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Exploratory determinants of service quality in academic libraries: users' perspective

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Abstract

Today's competitive environment focuses not only on providing high quality goods and services to their customers, but also emphasis to satisfy them at angle of three sixty degree. Libraries are also facing the same change and challenge in this age of information. This study examined the library users' satisfaction about library services, measured on seven determinants, which were service quality, library atmosphere, staff attitude, technological facilities, electronic resources, user satisfaction and user's loyalty. Survey research method used to conduct this study and initial data collected through a structured questionnaire. Which was divided into two parts, first was comprised of statements regarding users' satisfaction with libraries of their concerned universities. The second part was about demographic information regarding the respondents. Before administering questionnaire, the respondents briefed about the questions. The university students were the population for this study, the probability stratified random sampling method used to ensure equal chance for each participant. The collected data analyzed through Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), along with descriptive statistics ANOVA test was applied for getting answers of research questions. The study concluded, students are satisfied with university libraries staff members' attitude, found them cooperative, supportive and encourage students to use libraries effectively. The libraries service quality are pleasurable but not up to the expectations.

The study concluded, students are satisfied with university libraries staff members' attitude, found them cooperative, supportive and encourage students to use libraries effectively. The libraries service quality are pleasurable and up to the expectations. The users are not satisfied with library atmosphere, availability of electronic resources to meet users' anticipations, technological facilities, Online Public Access Catalogs and websites are interactive. To answer research question, dig out high impact factors for student satisfaction are latest technological facilities and service quality.

Keyword: Service quality, Digital resources, User satisfaction, Academic libraries, Digital libraries, Resources integration, Pakistan, Library users

Introduction

University libraries are the heart of learning communities, teachers, students and researchers enrich their knowledge perspective. Library users are the main stakeholders of the library existence and they are at receiving end, all the rest stakeholders are at delivering end. Library managers and other relevant authorities may have the empirical evidence of the areas which are strong and which need to improve. When the users centered strategy will be devised, the image of libraries will improve at multiple levels. Attitude of service provider has a key role in service process because it would be the first encounter of library users to build the image of library services. Attitude does not include the expressed behavior of library staff, but also the implied expressions too. This study will be an important tool to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services delivered in libraries. The study has addressed all standpoints relevant to the user's satisfaction by providing them fair and open chance to elaborate their judgment. The results are the significant addition to the existing literature, and will open more horizons for further studies.

Relevant Literature Review

Academic libraries are supposed to act as catalyst in the provision of information services contrary to the fact that how much diverse their needs are by focusing users centered approach and addressing their information needs (Simmonds & Andleeb, 2001). Onadiran (1999) concluded the study as number of customers frequently uses the library services and greater part is about those who use library books. In a study by Simmonds and Andleeb (2001) come with conclusion that university students, especially the seniors could not find a suitable place at their home due to their family for diligent studies so they prefer libraries. Erens (1996) had made a research on "How this

integration of new and old systems in library structure has improved the quality in research” and found that academics are availing its best through their greater use. With this structure, the libraries of universities had started improving the quality standards during the last decade and in the surveys teachers and students started feeling comfortable and satisfied with the technology of e-services. In other words, to measure the effectiveness of library services, customer satisfaction is one method of evaluation (Andaleeb & Simmonds, 1998; Cullen, 2001). SERVQUAL is of wide range that can use to test from one service, alone, to whole range exists in library services. This tool is now being used in academia, private and public libraries. Later on SERVQUAL was used to carry out principal surveys and the empirical studies as (Ahmed, 2017; Sheikh, 2014; Arshad, 2010; Nitecki, 1995; and Hernon (1996). The other model LibQUAL based on the philosophy of SERVQUAL using to get opinions of users about library services Rehman (2012), Sheikh (2014). Students influencing factors highlighted by Majid, Anwer and Eisenschitz (2012) the library better services, facilities and collection. Adikata and Anwar (2006) in their article, “Student library use: A study of faculty perceptions in a Malaysian University” found dissatisfaction from the students side, that they don’t have enough skills to use the library and to retrieve relative information and annoying part is librarians don’t guide the customers. Writers expect that librarians should encourage the customers with the academic environment. Atakan et al. (2008) in his survey “An evaluation of the second survey on electronic databases usage at the Ankara University digital library” they tried to explain how to assess the effectiveness of digital library. They use to take the comparison of two surveys, one was carried out in 2002 and another was carried out in 2005. On the basis of their results it was found that mostly used electronic databases like as ebcohost, web of science, and science direct. Clee and Maguire (1993) made a research which he titled as “Library Environment and Library Usage”. He has done the research to explore the significance

