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Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care in University Libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this research was to look at the attitudes of library leaders' towards user care in university libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. This study was conducted utilizing a quantitative research methodology that included a survey approach and a questionnaire. The data were collected from all library leaders' working in the universities/ degree awarding institutions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad recognized by Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. Both descriptive as well as inferential statistics were applied to analyze data using SPSS. The results revealed that the library leaders had an overall positive attitude towards user care. There were no statistically significant differences in the library leaders' attitude based on types of university, number of employees in libraries, year of establishment of university, library working days in a week, and library timing respectively. Conversely, there were statistically significant mean differences in library leaders' attitude towards user care based on geographical locations of university and gender of the respondents. The results provided a pragmatic insight into the user-centred approaches for managing customer (user) relationship for marketing of library resources and services. This research also had an important contribution to the existing literature on relationship marketing in general and user relationship management in particular as only a few such studies appeared so far.

Keywords: *Customer relationship management, User care, Library leaders, University libraries, Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

User care is critical to an organization's growth as it comprises taking care of the user in order to ensure a positive experience with the organization's goods, services, and brand. Instead than simply generating a sale, strong user care guarantees that users are cared for, that their requirements are understood, and that they are assisted in choosing the best solution. User care, in many circumstances, goes beyond simple customer service by establishing an emotional bond (Mugge *et al.*, 2009). Customer care services at a business include things like reliability, security, parking, front desk services, attractiveness, speed in service delivery, client attention and sensitivity to their needs, honesty, and a nice attitude toward users (Majava & Isoherranen, 2019). User care services try to put customers at ease, create memorable experiences in their minds, and make them feel better and happier than they did before the interaction in order to increase customer retention (Christine, 2011).

Academic libraries are services oriented organization, they have always been eager to meet the needs of their patrons and endeavor for their pleasure up to the greatest (Adeniran, 2011). Due to the competitive climate where various channels of information are available, it is critical to establish users care strategies, which are a crucial element of libraries. Users care strategies is so vital to academic libraries ability to create profits and revenue, it should be considered as part of a comprehensive plan to systematic improvement. It will not only positive impact on the success of academic libraries but also improve library image, services quality and lifelong learning (Bahader *et al.*, 2020).

University libraries of Khyber PakhtunKhwā and Islamabad, Pakistan have traditionally focused on user services, but there is a gap in the management of user care initiatives as part of the library service plan that must be addressed formally. By joining these holes, libraries will gain a deeper picture of their users through comprehensive assessments. Libraries will become more solution-oriented, improve service quality, staff professionalism, expertise and friendliness will improve, and new learning opportunities will emerge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Customer Care

Customer care, according to Kotler (1995), is an intangible activity or benefit that a party might deliver to another that does not result in ownership of anything. According to Ngahu (2001), customer care is any good service delivered to a customer during the selling process of a product or service. He continues to explain "actions" as "things" that are sold or provided in conjunction with the selling of goods. Customer care is a tool for solving problems and giving customers with high-quality services and goods, according to the Empowerment International Customer Care Policy (2001). Customer care policies, according to St Martin's College (2004), aim to resolve complaints regarding public and private sector organizations' services in a timely, fair, and pleasant manner.

Customer Care Policy

According to research conducted by The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (2002), library policy encompasses all areas of library service accessibility. Location, operating hours, physical access, furniture and equipment, stock and services, access to workers, and sufficient space are among the factors used to assess individual users' and communities' needs, rights, and expectations. As stated by Dlamini (2004), the empowerment libraries are dedicated to customer care and satisfaction policies, as proven by Jordan Hill Library Customer Care Policy, (2000), International Customer Care Policy, (2001), and the University of Hull Academic Services Libraries, (2002) are following:

- Provides a friendly, helpful, and prompt service to customer needs.
- Within the constraints of available resources, provides the best possible service at all times.
- Creates a comfortable and friendly atmosphere for users to work in.
- Provides materials and information resources that are relevant for the user's needs.
- Trains and develops library employees in order for them to continue to deliver excellent service.

