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Abstract

Objectives: The primary purpose of this study was to determine the Law Library usage patterns of law students in the public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. It analyzed the legal information needs of law students along with the purpose of their visits, availability of services, and major problems faced by law students in the law libraries.

Methodology: This empirical study was conducted while using a survey design. A structured questionnaire was distributed among the participants of the study using a convenience sampling technique. Collected data was analyzed and interpreted through the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V23). Descriptive statistics were used and data was presented in form of frequencies, modes, standard deviation, and percentages.

Findings: The study revealed that the majority of law students visit the law library once a month. It also transpires that the main purpose of visiting the law library is to work on class assignments and preparation for exams. The study pointed out major problems faced by the law students in law libraries that included the non-availability of a law librarian, non-availability of online databases, and non-availability of legal research journals. The study also recommends reforms to improve the situation in law libraries which ultimately help to raise the legal education standards in Pakistan.

Keywords: law library, law students, legal information, legal education, Pakistan, legal information seeking, law library usage, university law library

Introduction

Information is key to success in the modern world and libraries play a crucial role in storing and disseminating the information. Although the role of libraries has changed dramatically after the digital revolution yet they are still very important for students and professionals. The only access to a library or information is not enough for students because without information literacy one cannot get benefit from mere information. Johnston and Webber (2003) define information literacy as " Appropriate information behavior to obtain that information which is well fitted to the information needs, through any channel or medium, together with a critical awareness of the importance of wise and ethical use of information in society". Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defines Information Literacy as "the set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze and use information" (ACRL, 2011).

Although the information is important for students of all disciplines but law students, the information is of paramount importance. Legal information is the backbone of the legal profession and without up-to-date legal information, a lawyer or law student cannot make informed decisions. Young & Belanger (1983) defines University Library as, "a library established, supported and administered by a university to meet the information needs of its students, faculty and supports its service and research.

The role of libraries is very important for all sorts of social and economic development. Libraries provide books, buildings, materials, and technology for research and information seeking (Darkey, 2008).

University Library is one of the most important places for the students of any discipline but the importance of University Law Library is paramount for law students. Some universities have separate law libraries while others have dedicated portions of the law in the University Law Libraries. The role of law libraries also changed dramatically after the digital revolution of the 21st Century. The introduction of technology in Law Libraries is an old phenomenon that dates back to the 1950s when microfilm and microfiche were introduced in the law libraries. It means that librarians are the early adopter of technology who tried to implement such changes in law libraries many decades ago (Murley, 2009).

Law libraries quickly adopted technological changes and included online catalogs, computer-assisted legal research tools, and integrated library systems (Danner, 1997). Similarly, the web pages were first developed and adopted by the Law Libraries. They have their web presence long before the existence of official websites of law schools and universities. Law libraries also adopted networking techniques, CD-ROMs, and published court decisions online. They not only preserved digital legal information but also founded many institutional repositories. In recent developments, law libraries strongly advocated for open access to legal material (Turpening, 2009; Durham, 2009).

Law libraries are moving from the traditional approach to the technological approach. Now in most of the law libraries, there are dedicated computer laps that provide access to online

databases for legal research along with other resources like word processing and printing. Although in some law libraries the computer laps are replaced by laptops and wireless networks (Parker, 2011). Although laptops and wireless networks are the future but still most universities offer computer-assisted legal research due to increased demand along with other services like printing and support staff (Watson & Reeves, 2011). Technology is not only confined to law libraries but also spread in law schools and universities. Law schools are managing their admissions, records, and other infrastructural issues using technology (Polden, 2011).