environment for library. Researchers come up with the conclusion that separately factors in environment of library are totally affected by customer perceptions and it makes the supreme effect. Coker (1993) wrote an article, that attract lots of attraction was “Libraries Verses Users? How and How Not to Deter Library Users” in which the writer came up with the research that identifies who are and who are not the library customers. Researcher scrutinizes the factors that influence the mindset of library customer. He also enlisted the non-customer’s concerns that are affected by various factors, as: socioeconomic factors, technical factor, physical issues and psychological or emotional attitude. Library members’ staff attitude influences positively on users’ satisfaction (Kumar, 2014). The study of these behaviors inhibits the potential customers. Cullen (2001) revealed that reason for utilizing and focusing on customer studies are:

- To provide the customers with the detailed and authentic information
- To make the concept of libraries clear and also the conjecture about customer needs
- Identification of problems
- Solution suggestion to the problems

Woo (2005) carried out an online customer survey to examine the overall scenario of university libraries. In his research, he revealed that with the availability and application of modern technical tools, customer started preferring the use of electronic and online journals. They collected all the relative data in some folder and then print the most specific data out of all but on the other side 72% are those customers which preferred the use of whole printed books electronically. Lohar and Kumbar (2007) revealed, there was very small number of customers which were familiar with the inter library loan services. These loan services include the methods to search the new updated literature, photocopy services, got assess to readable literature, electronic and digital integration of libraries, using through the internet and other factors were also examined. Kumar (2014) found

in survey users satisfied with an orientation program arranging for using OPAC and gratified features. Popoola (2008) put his research to examine the awareness about the use of library information services, resources and products within the faculty. He chooses one third members of faculty randomly for survey, in which he sort the things through questionnaires. He found the remarkable difference among the faculty awareness and their learning in using the library resources. It further revealed that customers sometimes are unaware of using the technology and do not have enough expertise and also they are incapable of relating their research work, learning and teaching with the library products and resources. Allen (1993) highlighted the current difficulties which are drawn by using libraries and effects were strained for libraries. Yousef (2010) found that the faculty member's perceptions about library services are good, they appreciate the library service to guide users in finding relevant information effectively. Some of the scholars as Madhusudhan (2010) have come up with the suggestions that libraries should also bring up the online and offline feedback system in order to observe the use and satisfaction feedback of electronic resources. With the time electronic service providers are being challenged with more demands of improvement in efficiency and utilization of electronic resources (Zhang, Ye, & Liu, 2011). Library usage is high and users are satisfied with library services, material collection, management, staff members are skilled and guide efficiently. Author recommended to polish librarians' skills should arrange professional development programs (Adeniran, 2011).

A number of Pakistani researchers have produced literature to inquire library user satisfaction with different angles like service quality, staff attitude, library resources (khan ,2012; Arshad, 2010; Bukhari et al., 2010; Sheikh, 2014; Ahmed, 2017). Rehman (2012) had observed the expectations of Pakistani customers regarding the libraries. He used a tool known as LibQUAL; concluded as users' expectations are very high regarding library environment, physical space and