- Utilizes information from the library's customer complaints and recommendations scheme, as well as user surveys, to enhance services.
- Publicizes the library's services, policies, and working hours, and keeps users up to date on any changes to the library.
- Customer expectations are met and exceeded.
- All customers receive the best products, training, and services available.
- Every customer is treated with respect and courtesy.
- Meets with library representatives, conducts periodic user feedback surveys, and provides a suggestion box to collaborate with users.
- Based on current information sources and modern technology, provides professional and effective services.

Academic Library Users

According to the European Higher Education Libraries Programme, (2002) academic libraries are practically universally acknowledged as the heart of the institutions. This is because the library serves as a primary source of knowledge for everyone who works, learns, or visits the institution. Academic libraries assist the University's objectives and encouraging learning, teaching, research, and development by providing resources and information services (University of Natal Durban Annual Report, 2002). The professional and paraprofessional employees of the library serve the entire university community.

Academic library users differ from one library to the next, but they are mostly the same (European Higher Education Libraries Programme, 2002; Mgobozi, 2002; Moyane, 2003). They also stated that learning students, academics, researchers, the community, and coworkers, as well as those who are required to use the library, are all users of academic libraries. Because academic library users have a diverse set of requirements and expectations, library employees must be aware of these demands and

make every attempt to accommodate them (2002, University of Otago Library). Academic librarians face a tremendous challenge in providing high-quality services in their libraries. Libraries should provide more than just a physical space; they should also provide access to high-quality services (Farooq *et al.*, 2016; Ashiq *et al.*, 2021). Academic libraries, according to Biblarz *et al.* (1998:2), must prioritize customer service in order for customers to use and enjoy the services available.

Attitude of Library Leaders' towards User Care

Attitude refers to a person or object's method, temperament, sentiment, and position toward that person or thing, as well as a proclivity or inclination, especially in the mind. An attitude, according to Allport (1935), is a mental and neurological state of readiness that is organized through experience and has a direct or dynamic impact on the individual's response to all objects and events with which it is related. According to the American Psychological Association, attitude is the proclivity to react favorably or negatively to a specific set of stimuli, such as a national or racial group, a custom, or a system (Anastasi, 1957). Munn (1933) defined attitudes as learned predispositions toward environmental elements. As a result, an attitude is a positive, negative, or mixed evaluation of an object expressed in varied degrees of intensity. It conveys a positive or negative assessment of a person, place, thing, or event. These are critical features of our perceptions and actions in regard to our social environment in general.

Library leaders' and staff is the main component of a library system. The library staff's good attitude, capability, efficiency, and enthusiasm play a big role in user happiness and care (Bahader *et al.*, 2018) and they play a crucial part in the library's smooth operation. Even if a library has all of the necessary resources, infrastructure, and equipment, it will never be able to provide effective and efficient services if its staff is not properly trained, motivated, and energized. University libraries employees must needs different competencies and practical intelligence for the smooth, quick and proper functions of the library to implement user care strategies in their respective libraries (Bahader *et al.*, 2021). Employees at the library should be aware of and comprehend user preferences, organizational visions and strategies,

customer-oriented service values, and the effects of the establishment and maintenance of excellent customer-organization relationships (Greenberg, 2001).

Afzal (2008) observed that, despite significant LIS research, library users (who use the designed system), the environment in which users interact with librarians, friendly help services given by librarians, and their impact on users' psychological well-being have received less attention. In order to function effectively, librarians must possess personal attributes such as strong communication skills, networking skills, intellectual curiosity, flexibility and tolerance, a positive attitude, appreciation for variation, creative thinking, self-motivation, self-confidence, and assessment (Nonthacumjane, 2011; Hashim and Mokhtar, 2012). A thorough evaluation of available research indicated that no previous study evaluating library leaders' attitudes towards user care found, emphasizing the necessity for more research in the proposed field. As a result, this study was designed to ascertain university library leaders' attitudes towards user care in university libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, Pakistan. Among the research questions were: **RQ1:** what are the library leaders' attitude towards user care in university libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad? **RQ2:** Are there any significant differences in the library leaders' attitude towards user care based on demographic information (University` types, region, year of establishment, number of library staff, library operating hours, working days in a week, and gender)?

