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LIS Professionals' Staffing Patterns: Pakistani Public Sector Universities

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LIS Professionals' Staffing Patterns: Pakistani Public Sector Universities

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Introduction

Libraries are created for people and by people. Malhan and Rao (2006) say that, "Librarianship is a people-based profession. Its core values revolve around managing and serving people." Libraries are non-profit, labour-intensive service organizations.

The main aim of all types of libraries is to satisfy customers' needs and expectations. Competent staff are essential to service excellence in any organization, and information centers are no exception. Competent and suitable LIS professionals in universities are essential to meeting the changing needs of customers in this digital environment. This is even more important in research organizations such as university libraries. Capable LIS professionals affect research productivity in universities.

Libraries and information centres spend two-thirds of their budgets on employees (Stueart and Moran, 2007). In such a labour intensive organization employees are crucial to providing effective and efficient services to customers. A library cannot endure with out competent people even if it has superb technology, collections, and facilities (Malhan & Rao, 2006).

Staffing is often used interchangeably with hiring and recruiting. Staffing is broader term and covers all aspects of human resources, from advertising to selection. Changes are occurring in staffing patterns for LIS professionals globally. The diversity of the workforce, employee expectations for promotion and career development, technology, changes in organizations and external regulations from funding agencies and higher authorities make the staffing function more complex (Stueart and Moran, 2007).

Objectives of the Study

The study aims to:

- Analyze the staffing of LIS professionals in public sector universities of Pakistan.
- Explore the ways used by libraries to publicize job availability among LIS professionals
- Investigate the level of satisfaction of library directors with the available professional staff in providing effective services in LIS centres

Research Design

A survey of 20 public sector university libraries in the Punjab province was conducted to find out their prevailing status of staffing. The library directors of these universities were the sample population for this study. A questionnaire was used to gether data. Data was collected through a postal survey. Email and cell phones were also used to maximize the response. Nineteen university libraries (ULs) responded to the questionnaire, a response rate of 95 percent. Public sector ULs were chosen as sample because they have comparatively better professional staffing than private sector ULs and college sector (Appendix A).

Findings and Discussion

Status of Human Resources in ULs

Table 1

Number of Total Employees Working in ULs

Total Employees	Frequency	Percent
Up to 5	3	15.9
Between 6-10	4	21.2
Between 11-20	4	21.2
Between 21-50	6	31.8
More than 50	2	10.6
Total	19	100.0

Number of LIS Professionals Working in ULs

The number of total employees working in ULs ranged from 4 to 151 with a mean of 26.84. The highest number of employees, i.e. 151, is found in the Punjab University library. Three (15.9%) libraries had up to five employees. Four (21.2%) had between 6-10 and 11-20 employees, respectively. Only two libraries had more than 50 total employees, one with 52 and the other with 151 employees.

Table 2

LIS Professionals Working in ULs

LIS Professional	Frequency	Percent
One professional	3	15.8
2-5	11	57.9
6-10	4	21.1
More than 10	1	5.1

The respondent libraries were asked about the number of professionals having a foreign master's degree in LIS/M.Phil/ PhD/ in their libraries. Fifteen (78.9%) libraries had no professional with M.Phil/ PhD. Three (18.2%) libraries had one LIS professional with M.Phil/PhD degree. Only one (3.0%) library had 3 LIS professionals with M.Phil or PhD degree. This shows that public sector universities in Pakistan lack highly-qualified staff to fill positions.

Number of Non-Professional Employees in ULs

Non-professionals and paraprofessionals play an important role in service delivery in LIS centres. The number of non-professional staff ranged between 0 and 128. Table 3 shows the frequency distribution of non-professionals in ULs.

Table 3

Non-Professional Employees in ULs

Non-Professional	Frequency	Percent
Up to 10	8	42.1
11-20	4	21.1
21-40	5	26.3
More than 40	2	10.5
Total	19	100.0

A significant number of libraries, i.e., 8 (42.1%) had up to 10 non-professionals. Four (21.1%) libraries had 11 to 20 non-professionals, followed by 5 (26.3%) libraries had 21 to 40 employees. Only two libraries had more than 40 non-professional employees. Among them, one library had 45 non-professional employees and the other library had 128 non-professional employees.

Number of available and filled positions for LIS professionals

Respondents were asked about the number of available and filled positions for LIS professionals. The total available seats in 19 libraries were 131. Among them, 90 were filled and 41 were vacant.