its location. The service quality of libraries is not meeting the expectations of users (Arshad, 2010). Bukhari et al., 2010 come up with results as librarians not pay full consider to perform duties; students face problems to access material and to get help from library staff. Researchers found positive view as users are satisfied with library services (Rehman, 2012; Sheikh, 2014; Ahmed, 2017). Mairaj and Naseer (2013) concluded that library users satisfied with library collection, staff attitude, circulation and reference services, but not pleased with library space, environment and furniture. Sheikh (2014) stated, the CIIT library providing better services as compared to other university libraries of Pakistan. Khan (2012) recommended as library infrastructure and availability of the material are more effective. Library staff needs to develop knowledge and skills to provide modern services to library users (Arshad, 2010). Librarians should motivate users to use and contribute proposals for perfection (Ahmed, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to identify the determinants considers important by the library users specifically the students for their satisfaction by the university libraries, further determining factors having high impact on users' satisfaction.

Research Questions of the Study

- What are the dimensions of satisfaction for university libraries considered by the users?
- What are the determinants having high impact on user's satisfaction?

Significance of the Study

University libraries are the heart of learning communities, teachers, students and researchers enrich their knowledge perspective. This study will portrait real picture of library services and facilities being provided in the university libraries. When the picture of current status

will be presented to the authorities, they may design the strategies which will fill the gap, where they are and what to achieve in future. Library users are main stakeholders of the library existence and they at receiving end, all the rest stakeholders are at delivering end. Library managers and other relevant authorities may have the empirical evidence for the areas which are strong and which need to improve. When the user's centered strategy will be devised the image of libraries will improve at multiple levels. This study will be an important tool to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of services delivered in libraries. The study has addressed all standpoints relevant to user's satisfaction by providing them fair and open chance to elaborate their judgment. The results are the significant addition to the existing literature and will open more horizons for further studies.

Research Design

Survey research method used to conduct the study and initial data collected through a structured questionnaire. A structured developed questionnaire used to collect data, which was divided into two parts. First part of the instrument was comprised of statements regarding users' satisfaction with libraries of their concerned universities. Seven facets were included about satisfaction. The response was taken on a five point Likert Scale: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, N = Neutral, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree. The second part of the questionnaire was about demographic information. The selected variables for demographic portion was consist of name, gender, qualification and department, etc. 50 questionnaires filled by the students of various targeted universities as a pilot study, some changes made according to the suggestions. Before administering questionnaire the respondents briefed about the questions so that no question was misunderstood and they were given ample time to answer the questions at their free will. The students of different universities were the population for this study. The sample was drawn by

using a systematic sampling technique through selecting various departments of universities. The library users again selected systematically from their roll call, which was taken from the class coordinators of each department. The sample size drawn according to the formula of deriving sample size. Therefore, the number of respondents included in this study was 265. Out of these thirty responses not received, so 247 gave their opinion.

The data analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The objective of the study was to identify factors having high impact on user's satisfaction. For this purpose, one way ANOVA along with PostHoc and LSD used to dig out the variables having more significance from their covariables.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Both male and female library users were the part of sample and were given equal opportunity as per the systematic procedure to participate in the survey. The percentage of male users is 55.5 and female users is 44.5. In this study, a diversified age group participated 48% of the participants belong to group having 21-24 years of age, 17% are related to 25-28, 32% respondents belong to age group 17-20 years and 3% are 29 years and above.

Service quality

Libraries always focus to provide best services to their users; it is one of the prime considerations of university libraries. Mostly responded (n=51, 21%) strongly disagreed and (n=72, 29%) are disagreed (n=51, 21%) showed interest as neutral for this determinant. According to the data received through survey users are not satisfied with the tools and technology applications (n=71, 29.7%) adopted by the university libraries. Major chunk of respondents is not satisfied with the technological advancement occurred in the era of information flood and the age of internet. There might be three reasons, which may affect the satisfaction level of library users

in this regard. The first reason might be the shortage of IT labs within the library premises because most of the libraries are without proper computer labs. Some libraries have additional desktops for the browsing or using social media applications, but these resources do not fulfill the entire need of users. The second reason might be timely, non up-gradation of technology because 21st century has brought a rigorous revolution of technology and it has changed the face of libraries too. Unfortunately, libraries in Pakistan could not walk with the speed of technological developments. Therefore, the technological applications that are available in the market are not accessible in the university libraries, which cause dissatisfaction of library users. Thirdly the Google race who is a frequent user of social media tools in their daily life are not available as part of library services. Social Media is a main source nowadays to market the library services. Keeping in view the data, we can say that social media compatibility in the library services can enhance the service quality of libraries. Most of the libraries banned the social media websites to restrict their users for usage of social media applications.

