Muhammad Tanzeel Jabbar [*] | Iqbal Hussain Asad [†]

Practices and Challenges of Reference Services in Medical Libraries of Punjab, Pakistan

Abstract: *The major objective of this study was to investigate the use of Reference Sources in the Medical College Libraries of Punjab. The study was quantitative in nature. In this research, the users of libraries participated of different demographics such as; MBBS Students, M. Phil Students, FCPS Students, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, and Professors from medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan as population. A questionnaire was prepared including 35 items and collected data from almost 361 respondents as a sample through simple random sampling by survey method. The data was analyzed with the help of the SPSS software. The study found that majority of the users of medical college libraries were moderately aware and getting most of the libraries' reference services and sources. The study further indicates that the majority of respondents used library reference sources for different purposes for learning, education and updating their knowledge. The study also highlights that majority of participants were partially satisfied with available library reference resources.*

Contents

Key Words: Reference Services, Practices and challenges, Medical Libraries

Introduction

As you know medical library ever considered as a backbone and vital asset of knowledge and information of any medical college or university in the world. It deals with the academic and research community and comprises a highly trained staff with the latest library technology and tools. Proper classification of the library collection, suitable service sections, a decent sitting environment and a library staff structure is considered as basic and mandatory elements of any medical college or university library. A huge library collection of a lot of disciplines, and multiple students and faculty queries on daily basis clearly show that medical libraries have been established in the current scenario. But it is surprising that unfortunately, these libraries have not adopted the standardized library working structure yet and even are deprived of a planning strategy.

In the current scenario, there are no proper arrangements for reference library services for users and medical libraries in Punjab are also deprived of budget and many other resources.

[*] MPhil Scholar, Department of Library and Information, Management Superior University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: tanzeeljabbar101@gmail.com *(Corresponding Author)*
[†] Professor & HOD Affiliated Library and Information Management Department, Superior University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

Libraries do not have suitable technology to provide in-time knowledge to their clients. Especially during the collected data through the questionnaire, I observed that in Punjab medical libraries there should be the following necessary service arrangements with their respective staff within no time. I thought after the application of the following Reference Library Services medical libraries might be played a better role.

- Reference Services Policy
- Reference Services for Printed Collection
- Reference Circulation Services
- Reference Electronic Collection Services
- Reference Circulation Services
- Reference Turnitin Services
- Reference Multimedia Services
- Institutional Repository Services

Review of Literature

It is considered a well-equipped medical library, having more than 25,000 books and subscribes to 500 medical and nursing journals each year. The library has an online search facility and access to databases like PubMed, CINAHL, ERIC, MD Consult, Mosby's Nursing Consult, Up to Date and HEC National Digital Library (Aga Khan University, 2007), A survey research method was applied in this study, based on a questionnaire consisting 10 questions. The questionnaire was prepared under the guidance of the Head, of the LIS Department, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad. Survey of 34 Medical Libraries situated in Twin Cities, Pakistan; followed by interviews with their librarians conducted. The data was collected from 1st March to 30th June 2006. Aga Khan University of Health Sciences Library, Pakistan is a model library for Pakistan and other developing countries.

Khan & Khan (2014) discussed the difference between traditional library reference services and digital reference services in their work "Implementation of Digital Reference Services in Pakistani Libraries: A Descriptive and Critical Annotated Bibliographic Guide." They opined that a digital reference service, unlike the traditional library reference service, allows users to submit questions and receive responses via the Internet and other electronic communication methods. Conclusion: Librarians understand the utility of the tools and mechanisms to connect with the users overcoming the usual constraints of user relocation and library opening hours.

Previous studies posited that there was a need for the development of reference service users and embracing new technologies opens up both benefits and challenges (Shakeri et al.,2012; Lauer & McKinzie, 2002). Additionally, determined how library orientation affects library customers and also determined what the students think of the library orientation program. The significance of academic library orientation programs at respective universities' libraries was stressed by several authors. Despite the fact that there is ample proof that student-produced academic research is of higher quality. Despite the fact that the library provides a wide range of services and amenities to its patrons, the majority of students are reportedly uninformed about most library services because the orientation program only covers a small portion of the library's offerings (Hindagolla, 2012).

According to Wickramanayake (2014), most university libraries lack the funding necessary to offer library orientation programs. Conclusion: The study's conclusions state that library orientation helps the library educate recently admitted students and raise sufficient awareness of the resources and services offered by the library in order to meet and satisfy users' demands. Simmonds and Andaleeb (2001) noted the issue of students' lack of interest in library orientation. Staff members and students have also noted a lot of issues, such as low library usage confidence, inadequate student support from the librarian's teaching style, and a dearth of computerized informational resources.