Westlaw and LexisNexis completely changed the legal publishing industry. Before the arrival of these online databases, legal scholars, law students, and legal practitioners were already searching for online legal databases. Libraries were faced with the problem of how to accommodate such increasing requests for legal data but Westlaw and LexisNexis revolutionized the scenario and facilitated the legal researchers with its content and legal information specialization (Caswell & Wynstra, 2010)

Law libraries provide opportunities to law students for their research and academic activities. Where there are insufficient resources available to the law libraries, students lack research skills and face difficulties in their academic activities. The weakness of law students in research is a direct outcome of insufficient resources in law libraries. Meyer (2009) also discussed the poor research abilities of law students. He concluded that fresh law graduates were not good in difficult legal research tasks. The study also highlighted the fact that law practitioners prefer print material over online material which still dominates the legal environments. At the end of his study, he suggested that law students should be trained to use print material during their law graduation so that they can better prepare themselves for this kind of research in their legal practice.

Legal education depends on law libraries for quality and resources. The main purpose of legal education is to address three issues i.e. first, the practice of law, second, the enterprise of understanding that practice, and third, the study of law's possible understandings within the context of a university (Weinrib, 2007).

Pakistan is a developing country in South Asia with a Common Law legal system. Legal education is provided through Public sector universities and private law colleges. Law students in these institutes need legal information and up-to-date law libraries for studies and research. Generally, law students prefer other methods for legal information than law library visits in Pakistan. This study is an attempt to determine all the aspects of law student's interaction with the law library in public sector universities of Punjab, the most populous province of Pakistan.

Literature Review

Khan, Bhatti & Khan (2014) conducted a study on the facilities, resources, and services provided by the Central Library of the University of Peshawar. They found out that the majority of students visit the law library to study course books, reference material, and documents for

information needs. Their study revealed that lack of electronic resources, insufficient collection, and lack of physical facilities were the main problems faced by law students.

Otike (1999) studies the information-seeking habits of lawyers in England. With the help of semi-structured interviews he collected data and found that in the legal profession, the lawyer normally delegates the information-seeking powers. He also analyzed and measured the aspects of the information-seeking behavior of lawyers along with their reading habits and usage of law libraries.

Syvcilahti & Katjihingua (2012) conducted a study about the information-seeking behavior of law students at the University of Namibia. They found out that the majority of students visit the law library to borrow books. The study also pointed out the preferred method of seeking legal information is consultation with fellow students and colleagues. They suggested that law students need more information literacy courses and cooperation with their teachers.

Jamshed, Naeem & Bhatti (2020) presented the findings of their study regarding the usage of law libraries by lawyers. Their findings show that most of the lawyers prefer the advice of senior lawyers over the visit to the law library. It also revealed that the lack of electronic resources and access to online databases are among the major problems associated with the law library.

Shakeel and Rubina (2011) concluded that in the era of digital libraries, the role of traditional law libraries is still important. It was revealed in the study that the majority of lawyers prefer traditional print material over electronics resources and digital libraries. The study also revealed that while seeking legal information, the lawyer visit local law libraries.

Research Questions

The primary aim of this study is to explore the different aspects of law student's interaction with the law library. The study is conducted to achieve the following objectives;

- To determine the frequency of law library visits by law students
- To determine the basic reasons to visit the law library by law students
- To find out the legal information needs of law students
- To find out the preferred sources used by the law students for legal information
- To find out the basic services provided by the law libraries and the common problems faced by the law students in law libraries

Research Methodology

This quantitative study was conducted while using Survey Design. The population of the study consists of undergraduate and graduate law students enrolled in different public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. Non-random sampling technique was used and a convenience sampling method was used to collect data from the population through a structured questionnaire.

A structured questionnaire was constructed and first, it was pilot tested among the 10 law students. It was slightly updated with the recommended changes after pilot testing. The questionnaire was distributed among the law students studying in different public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan through WhatsApp Groups, E-Mails, Couriers, and personal visits. Overall 800 questionnaires were distributed among the participants and 368 questionnaires were received back with a response rate of 46% (372 questionnaires were received back but 04 questionnaires were incomplete hence not considered).

The questionnaire was consist of two parts; the first part was about the demographic information of respondents and the second part consists of questions regarding the student's legal information needs, reasons for visit of the law library, services provided by the law library, and common problems faced by students in the law library. All these questions are constructed while using the Likert Scale on the "fully anchored rating scale".

