in promoting library use. Saima (2009) investigated the role of websites in marketing library information to stakeholders and it was found that there is no tendency to develop and update the websites of academic libraries in Pakistan, which reduces the information to the stakeholders regarding library literature and leaves information-seekers uninformed about the databases and assistance that libraries can provide. There is no debate about the prominent role of libraries in students' personal development but the evidence from Pakistan reported a lack of collaboration among teachers, students, and librarians regarding library use (Bhatti, 2006). There is not only a lack of interest by the library staff but it is also very rarely that the library staff members are involved in supporting faculty and students to get them involved in library-oriented behaviors (Khan, 1994). There is no such guidance and support provided to students regarding library usage. Even after earning a masters degree, they are unable to explain how to find relevant literature and consult library catalogues (Usmani, 1986). There is also a lack of student

satisfaction with library services which restricts the frequency of library use among college and university level students (Idrees, 2007). The image of libraries portrayed by the university management, students and librarians is also very poor. In addition, Pakistan's educational norms do not support library-based work and this has resulted in poor reading habits (Bhatti, 2006). The current situation in developing countries regarding the improper use of academic libraries and the need to develop coordination among students, faculty and librarians in promoting libraries inspired this study which will fill a gap in the library literature by reporting faculty's opinions regarding student library use.

## **Methodology**

The study investigated the faculty's perceptions of student library use and was conducted between October to December, 2010. The respondents, randomly selected, were full time faculty members of a private sector university based in the province of Punjab, Pakistan. A sample of 100 respondents was selected and the researchers received 76 usable questionnaires. The size of the sample and non-response bias is justified through the published work of Adnan and Mumtaz (2005) where smaller sample sizes were used. An already developed questionnaire from the study of Adnan and Mumtaz (2005) was taken and used for data collection. To measure the construct, a Likert scale of 1=strongly agree, 2=agree, 3=neutral, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree was used. The questionnaire was composed of four major parts: items related to faculty's perceptions towards the importance of libraries, faculty's self-perceived roles, perceived roles of librarians and institutional issues while incorporating a library-based culture. The instrument contained 19 statements and was not modified.

## **Findings**

### **Respondents**

Fifty two respondents were male (68.4 per cent) and twenty four (31.6 per cent) were female. Twenty eight (36.8 per cent) respondents were aged 30 or below, twenty six (34.2 per cent) were in the age group of 31-35, twelve (17 per cent) were in the age range of 36-40 years, seven (9.2 per

cent) were aged between 41-45, one person (1.3 per cent) was in the age group of 46-50 and two were aged 50 and above (1.3 per cent). Of the 76 respondents, 33 (42.9 per cent) were masters degree holders, 27 (35.5 per cent) had M.Phil, and 16 (21.1 per cent) had earned a PhD. Among the respondents, 41 (53.9 per cent) were lecturers, 21 (27.6 per cent) were assistant professors, 3 (3.9 per cent) were associate professors, and 11 (14.5 per cent) were professors.

## Student Library Use

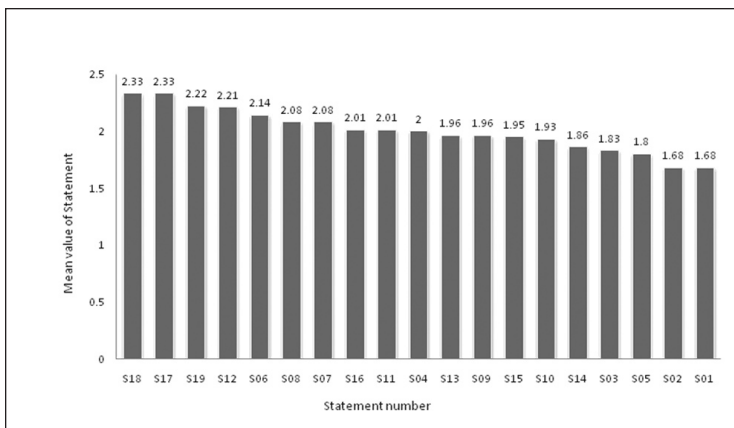


Figure 1: Mean Value of Statements

## Importance of Student Library Use

Tables 1 – 5 show the responses to the questionnaire. Figure 1 shows the mean value of responses to the questions in decreasing order. Table 1 shows faculty's responses concerning the importance of student library use. The majority of the respondents strongly endorsed the idea of library use in stimulating students' intellectual curiosity with a mean value of 1.68. There was only one respondent who disagreed with the statement. Self-esteem and self-confidence were valued by 84 per cent of the respondents and only two respondents disagreed with this statement. Ninety per cent of the respondents believed that the use of libraries helped students to become familiar with their field. Seventeen per cent had no opinion about the statement that library usage improved general communication skills and seven per cent disagreed with this idea.