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study used a quantitative research strategy that included a survey and a questionnaire. There were two sections to the questionnaire. The first portion contained demographic data about the university libraries as well as relevant questions such as: types, region, year of establishment, working days in a week, and number of staff total and gender of the respondents' respectively. The second section contains nine facets related to library leaders' attitudes towards user care were developed based on an extensive literature review. The content and face validity of the questionnaire was established through review of expert panel and pilot testing. The Cronbach's alpha value was used to determine the

questionnaire's reliability. The strong Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.802 indicated that the instrument's internal reliability was acceptable.

Population and Sampling

The survey includes all head/in-charge librarians of university libraries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Federal Territory of Islamabad. The population size of the study is forty-three (43), libraries of universities and degree awarding institutes, approved by Higher Education Commission of Pakistan covering all the private and public sectors universities of the selected area. It was decided to collect data from all these head librarians. The survey of these library leaders was conducted using a questionnaire.

Data Collection and Analysis

The administration of questionnaire to the library leaders of university libraries from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad was completed through personal visits and mails. The questionnaire included self-addressed envelopes in which the completed questionnaire was to be returned to the researchers. Initially the response rate was very low. However, the follow up reminders via phone calls and mails helped the researchers to achieve a reasonable response rate of 81.4 %. All questionnaires collected were checked for completeness and accuracy of data prior to data processing. Following that, the data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences software (SPSS), which included both descriptive and inferential statistics.

FINDINGS

Profile of the Study Respondents

Out of 35 total participants, there were 6 females (17.1%) and 29 males (82.9%). A larger number of respondents (n= 20, 57.1%) were belong to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and (n=15, 42.9) belong to Islamabad. In terms of university types, the majority of respondents, 22 (62.9%), were concerned with public universities, while 13 (37.1%) were concerned with private universities. A good number of universities (n=22, 62.9%) established after 1991 till date, followed by (n=7, 20.0%) in the years of 1971 to 1990, and (n=6, 17.1%) were in the years of 1947 to 1970 respectively. As for as library timing is

concerned, 14(40%) libraries serving Eight hrs, 11(31.4%) were 10 hrs, and 10(28.6%) were 12 hrs daily respectively. Similarly, majority (n=19, 54.3%) of university libraries working Five days in a week, followed by Six days (n=14, 40.0%), and Seven days (n=2, 5.7%) correspondingly. Total number of employees in university libraries range wise are “up to 5” 10(28.6%), “6 to10” 12(34.3%), “11 to 15” 7(20%), and “more than 16” 6(17.1%) respectively.

Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

In order to know about the library leaders' attitude towards user care respondents were asked participants to score various alternative options on a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating strong disagree and 5 indicating strong agree. Table 01 shows the results in detail. The attribute that has highest mean score of (04.60) in the questionnaire is “we try our best to fulfill information needs of every individual user by all possible means” followed by “all library staff care for our user and extend helping hand for them” has mean score (4.49), and “Library staff shows welcoming attitude to the user stepping in the library and educated them regarding the proper use of services”, with mean score is (4.37). Moreover, rank wise mean scores are (4.34), (4.26), (4.20), (3.83), and (3.49) of the facets “we ensure privacy for every user's personal information”, “We strongly encourage to build up friends of library”, “our users' services department use individual attention to every user who step in the library”, “the online user services and support staff of library is quite efficient in problem solving”, and “our users' services department gives priority to key users” respectively.

The overall mean score of library leaders' attitude facets is (M=4.17& SD= .499). This result lies at “Agree” position in the given scale and indicate that respondents' attitude about user care is optimistic in academic libraries of KPK and Islamabad.

RELATIONSHIP TESTING

Types of University and Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

To investigate mean differences between composite average score and features of library leaders' attitude toward user care and types of university, an independent sample t-test (two-tailed) was

applied. Results shows that there is no significant difference found in the overall mean score of library leaders' attitude towards user care with respect to types of university where significant value is greater than Alpha value ($P = .386 > 0.05$). Similarly, no significant differences were found between all facets of library leaders' attitude regarding types of University, where all significant values are greater than P-values ($P > 0.05$).