Mathews (2009) stated that students learn at library orientation that libraries now provide a full range of academic support services in addition to research assistance.

Esse & Ullah (2014) claimed that the program helps library patrons develop their capacity as self-directed learners through the utilization of library resources. One of the most remarkable inventions of the 20th century was the search engine (SE). You can now obtain any information in a matter of milliseconds thanks to information and communication technology (ICT). Search

engines are properly regarded as the cornerstone of the Internet because of how they have transformed the information landscape. The primary goal of the current study was to examine the extent to which web search engines are employed in Pakistani university libraries to offer Virtual Reference Services.

Younus (2014) found that the majority of university libraries in Pakistan use email as a means of offering virtual reference services. It was discovered that librarians now use web forms, Skype, and instant chat. As a result, Pakistani librarians are increasingly using synchronous channels rather than asynchronous ones to deliver virtual reference services.

Dudek et al., (2006) define a search engine as "a web application that gathers information items from the web according to different strategies (using crawlers or spiders) and then performs the basic retrieval task, the acceptance of a query, a comparison of the query with each of the records in a database, and then the production of a retrieval set as output". Norris (2007) demonstrates how Google affects libraries, with a librarian serving as a supporting actor when a user has access to Google and other search engines.

Liu (2008) examined, respectively, the academic libraries in Pakistan and Germany. Few libraries in each country offer web-based reference services, which are still in their infancy globally, according to both polls. Janes (2002) emphasized reference librarians' understanding of and attitudes toward utilizing digital and other technology in reference services. He learned that reference services are primarily provided by librarians via email to their clients. Nicholas (2011) analyzed insufficient hardware, software, training, and partnerships in the provision of such services. Rusuli and Saufi (2014) identified a number of factors, including a lack of planning, synchronous and asynchronous service delivery methods, cost, a language barrier, a lack of knowledge regarding communication skills, IT literacy, and collaborative reference services, among others in South Asian nations.

Bakar (2009) draws the conclusion that the absence of ICT in public libraries in Muslim countries is a significant obstacle to delivering Virtual Reference Services. This edition introduces a new model for updating the data supporting the particular criterion. Most recently, during the Covid-19 pandemic's repeated waves, health libraries around the world quickly adjusted, working with colleagues to support public health initiatives to make sure that high-quality information is accessible to consumers, policymakers, and healthcare professionals providing direct patient care (Anderson & Ivacic-Ramljak, 2021).

Important Ways for Reference Library Marketing Strategy

There are many ways of reference library marketing but some followings are importantly mentioned:

You tube

Through YouTube, we can market our reference library services as youtube is the best source of the current time period for advertisement. Every professional can make a full video of its reference library services, products and many vital things and can share it with people.

Video Links/Tick Tock Application

We can use video links for reference library services marketing. In the current situation tick tock applications is a good source of advertisement. Using this app, we can advertise our library resources to the whole community

Face book

As you know there is no example of a Facebook platform so we can make different pages of our related reference library services on Facebook and explore our product of library with people.

LinkedIn

Every person can post his reference library services on this platform as LinkedIn is a very good international platform for marketing.

Email Marketing Strategies

Nowadays we are seeing email marketing and touching people through emails. It is a big source

of giving information about our reference library services to others.

Manage Exhibitions

Sometimes we manage different kinds of exhibitions to introduce reference library services. Multi kinds of people can join these kinds of exhibitions and gets a lot of information about library services.

A Good Environment

A good environment is also a very good source of reference library marketing. A good sitting environment, luxury furniture and services attract people for visiting the library.

Workshops /conferences

As time-by-time library heads in collaboration with their organizations manage workshops and conferences to market their reference library services. Through this platform, outsiders can be awarded resources.

A Good Place

To locate a very good place for a reference library section in any intuition is also a very good source of reference library services marketing. The place is at an easy distance where the users can come and use the library sources easily.

Updated Print Material

Updated books and other material are also a plus point for a reference library section. The latest print reference material should be available in newspapers, magazines, journals, series, dictionaries, almanacks etc.

Latest Automation Software

As we know now the world has changed from print to cyber world. There is multi-automation software for the library in the market. So, when we give reference services to our users within no time through software then our reference library marketing rate would be increased.