The collected data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS V-23). The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics in form of percentages, mean, standard deviation, and frequencies, and then presented in form of tables and diagrams.

Findings

In our cohort of respondents, the majority (86.7%) consists of males and only (13.3%) are females. The majority (89.7%) of respondents are enrolled in the LLB degree program. the majority (51.1%) of respondents are interested in Criminal and the majority of them (47.7%) will pursue their career as a lawyer after completion of the degree.

Table 1: Demographic Information

Gender	Male		Female	
	319 (86.7%)		49 (13.3%)	
Education Level	LLB		LLM	PhD
	330 (89.7%)		37 (10.1%)	1 (0.3%)
Area of Interest	Civil Cases	Criminal Cases	Family Cases	Others
	93 (25.3%)	188 (51.1%)	42 (11.4%)	45 (12.2%)
Preferred Career	Lawyer	Judge	Prosecutor	Law Officers	Others
	174 (47.3%)	137 (37.2%)	31 (8.4%)	16 (4.3%)	10 (2.7%)

Respondents were asked 06 statements to understand the different reasons for visiting the law library. One statement received a mean value of around 4, which means the majority of respondents 'often' visit the law library to complete their class assignments (M=3.73, SD=.672). Four statements received a mean value of around 2, which means the majority of respondents 'rarely' visit law library with friends (M=2.35, SD=1.283), to spend time peacefully (M=1.95,

SD=1.137), to borrow books (M=1.85, SD=.855), read about new laws (M=1.78, SD=.864) and to read legal journals (M=1.53, SD=.621) (Table 2).

Table 2: Purpose of visiting Law Library

Statements	Valid Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
I visit the library to complete my class assignments	368	3.73	.673
I visit the library to meet with friends	368	2.35	1.283
I visit the library to spend some time peacefully	368	1.95	1.137
I visit the library to borrow books for study	368	1.85	.855
I visit library to read about new laws	368	1.78	.864
I visit library to read legal journals	368	1.53	.621

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always

Eight statements were asked from respondents to find out the basic services provided by the university law library. 02 statements received a mean value of around 4, which implies that Wi-Fi (M=4.28, SD=.789) and law books (M=4.02, SD=.628) are 'often' available in the university law library. 02 statements received a mean value of around 2, which means legal research journals (M=1.72, SD=.890) and online legal databases (M=1.88, SD=1.319) are 'rarely' provided by the university law library (Table 3).

Table 3: Services provided by the University Law Library

Statements	Valid Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Availability of free Wi-Fi	368	4.28	.789
Availability of law books	368	4.02	.628
Availability of up to date law books	368	2.36	.764
Availability of Law Librarian & Support Staff	368	2.35	.571
Availability of monthly case law journals	368	1.95	1.024
Availability of instructions for information retrieval & literacy	368	1.94	.680
Access to online legal databases/resources	368	1.88	1.319
Availability of legal research journals	368	1.72	.890

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always

Respondents were asked 05 statements to learn about the legal information needs of law students. One statement received a mean value of around 5, which shows that majority of respondents need legal information for their course assignments and examinations (M=4.58, SD=.656). three statements received a mean value of around 2, which means the majority of respondents 'rarely' need legal information about case laws (M=2.22, SD=.786) and for research purposes (M=1.82, SD=.962) (Table 4).

Table 4: Legal Information Needs of Law Students

Statements	Valid Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
I need legal information for my course assignments and exams	368	4.58	.656
I need legal information to understand the specific legal issue	368	2.90	1.360
I need legal information to read about newly promulgated laws	368	2.24	1.126
I need legal information to read about case laws/judgments of higher courts	368	2.22	.786
I need legal information for research purpose	368	1.82	.962

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always

Respondents were asked 06 statements to ascertain the preferred methods used by the students to seek required legal information. Three statements received a mean value of around 4, which shows that majority of respondents 'agree' that they prefer to obtain required legal information from online resources (M=4.44, SD=.632), from the teacher (M=3.74, SD=1.314) and friends (M=3.73, SD=1.437). Two statements received a mean value of around 2, which means the majority of respondents 'disagree' with the statements that they prefer to obtain legal information from printed material (M=2.49, SD=1.080) and the law library (M=2.08, SD=1.107) (Table 5).