Table 01

Mean Score of Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

| Rank | Attributes | Mean | SD |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| 1 | We try our best to fulfill information needs of every individual user by all possible means | 4.60 | .775 |
| 2 | All library staff care for users and extend helping hands for them | 4.49 | .612 |
| 3 | Library staff shows welcoming attitude to the users stepping in the library and educated them regarding the proper use of services | 4.37 | .547 |
| 4 | We ensure privacy for every user personal information | 4.34 | .802 |
| 5 | We strongly encourage to build up friends of library community | 4.26 | .780 |
| 6 | We maintain long term relationship with users | 4.11 | .867 |
| 7 | Our user services department pay individual attention to every person who step in the library | 4.00 | .840 |
| 8 | The online users services and support staff of the library is quite efficient in problem solving | 3.83 | 1.071 |
| 9 | Our user services department gives priority to key users | 3.49 | 1.245 |
| Overall, Library leaders' Attitude | | 4.17 | .499 |

Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1= Strongly Disagree

Regions of University and Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

To determine mean differences in library leaders' attitudes toward user care among university locations, a two-tailed independent sample t-test was used. There was significant differences found in the composite mean scores of ($M = 3.97$ & $SD = 0.522$) KPK and Islamabad ($M = 4.42$ & $SD = 0.333$), conditions; $t(33) = -2.915$, $P = .006 < 0.05$. Here p-values are less than significant alpha value of 0.05 for the composite mean score of library leaders' attitude. This reflects that library leaders' belongs to Islamabad universities are taking more care of users as compare to KPK.

Furthermore, three statements where significant difference were existed between KPK and Islamabad are "We ensure privacy for every user personal information" ($P = .037 < 0.05$), "The online users services

and support staff of the library is quite efficient in problem solving”, (P=.034<0.05), and “All library staff care for our users and extend helping hands for them”, (P=.007<0.05) respectively. Details are given in Table 02.

Table 02

Participants’ Mean Differences towards User Care based on Regions of University (N=35)

| Attributes | Regions of University | | | | t-stats (df=33) | P-value |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | KPK | | Islamabad | | | |
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| We ensure privacy for every user personal information | 4.10 | .852 | 4.67 | .617 | -2.179 | .037* |
| The online users services and support staff of the library is quite efficient in problem solving | 3.50 | 1.23 | 4.27 | .594 | -2.213 | .034* |
| All library staff care for our users and extend helping hands for them | 4.25 | .639 | 4.80 | .414 | -2.903 | .007* |
| Overall, Library leaders’ Attitude | 3.97 | .522 | 4.42 | .333 | -2.915 | .006* |

* The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Number of Employees and Library Leaders’ Attitude towards User Care

The One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test was applied to find out significant differences of average score of library leaders’ attitude based on number of library employees. Results revealed that in terms of the number of library employees, there is no significant variation in the composite mean score of library leaders' attitude toward user care. The significant value P=0.925, is larger than alpha-value 0.05 and F-value is .156 i.e. (F (3, 31) =0.156, P= .925>0.05) respectively. Similarly, no significant variations were found in all facets of library leaders’ attitude with respect to number of employees in libraries.

Year of Establishment and Library Leaders’ Attitude towards User Care

The study utilised a one-way ANOVA to compare means deviation of library leaders’ attitude with year of establishment of university from 1947 to till date. Results revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in the composite mean score of “library leaders’ attitude” (F= .011, P= .989>0.05).

Besides this, nine attributes of library leaders' attitude have not statistically significant difference in the average scores and their p-values are larger than alpha-values ($P > 0.05$).

Working Days in Week and Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

The One-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was carried out to test variation in mean score of respondents for overall library leaders' attitude facets regarding working days (Five, Six and Seven) in week. Nine attributes of library leaders' attitude were experienced and shows the composite mean scores of library leaders' attitude based on working days in the week do not differ statistically significantly. The significant value $P = .946$, which is larger than alpha-value (0.05) and F-value is 0.56 i.e. ($F(3,136) = 0.56, P = .946 > 0.05$). Thus, the variations in the library leaders' attitude regarding working days in week of university libraries is not correlated.