E-Collection

Because it's digital time So if we provide reference material e.g., E-books, E-journals, E-

Magazines- E, Newspapers and all other kinds of other reference material then the user can access easily reference services in E-form. It is a better strategy to attract the user and increase the number of users.

Research Objectives

i. To discuss reference library services in medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan
ii. To explain the purpose of library usage of users in medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan
iii. Kinds of problems faced by users in medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan
iv. To highlight Barriers/Challenges of reference service in medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan
v. Oversight sources of information that uses mostly by medical users in Punjab, Pakistan

Research Questions

i. What is about Reference Library Services?
ii. What are the Purposes of library usage?
iii. Which kind of Problems facing during library usage?
iv. What are the barriers /Challenges of Reference Services?
v. Sources of Information do you use?

Significance of the Study

This study has a smart significance of Reference Services in Medical Libraries of Punjab, Pakistan due to the acknowledgement of the latest studies, fulfilling their gaps and in detail description of proper implementations of updated working in the market. The research objectives and research questions are very clear and ideal.

Delimitations

This study focused on the Medical Libraries of Punjab, Pakistan. It covers practices and challenges area of reference services in medical libraries only in Punjab, Pakistan. In this study MBBS Students, MPhil students, FCPS students, Assistant Professors and Professors participated in data collection. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used for data analysis.

Research Methodology

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the use of Reference Sources in the medical college libraries of Punjab. The study was quantitative in its nature. In this research participants participated from different demographics; there were the following users of medical libraries in Punjab, Pakistan in this study:

- MBBS Students
- M. Phil Students
- FCPS Students
- Assistant Professors
- Associate Professors
- Professors

A questionnaire was prepared including 35 items and shared with medical students, M. Phil, FCPS, Assistant Professors and Professors collected data from almost 361 respondents as a sample through simple random sampling by survey method. The data was analyzed with the help of the SPSS software. The findings drew on the basis of frequency and percentage to examine the opinions of the respondents.

Findings

This section discussed a details description of the results. The present study used a quantitative research approach.

Demographic Information

Demographics are the feature of the population. These features like gender, qualifications, positions and region of the population who participate in the research

Table 1. Gender (NUMBER=361)

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	200	55.4
Female	161	44.5
Total	361	100.0

The results of table 1 present that 200 (55.4 %) of the total 361 (100 %) participants were male and 161 (44.5%) were female.

Gender Representation in Pie Chart
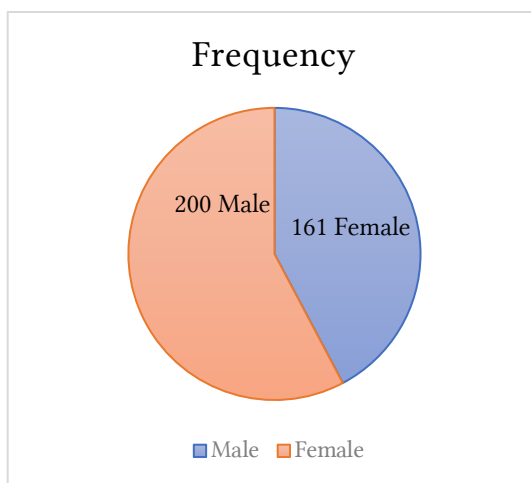
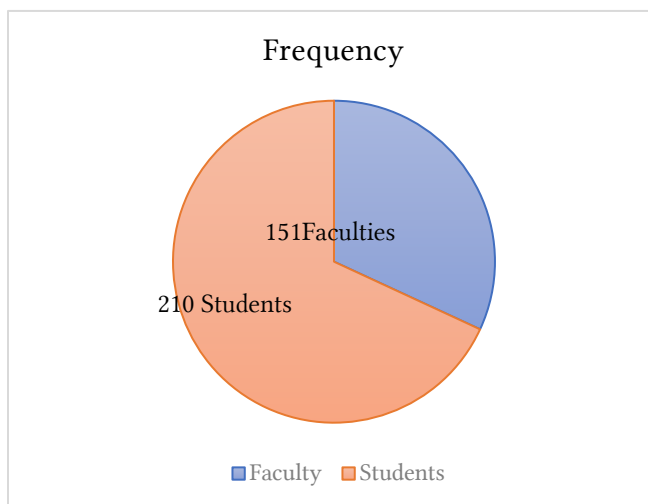**Figure 1:** Graphical Representation of Respondents' Study Year

The black colour in the pie chart shows the male while the blue colour showed the female participants.