Table 5: Methods preferred by the students for legal information seeking

Statements	Valid Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
I prefer to obtain required legal information from online resources	368	4.44	.632
I prefer to obtain the required legal information from the teacher	368	3.74	1.314
I prefer to obtain required legal information from friends	368	3.73	1.437
I prefer to obtain required legal information from personal law books	368	3.47	.692
I prefer to obtain required legal information from printed material	368	2.49	1.080
I prefer to obtain required legal information from law library	368	2.08	1.107

Scale: 1= Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neither agree nor disagree, 4= Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

Respondents were asked 07 statements regarding common problems or barriers faced by law students in the university law library. One statement received a mean value of around 5, which means the non-availability of a professional law librarian (M=4.56, SD=.559) is the problem 'always' faced by the respondents. Three statements received a mean value of around 2, which means the majority of respondents 'rarely' encounter issues like non-availability of the heater in winter (M=1.76, SD=.685), non-availability of air-conditioning in summer (M=1.60, SD=.690), and insufficient sitting space in a law library (M=1.91, SD=.790) (Table 6)
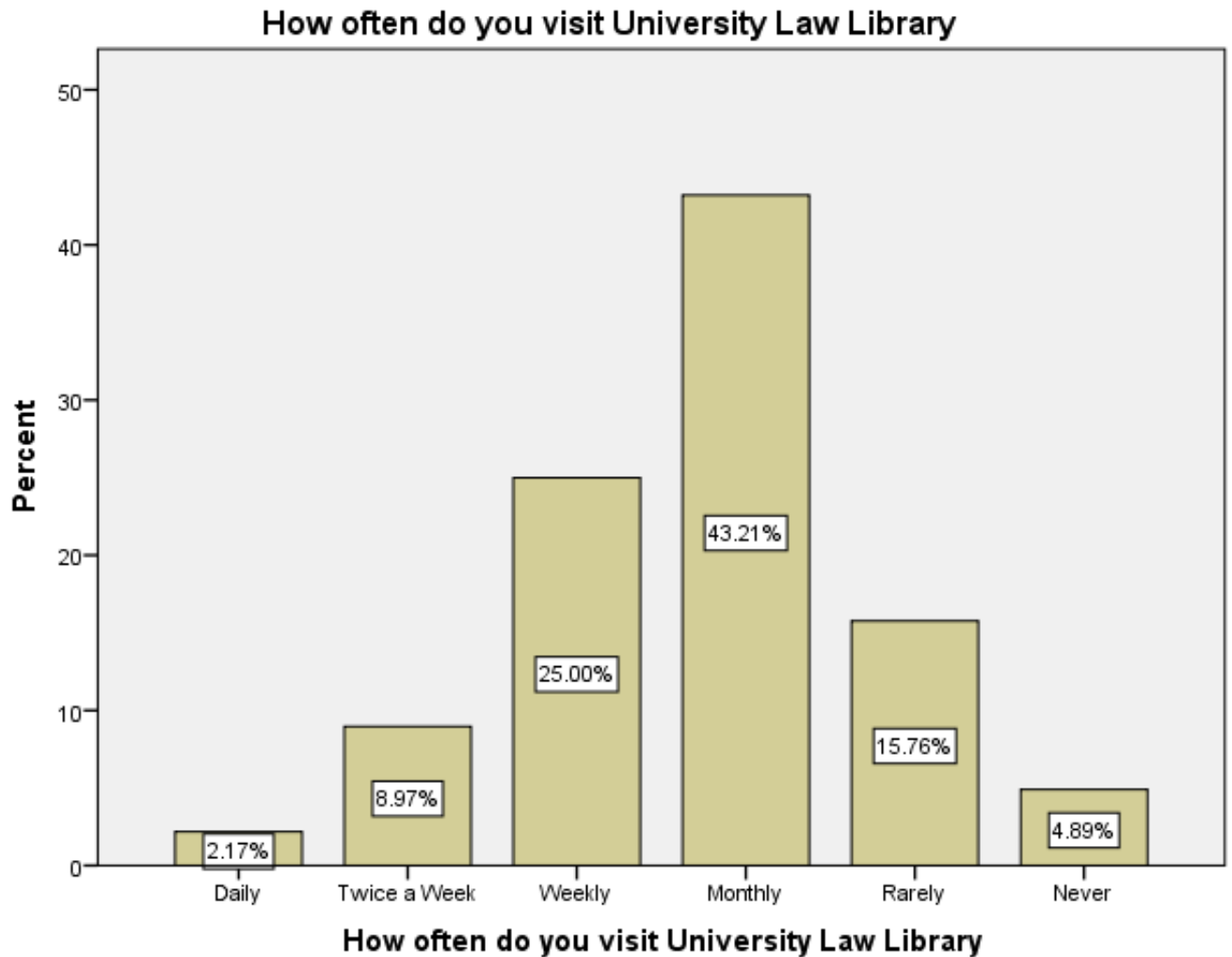
Table 6: Common Problems/Barriers faced by the law students in the library