Library Atmosphere

The interior atmosphere of the academic library is always welcoming to the users for study. The study shows that users give importance to the aesthetic view and environment; so it is very important to make the library atmosphere conducive to study, eye-catching, and peaceable to get the users in it. The users of university libraries are not satisfied with the atmosphere (n=54, 21.9%) and also the same responses received as neutral (n=54, 21.9%). Luxurious view of a library makes happy to its users. During the fix fixture of a library the needs and choice of the users should be kept in the planning. The seating capacity and planning attracts the users of a library, but users are disagreed about the sitting place and discussion sections in the university library (n=69, 28.9%).

Users like various sections like discussion room, recreational room and rest areas in the library. This factor also effect on the user's satisfaction.

Library Staff Attitude

Library staff attitude matters a lot to enhance the level of satisfaction of the library users. User oriented attitude and manners are the backbone of services for the users of any sector. It leads towards the best level of user satisfactions the students' responses referred as mostly agreed that libraries' staff attitude is friendly (n=100, 41.8%) as well as data is much impressive regarding the library staff's attitude cooperative and supportive (n=99, 41.4%). It also makes the users loyal. Library staff's assistance is interlink with library services and user's satisfaction in the completion of academic projects.

Technological Facilities

Technological facilities for library services are required to cater the need of its users. It is pertinent to mention here that library and its services can satisfy its users by providing the best technological facilities. The users are agreed (n=102, 41.3%) that technical facilities are available in the libraries. Users in this global age like to get information online at their table may via library website, the library portal is the source to access bibliographic information; users get satisfaction by using such platform. Interactive website of library enhances the level of satisfaction, according to the data users showed their satisfaction (n=113, 45.7%). This statement shows that mostly university libraries have interactive websites for its users as only (n=31, 12.6%) are disagreed. Document delivery is very important service in university library services. Libraries try to give preference on this element in various formats. The response is very interesting (n=70, 28.3%) are neutral and (n=58, 23.5%) are disagreed about the availability of document delivery service.

Electronic Resources

Sufficient library electronic (online/offline) resources are very essential to target the user to fulfil their information need. The responses show that a significant number of respondents (n=67, 27.1%) are not satisfied with the sufficiency of electronic resources in the libraries and (n=43, 17.4%) strongly believe that currently available are not ample to meet their information needs. Electronic resources are being popularized in libraries nowadays; it gives the concept of library without walls. It can be more useful and better if they are available through internet or at least local area networks. The respondents (n=98, 40%) agreed that resources can be accessed through network in their libraries. Well organized and networked digital resources are the backbone of library services. OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) is source of bibliographic information about the library resources. In this survey a question was asked about the expediency of OPAC, (n=101, 41%) respondents agreed and (n=34, 14%) were strongly agreed with the statement that OPAC is very useful and active.

Overall User Satisfaction

Library services play a vital role in the enhancement of the user's satisfaction. For university libraries user satisfaction is very important which leads to better or worst ranking in the institution. Got the opinions about the overall satisfaction with services being provided (n=71, 28.7%) agreed and (n=26, 10.5%) strongly agreed. To know the satisfaction with libraries, a question was asked whether they are satisfied with their libraries based on the experience (n=31, 12.6%) said they are strongly agreed (n=62, 25.1%) agreed. The responses of participants about their expectations (n=69, 27.9%) of them remain neutral and (n=63, 25.5%) found disagreed. This is the indication toward the dissatisfaction of students to meet expectations from the university libraries.