Table 2. Type of users (N=361)

Type Of Users	Frequency	Percentage
Faculty	151	41.8
Students	210	58.17
Total	361	100.0

The results of Table 2 showed that 151 (41.8 %) of the total 361 (100%) participants were faculty members and 210 (58.17%) were students.

Types of Users

Figure 2: Graphical Representation of Types of Users

In the pie chart, the red colour represents the students while the blue colour represents the faculties.

Table 3. Qualification (N=361)

Qualifications	Frequency	Percentage
MBBS	140	38.7
BDS	70	19.3
M.Phil	51	14.0
FCPS	100	27.7
Total	361	100.0

The findings of Table 3 uncover that 140 (38.7 %) of the total 361 (100%) participants have qualification MBBS, while 70 (19.3.6%) had BDS, 51(14.0 %) had M.Phil and only 100 (27.7%) had FCPS qualification.

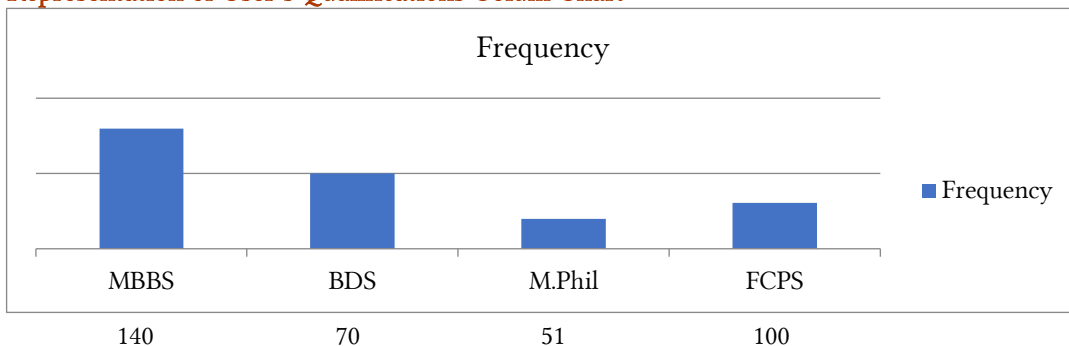### Representation of User's Qualifications Colum Chart

Figure 3: Graphical Representation of User's Qualification

Table 4. Year of Study (N=361)

Year of Study	Frequency	Percentage
1st Year	40	11.0
2nd Year	25	6.9
3rd Year	50	13.5
4th Year	60	16.6
5th Year	45	12.4
Faculty	151	41.8
Total	361	100.0

The findings of Table 4 showed that 40 (11.0 %) of 361 (6.9%) participants were studying in 1st year, while 25 (13.85%) participated in 2nd year, 50 (13.8%) participants from 3rd year, 60 (16.6%) from 4th year and 45(12.4) participants from 5th years. On the other hand, 151 (41.8) faculty members also participated in this research.
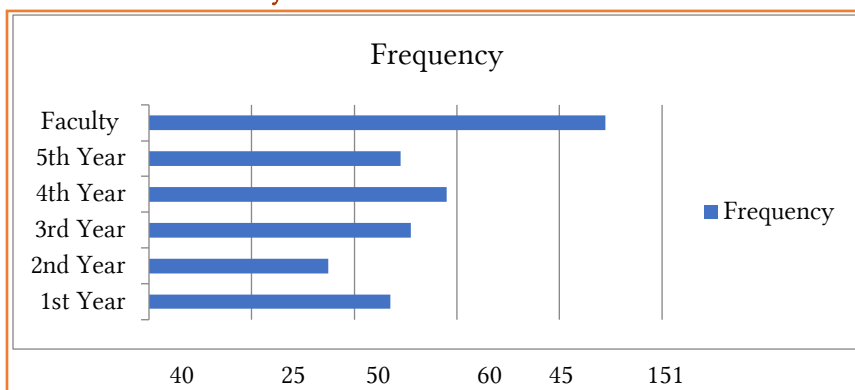
Representation of Years of Study in Bar Chart

Figure 4: Graphical representation of Years of Study

Table 5. Academic Rank / Position (N=361)

Ranks	Frequency	Percentage
Professor	20	.6
Associate Professor	30	8.3

Ranks	Frequency	Percentage
Assistant Professor	40	11.0
Demonstrator	61	16.8
Students	200	55.4
Total	361	100.0