Figure.1 Total number of available and filled positions for LIS professionals

Ways to publicize recent professional positions

ULs use various means for recruitment. Newspaper advertising, the Internet, referrals, and internal searches are the main sources.

All libraries in the public sector ULs used print media advertisement in local or national newspapers to publicize the job availability. Libraries commonly used more than one method for that purpose. Eight (42.1%) used web-based advertisement, i.e., on their library or university webpage along with print media advertisements. Five (26.3%) libraries used staff referrals for new hiring. Referral is another favoured source because referees' "word of mouth" is seen as having a certain amount of reliability (Yang, 2007). It was not commonly used in public sector universities because governmental hiring procedures were already prescribed.

Four (21.1%) libraries used internal searches (within the organization) followed by listservs. Listserves play a dynamic role in social networking among LIS professionals in Pakistan, especially in job searching.

Table 4

Ways to job advertise among LIS professionals

Ways of job publicity	Frequency	Percent
Print Advertisement	19	100
Web based Advertisement	8	42.1
Library Staff Referrals	5	26.3
Internal search	4	21.1
Email discussion group/Listserv	3	15.8

Satisfaction with the number of professional staff and other staffing issues

Respondents were asked about their satisfaction with the number of available professional staff. Only 4 (21.1%) libraries were satisfied with the number of available professional staff. A significant number of respondent libraries, i.e., 15 (78.9%), were not satisfied with the number of available LIS professionals. These libraries were understaffed and need more employees.

Number of employees needed

Respondents were further asked if they were not satisfied with the number of available staff, how many employees were needed to provide better services to users. The frequency distribution of the required number of professional and non-professional employees is shown in tables 5 and 6.

A significant number of libraries, i.e., 10 (66.7%) needed up to four professionals. It shows the majority of the libraries is understaffed and only need few more professionals to fulfill their users' and staffing needs of ULs. Four (26.7%) libraries needed 5 to 8 more professionals. Only one (6.7%) respondent needed more than 8 professionals.

Table 5

Professional Employees Needed in ULs N=15

Professional Employees Needed	Frequency	Percent
Up to 4	10	66.7
Between 5-8	4	26.7
More than 8	1	6.7
Total	15	

The frequency distribution of the number of needed non-professional employees is presented in Table 8. Six (40 %) libraries needed up to five non-professional employees and 4 (26.7%) libraries needed 6 to 10 employees. Five (33.3%) libraries needed more than 10 non-professional employees.

Table 6

Non-Professional Employees Needed in ULs

Non-Professional Needed	Frequency	Percent
Up to 5	6	40
Between 6-10	4	26.7
More than 10	5	33.3
Total	15	

Figure 2 shows the complete picture of understaffed university libraries. It reveals that 55 professional (with a mean of 14) and 117 non professional (with a mean of 6.38) were needed in the 15 ULs. The findings shows that there is not only a need to fill vacant positions, but also a need to create more positions for LIS professionals to fulfill users' information needs.

Figure 2 Number of Employees needed in the ULs

Satisfaction about Staffing Issues

Respondents were asked their opinions on the following four statements on a 5-point Likert scale (from very satisfied to very dissatisfied). IDescriptive statistics of their responses have been given in Table 7.

Table 7

Satisfaction about Staffing Issues

	Statements	Mean	SD
1	Involvement in selection process	3.58	1.31
2	Role in over all decision making about staff	3.68	1.16

3	Satisfaction with recruitment procedure of LIS professionals in your organization	3.63	1.42
4	Method to attract competent LIS professionals	3.11	1.41

The mean shows that respondents were very satisfied with first statement: "involvement in selection process" (mean=3.52, SD=1.31). The respondents were satisfied with the remaining three statements with the 3+ mean. Respondents were satisfied with their role in overall decision making about staff with the mean of 3.68. The statement regarding the method of attracting competent LIS professionals had the lowest mean and showed the least satisfaction of the respondents.

Conclusions

Library services depend on the skills of library professionals and support staff. University libraries need more professional and non-professional staff to provide effective services to clients. It is a big challenge for library managers to introduce new services with existing staff. A majority of libraries used print advertisement along with we-based advertisement and library staff referrals.

The problem encountered in getting the right caliber of professional staff due to low salaries and poor work environments. It should also be communicated to higher authorities and funding agencies, i.e., HEC (Higher Education Commission of Pakistan) and parent institutions to improve the situation.

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