Table 1: Faculty’s Responses Towards the Importance of Student Library Use

Statements	Strongly Agree		No Opinion		Strongly Disagree		Mean n (%)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
S01	Helps stimulate intellectual curiosity	34 (44.2)	33 (42.9)	8 (10.4)	1 (1.3)	0 (0)	1.68
S02	Increases self-esteem and confidence	38 (49.4)	26 (33.8)	10 (13)	2 (2.6)	0 (0)	1.68
S03	Become familiar with their field	29 (37.7)	34 (44.2)	10 (13.0)	3 (3.9)	0 (0)	1.83
S04	Improve general communication skill	23 (29.9)	35 (45.5)	13 (16.9)	5 (6.5)	0 (0)	2.00

### Importance of Library Based Assignments

Table 2 shows the faculty’s responses concerning the importance of library based assignments. The faculty strongly believed that the students had the necessary skills to use the library. Only four percent disagreed and twelve percent had no opinion. The rest of the faculty strongly agreed with this statement. However, some notable faculty members disagreed that the courses must be focused towards library study. This could be due to the fact that the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan stresses the importance of research based teaching which is rewarded heavily. Seventy percent of the respondents agreed with the idea that the assignments must be library based, nine percent disagreed and the rest of the faculty had no opinion. Seven respondents disagreed and sixteen respondents had no opinion about the idea that this type of assignment might increase the students’ general knowledge.

Table 2: Faculty’s Responses Towards the Importance of Library Based Assignments (n = 76)

Statements	Strongly Agree		No Opinion		Strongly Disagree		Mean n (%)
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	
S05	Student skills to use library	31 (40.3)	33 (42.9)	9 (11.7)	2 (2.6)	1 (1.3)	1.80
S06	More focused Courses	24 (31.2)	27 (35.1)	16 (20.8)	8 (10.4)	1 (1.3)	2.14
S07	Library-based assignments	26 (33.8)	27 (35.1)	16 (20.8)	5 (6.5)	2 (2.6)	2.08
S08	Increase students’ awareness of the world outside the classroom	26 (33.8)	27 (35.1)	16 (20.8)	5 (6.5)	2 (2.6)	2.08



### **Faculty's Self-perceived Roles and Responsibilities**

Table 3 shows the faculty's perception of their roles and responsibilities. The survey respondents demonstrated a positive perception of their roles and responsibilities with regard to student library use. All of the respondents, except for one who did not give any opinion, agreed that they were ready to motivate students to use the library (mean score of 1.93). Thirty-seven respondents (76.5 per cent) felt that in order to motivate students to use the library, they should provide graded assignments and extra credits, one (1.3 per cent) did not agree and seventeen (22.4 per cent) did not express any opinion. The overall response indicated that the award of extra credits was an important means of motivating students to use the library. Seventy-seven percent of the respondents believed that they should design assignments which required library usage. Twenty percent had no opinion regarding the statement while three percent disagreed with the statement that students must have library skills in order to retrieve information. Seventy-seven percent supported this idea by agreeing strongly, eighteen percent were neutral and had no opinion, while only three percent disagreed. Sixty-five percent agreed that the assignments were very time consuming and twenty-six percent had no opinion about this statement. A mean score of 2.21 implied that the majority of the respondents agreed and had a strong conviction that to encourage library work, the time for the assignments must be managed.

Table 3: Faculty's Responses on their Self Perceived Roles (n = 76)

Statements		Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	No Opinion n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean n (%)
S10	Motivate students to use library	24 (31.2%)	34 (44.2%)	17 (22.1%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0%)	1.93
S11	Make graded assignments	22 (28.6%)	34 (44.2%)	17 (22.1%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0%)	2.01
S09	Design assignments for library use	22 (28.6%)	37 (48.1%)	15 (19.5%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	1.96
S13	Students lack of study skills makes it difficult to require library based assignments	21 (27.3%)	39 (50.6%)	14 (18.2%)	2 (2.6%)	0 (0%)	1.96
S12	Assignments are very time consuming	17 (22.1%)	33 (42.9%)	20 (26.0%)	5 (6.5%)	1 (1.3%)	2.21

## Roles and Responsibilities of Librarians

Table 4 shows the faculty's responses concerning the roles and responsibilities of librarians. The majority of the respondents, with a mean score of 1.86 agreed that librarians must guide students in retrieving information from the library. Seventy-five percent believed that the environment and the gestures of the librarians must be welcoming. With a mean score of 1.95, only three percent disagreed although 20 percent did not express their opinions. Of the respondents, 70 percent agreed that the library must be equipped with up-to-date information and tools.