Statements	Valid Number	Mean	Std. Deviation
Non-availability of professional Law Librarian	368	4.56	.559
Non-availability of instructions for information retrieval and library use	368	4.32	.940
Non-availability of online legal database/resources	368	4.08	1.028
I do not feel any need to visit law library for legal information	368	4.03	.949
Insufficient sitting space in law library	368	1.91	.790
Non-availability of heaters in Winter	368	1.76	.685
Non-availability of Air-Conditioning in Summer season	368	1.60	.690

Scale: 1= Never, 2= Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4= Often, 5= Always

Respondents were asked a question that "How often you visit the university law library" to ascertain the frequency of library visits. The majority of respondents (43.21%) replied that they visit the university law library only once a month, (25%) of respondents visit weekly, and (15.76%) of respondents rarely visit the law library (Diagram 1).

Diagram 1: Frequency of Visits to University Law Library

How often do you visit University Law Library

Respondents were asked a question that "what you first do when faced with any difficult legal question". The majority of respondents (36.68%) replied that they use the internet and (35.60%) replied that they consult their teacher first to seek the answer to difficult questions. (14.95%) consult their friends, (7.07%) use books, and (5.71%) use other means (Diagram 2).

Diagram 2: where to look for the answer to a difficult legal question

What you first do when faced with any difficult legal question

What you first do when faced with any difficult legal question

Discussions

The study revealed many interesting and undiscovered facts about the law students studying in different Public Sector Universities of Pakistan. It highlighted different aspects of legal education that help determine the standard of legal education in Pakistan. One of the interesting facts revealed by this study is the preference of career by the law students after completion of their degree. Although the majority of the law students (47.3%) want to become lawyers yet (37.2%) of them wanted to become a Judge after completion of their degree. It also shows that position of judges in Pakistani society is very desirable due to socio-economic factors. Another interesting fact highlighted by the study is that majority (51.1%) of the students prefer "Criminal Cases" and "Criminal practice" and only (25.3%) are interested in Civil cases.

Another important finding of this study is that the majority of law students (43.21%) only visit the law library once a month. (25%) of law students visit the law library weekly, (8.97%) twice a week, and only (2.17%) visit the law library on daily basis. It is interesting to note that (15.76%)

of law students rarely visit the law library and (4.89%) even don't know about the existence of a law library. These findings show that law students do not prefer to use the law library due to different reasons and it is also one of the reasons for declining standards of law education.

The study found out that law students mainly visit the law library to complete their class assignments. They are not interested in visiting the law library for other purposes like reading books, legal journals, and new laws. It shows the lack of interest on the part of students to visit the law library. They only visit the law library when needed for class assignments. This finding also points out a weakness in the legal education system of Pakistan which fails to encourage the reading and research culture among students. Keefe (2005) also suggested in his study that the shortcoming of law students reflects in the new law practitioners who lack legal research skills. He pointed out different flaws in young legal researchers.