Conversely, only one attributes of library leaders' attitude is significant difference based on working days in week of university libraries and shown here with F-values and P- values. The statements are "Library staff shows welcoming attitude to the users stepping in the library and educated them regarding the proper use of services" ($F = 4.107, P = .026 < 0.05$). In addition, for pair wise comparisons, Tukey's HSD test indicated that university libraries open five days in week shows welcoming attitude towards users as compare to seven working days in a week.

Library Timing and Library Leaders' Attitude towards User Care

The association between library leaders' attitude toward user care and library timing in hours was assessed using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient test, using library timing as an independent variable. Results indicated that there is no correlation between library timing and library leaders' attitude towards user care, where significant values of composite mean of library leaders' attitude and its sub facets are greater than P-value at 0.05 and 0.01 . However, there was a significant but positive relationship between participants' attitude towards user care based on library timing for the attribute of "We strongly encourage to build up friends of library community" ($r = .364$ & $P = .032 < 0.05$) respectively.

Gender and Library leaders' Attitude towards User Care

The findings of the independent sample t-test in Table 03 demonstrate that there is a statistically significant difference in the composite mean score of library leaders' attitude toward users and gender, with a p-value less than .05. That is (M= 4.08 & SD=0.454) of male and (M =4.562 & SD=0.403) of female, conditions; $t(33) = 2.223, P = .033 < 0.05$. Table 3 showed that female employees showing welcoming attitude towards users as compare to male. In addition, two statements "Our user services department gives priority to key users" and "Our users services department pay individual attention to every person who step in the library" are also statistically significant and their significant values are less than P-value that is ($P = .009 < 0.05$) and ($P = .030 < 0.05$) simultaneously.

Table 03

Participants' Mean Differences of Attitude towards User Care based on Gender (N=35)

| Attributes | Gender | | | | t-stats (df=33) | P-value |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Male | | Female | | | |
| | Mean | SD | Mean | SD | | |
| Our user services department gives priority to key users | 3.24 | 1.21 | 4.67 | .516 | 2.796 | .009* |
| Our users services department pay individual attention to every person who step in the library | 3.86 | .833 | 4.67 | .516 | 2.261 | .030* |
| Overall, Library leaders' Attitude | 4.08 | .484 | 4.56 | .403 | 2.223 | .033* |

* At the 0.05 level, the mean difference is significant.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A close look at the results revealed that library leaders' attitude toward user care is optimistic in academic libraries of KPK and Islamabad. They tried to fulfill information needs of every user; they concerned about their users and are eager to assist them. Library leaders' greet and educates users about properly use the library's services, protect each user's personal information, and encourage the formation of library community friends. They maintain long term relationship with users, gives individual attention to users, solve user problems and gives priority to key users. These results are coherent to (Christine, 2011; Onwubiko, 2021; Bahader et al., 2021; Leonicio, 2001; Dlamini, 2006) respectively.

The results also revealed that no significant differences found in the overall mean score of library leaders' attitude towards user care with respect to types of university, number of employees in libraries, year of establishment of university, library working days in a week, and library timing respectively.

Conversely, there are statistically significant differences found in the overall mean score of library leaders' attitude towards user care based on geographical locations of university and gender of the respondents. This reflects that library leaders' belongs to Islamabad universities are taking more care of users as compare to KPK. In addition, overall attitude of female staff towards users are better as compare to male and similar with Onwubiko, (2021) results. Female employees give priority to key users and pay individual attention to every person who steps in the library.

This research resulted in a useful and positive strategy for libraries, particularly those engaged in user care practices. These results will have very crucial impacts on library services. It will neither support to enrichment of service quality but provide new dimension to it. This study will improve user satisfaction and library image also. It will furnish employees' skills and behavior regarding user needs and problem solving. This study also added to the existing literature on relationship marketing in general and user relationship management in particular, as it was one of the first of its kind. The findings could serve as a guide for library professionals in developing user-friendly and user-centered approaches in university libraries of Pakistan. This study addressed general attitude of library leaders' towards user care, meanwhile, positive attitude, good communication skills, networking abilities, intellectual curiosity, flexibility and tolerance, appreciation for variety, innovative thinking, self-motivation, self-confidence and appraisal in order to operate library services smoothly and efficiently and their impact on user satisfaction should be studied.

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