User Loyalty

User satisfaction leads towards the user loyalty. Such types of users are volunteer brand ambassador for their libraries. They motivate and refer others to avail and join the library services. Loyal users are the source of inspiration and marketing of library services to others. Library professionals can help the readers to develop their reading habits. A statement was given to the participants to rate on the scale, that librarian and library staff motivates them for using library (n=95, 38.5%) agreed with this statement, (n=33, 13.4%) strongly agreed.

The Determinants Having High Impact on User's Satisfaction

One of the questions was to identify among the determinants having high impact on user's satisfaction as compared to others. For this purpose one way ANOVA along with Post Hoc and LSD are the best statistical test to dig out the variables having more significance from their covariables. This test also provided us some of squares between groups and within groups considering the degree of difference (df) to find a significant difference for the priority of selected variables. From the result in table we can see that two of the determinants having relatively near to significance difference which is 0.05. The value of P for technological facilities and service quality is 0.077 and 0.092 respectively. We can conclude, these two determinants are having high impact on user's satisfaction as compare to the others. It means that users give more importance to the technological facilities and service quality for their high satisfaction level.

Table

The Determinants Having High Impact on User's Satisfaction

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Com. Technological Facilities	Between Groups	32.409	4	8.102	6.571	.077
	Within Groups	3.699	3	1.233		
	Total	36.108	7			
Com. Service Quality	Between Groups	125.356	4	31.339	10.070	.092
	Within Groups	6.224	2	3.112		
	Total	131.580	6			
Com. Overall User Satisfaction	Between Groups	47.492	4	11.873	2.992	.197
	Within Groups	11.906	3	3.969		
	Total	59.398	7			
Com. Librarians' Attitude	Between Groups	151.108	4	37.777	1.868	.317
	Within Groups	60.667	3	20.222		
	Total	211.774	7			
Com. Electronic Resources	Between Groups	9.500	3	3.167	1.118	.465
	Within Groups	8.500	3	2.833		
	Total	18.000	6			
Com. User Lyty	Between Groups	21.000	4	5.250	1.086	.493
	Within Groups	14.500	3	4.833		
	Total	35.500	7			
Com. Library Atmospher	Between Groups	22.053	4	5.513	.546	.718
	Within Groups	30.267	3	10.089		
	Total	52.320	7			

Findings

The dimensions and determinants considered in this study were Service Quality, Library Atmosphere, Librarian Attitude, Technological Facilities, Electronic Resources, User Satisfaction and User's Loyalty. Most of the users are not satisfied with the technological facilities given to them in the university libraries. The opportunities to remain in contact through social media are very limited. The real time dissemination of information by using latest social media tools not yet practiced by university libraries, while it would be very efficient and cost effective tools for disseminating required information. Users are disagreed with efficiency of services provision by university libraries. There is a mixed response about the library atmosphere, mostly users satisfied with the library working hours. Although libraries are having good furniture and fixture, but seating capacity is not sufficient. Most of the library users are hesitant to say that libraries are the best place for them so they remained neutral. The attitude of library staff is friendly and users are satisfied with the staff dealing. Library staff is very cooperative and supportive. Library staff extends helping hand to complete the academic assignments of library users. The websites of university Libraries are interactive but not providing document delivery services for their users. Users are not satisfied with multimedia, computers, scanners and other equipment in the university libraries. Library users desire to enhance electronic resources, but OPAC found useful to access library collection. Library users also relate the service quality, as a significant determinant for user satisfaction, the service quality of the university libraries is pleasant and up to the mark. Libraries are coming up with the expectations of library users, however, there is a considerable ratio such users do not agree with the statement of fulfilling their expectations. Users of the libraries show their interest to increase the digital resources in the libraries. Library users wish that library staff attitude should be nice and supportive. Users' satisfaction leads to users' loyalty, technological

facilities have high impact on the users' satisfaction. To answer the research question, dig out high impact factors for user satisfaction are latest technological facilities and service quality.

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