Another important finding of this study is that in most of the law libraries basic law books and free Wi-Fi services are available for students. But most of the time law libraries fail to provide other services like up-to-date law books, law librarians, monthly case law journals, instruction manuals, legal research journals, and availability of online databases. It is important to note that provision of online databases is key to modern legal research and this facility is hardly available at law libraries in Pakistan. To promote the culture of legal research access to legal journals, case laws and online databases are necessary which are not available in University Law Libraries in Pakistan. The study also revealed that the legal information need of the law students mainly revolves around course assignments and examinations. They hardly care about new laws, case laws, and legal research.

The study found out that law students prefer online resources, advice from teachers, and advice from friends as methods of obtaining legal information. It shows that law students never try to go to the library and find the solution to the legal problem but they prefer the advice of teachers and friends which is an easy way to finding answers to legal questions. This particular finding also highlights the importance of online search and use of the internet by the students and law students always use the internet to get the answer to any particular legal question.

The study also discovered the major problems faced by law students in law libraries. There are many problems but the non-availability of the professional law librarian is on the top of the list. This issue is critical because it creates many other issues for law students. Berring (2005) also supports this point of view and concluded that the law librarian is like the soul of a law library. He plays the role of the bridge between information seekers and information. Law librarians not only guide the person to find out the legal information but also make him understand the obtained information. Law is a specialized field and only a law graduate person knows how to look for the required legal information in the law library. Universities need to appoint a person a law librarian with basic knowledge of law or a law graduate because only he can guide the students for their research and academic activities in the library. The same view is also presented

by Slinger & Slinger (2010) that the presence of professional librarians in the law library is of major significance for those who are looking for legal information in the law library.

Other major problems faced by law students are the non-availability of instruction manuals for library use and the non-availability of online legal databases. In university law libraries the access to local and international paid databases is not available which is a big hurdle in the way to promote legal research culture in Pakistan. Online resources are the basic necessity for law students in the modern world as Watson & Reeves (2011) pointed out that virtual law libraries are the way forward and they are quickly becoming a reality. But they are not available in law libraries which also contributing to the falling standards of legal education in Pakistan. It also leads to the habit of using printed material over online electronic material in the law students when they become law practitioners as Ojo & Grand (2011) reported that the use of online resources is not preferred by the law practitioners.

The study also revealed that there is no problem with space in the law library, heaters in winters, and Air Conditioning in summer.

General findings of this study indicate that law students in the public sector universities of Pakistan are not using law libraries for research and academic activities. The law libraries in universities are not providing essential services and in bad shape. The role of law libraries in legal education is very important and due to this dismal condition of law libraries, Pakistan's legal education system is suffering.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to determine the law library usage patterns of law students in the public sector universities of Punjab, Pakistan. The study analyzed the different aspects of legal information-seeking behaviors of law students and their interaction with the law libraries. The study pointed out that law students are not inclined to visit the law libraries and the majority of them prefer other sources for information seeking than law libraries. It also highlighted the major problems faced by law students in law libraries. Due to the non-availability of online databases, non-availability of professional librarians, and lack of resources, students are generally not interested in law libraries.

Limitations

The study has many limitations. First, data is collected while using a non-random sampling technique which has its drawbacks. Second, questionnaires and closed-ended questions were used for this study, which generally lacks the in-depth point of view from respondents. Thirdly, data is collected only in one province of Pakistan; hence the whole population cannot be generalized.

Practical Implications

The study has many practical implications. The findings of this study can be used to improve the conditions of law libraries in public sector universities that will enhance the standards of legal education in Pakistan. The study can be used by the teachers to understand the mindset and behavior of law students while seeking legal information. The findings of this study can be used to increase the overall trends of law library use among law students.

Future Research

The main focus of this study is the public sector universities in the Province of Punjab, Pakistan. Further research can be conducted on the same issue regarding private universities and private law colleges that makes a major portion of the legal education sector. Similarly, research on the same issue in other provinces of Pakistan can be conducted.

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