Table 4: The Perceived Roles of Librarians (n = 76)

Statements	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	No Opinion n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean n (%)
S14 Librarians should guide students	25 (32.5%)	39 (50.6%)	11 (14.3%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0)	1.86
S15 library environment friendly & welcoming	25 (32.5%)	33 (42.9%)	15 (19.5%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0)	1.95
S16 Library has up-to-date information	24 (31.2%)	30 (39.0%)	19 (24.7%)	3 (3.9%)	0 (0)	2.01

Table 5: Institutional Issues (n = 76)

Statements	Strongly Agree n (%)	Agree n (%)	No Opinion n (%)	Disagree n (%)	Strongly Disagree n (%)	Mean n (%)
S17 Inadequate available information	10 (13.0%)	42 (54.5%)	15 (19.5%)	7 (9.1%)	2 (2.6%)	2.33
S18 Not valued as an important part of university by management	18 (23.4%)	30 (39.0%)	17 (22.1%)	7 (9.1%)	4 (5.2%)	2.33
S19 No institutional Support for faculty members	29 (37.7%)	18 (23.4%)	15 (19.5%)	11 (14.3%)	3 (3.9%)	2.22

## Institutional issues

Table 5 indicates faculty's perceptions of certain institutional issues. Fifty-two respondents agreed that the library lacked up-to-date information resources. With a mean score of 2.33, only 13 percent disagreed and 20 percent did not give an opinion. The faculty members perceived that top

management did not consider the library to be a valued resource. Sixty-three percent agreed, 11 percent disagreed, and 20 percent did not express an opinion. The mean score was 2.33 for this item and this raises many questions about the top management's commitment to promote library use. The majority of the respondents believed that there is an absence of strong organizational support for the faculty

## **Conclusion**

As indicated by Table 1, the respondents strongly agree that library use helps in increasing the self-esteem and confidence of users alongside an improvement in general communication skills. The results are in line with the work of Guskin (1996) which found that the use of the library enhances students' ability to think creatively and develop their personality by especially focusing on improving their communication skills. The results from Table 2 collected faculty's responses about the importance of library based assignments. The majority of faculty members agree that the students have appropriate skills and they believe that these assignments increase students' awareness of the world outside the classroom. Williams (1995) also laid stress on the need for academic libraries because they can intellectually stimulate students in key areas related to their studies. Table 3 collected faculty's opinions about their roles in promoting a library culture in Pakistan. They agree that faculty have a major role to play in motivating students to use libraries. They strongly support the idea that faculty in any university should design graded work which itself will encourage students to use libraries. The studies of Hardy (1992) and Baker (1997) strongly support the idea that faculty members are a major 'driving force' in increasing library traffic. They argue that students will look towards their instructors to acknowledge the importance of libraries and this can be done by assigning library-oriented work to the students. Faculty and librarians are the major motivating forces in inducing students to use libraries. Table 4 gathered faculty's responses about the role of librarians in supporting a library oriented culture among university students. Faculty members agree that librarians should not only guide students while consulting various databases but must also develop a friendly and welcoming library culture where students are treated through a service oriented culture. The studies of Al-Qallaf (2000), which found that libraries must have a welcoming culture and that there must be sufficient collaboration among faculty,

students and librarians support these results. The work of Khan (1994) and Bhatti (2006) support the idea of guidance provided by librarians to students and that they must be able to teach students how to get the maximum out of library resources. Table 5 captured faculty's perceptions about the institutional issues which may hinder students' frequent use of libraries. Very few of the respondents agree that the library has adequate and current information and the majority was of the view that there is a clear lack of institutional support for faculty members. The work of Bhatti (2006) supports this lack of institutional support and it is noted that some libraries do not even have websites that can be easily accessed by students.

The small sample size may be a limitation of this study but this is justified by the work of Adnan and Mumtaz (2005) where the same construct was measured with a smaller sample. This study adds a Pakistani perspective in marketing libraries to stakeholder groups and might be useful for policy makers at public and private sector institutions. The responses show a lack of coordination among students, librarians and faculty. To promote a library oriented culture, coordination among faculty, students and librarians is imperative. Further, it was found that the top management does not provide any support in incorporating a library oriented culture. Despite some challenges, the results are encouraging and the respondents explicitly acknowledge the importance of libraries as well as close collaboration among stakeholder groups. Future studies can be directed towards other universities in an effort to increase the generalisability of the construct.

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