The results of Table 5 showed the academic ranks of the faculty member who participated in this research, the findings showed that 20(6 %) of 361(100%) participants were working on professor rank, while 30(8.3%) associate professors, 40 (11.0%) Assistant Professors and 61 (16.8%) demonstrators participated. In the meanwhile, 200 (55.4.9%) students also participated in that research.
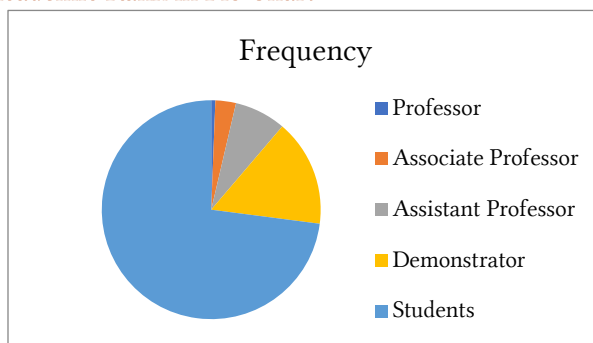
Representation of Academic Rank in Pie Chart

Figure 6: Graphical Representation of Academic Ranks of Users

Conclusions

This study overviewed that the overall situation of medical and health sciences libraries is not very discouraging. Medical Libraries are stocked with valuable reading and research material, which fulfils the teaching and research requirements of the health care professional.

The core aim of this study was to investigate the practices and challenges of reference services in the medical libraries of Punjab, Pakistan. A quantitative research approach was used to obtain the objectives. The target population of the study was library users including students and faculties of medical and dental colleges in Punjab, Pakistan. A self-developed questionnaire was prepared and disseminated among the respondents to get the collection of data.

The study explored that majority of the user of medical college libraries were moderately aware and used most libraries' reference sources. The study further indicates that the majority of respondents used library reference resources for different purposes like learning, education and updating their knowledge. The study also highlights that majority of participants were partially satisfied with available library reference resources.

Moreover, the study highlights barriers faced by the majority of respondents like Inadequate IT infrastructure of the Institute, Low speed of internet, Lack of Access to the Internet facility, and Lack of awareness of reference resources.

Recommendations

Libraries are the hub of knowledge and they play a very vital role in the development of any kind of organization, but without resources, libraries are useless, because resources make users knowledgeable regarding their field. This study is very significant for all types of institutions. It is also helpful for users of medical and dental students as well as faculty to introduce themselves with reference sources from medical and dental libraries. This study is very helpful for higher administration of health sectors and

medical & dental colleges to improve the library reference

resources which are available for users.

- There should be proper Standard operation procedures (Sops) for reference libraries working in any kind of medical library.
- It should be needed of necessary service arrangements with its respective staff in reference to services with an immediate effect.
- We should be able to consider our library as equal to or better than other market-based competitors at national and international levels.
- There should be organized a little entertainment corner in the reference section, especially to attract users.
- Communication should be developed between reference librarians and users.
- For reference services advertising, we should have prepared online pages and accounts on social media like LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and Skype and also using email platforms.
- It needed to improve reference distance learning services to its users.
- There should be needed to improve both printed and electronic reference services.
- Our Reference Services should be able to reach its users in any crucial and emergency time like Earthquake, COVID or any other dangerous condition.
- Reference librarians should be fully trained at an advanced level.
- Reference librarians should conduct orientation sessions regularly for their users.
- Online services are needed on an urgent basis in medical libraries.
- Reference services should have such material that helps the researchers' needs.
- Old and new Theses/ Dissertations should be available in the reference section.
- Reference Librarians should organize regular user studies to know the problems faced by users.
- For new students, each year of training manuals should be developed in the library.

- Assessments of users' needs should be organized.
- The Information Technology courses should be introduced by a reference librarian.
- Training sessions should be conducted by reference librarians for health studies for personal and professional growth and benefits.
- For reference sources, the subscription library budget should be increased.
- The results showed that some of the libraries were given medical e-databases to their users. All college and university libraries should provide for their users.
- The reference sources of medical and dental libraries the young faculty members to update their knowledge, improve their research skills and make ready their lectures.
- Different research should be conducted in the same area/ field for the awareness and importance of library resources and services in medical institutes.
- The medical librarians and faculty should collaborate in promoting and making the students aware of important reference resources.
- Government and policymakers should give due consideration to the libraries of medical institutes so that the students and faculties may get more benefits from the learning process in the form of success.
- This study recommends that medical colleges should promote advanced tools for the maximum utilization the library resources.
- Medical institutional administration should arrange workshops, seminars and training
- It is also recommended that Library professionals should conduct information literacy sessions for their users.

Topics for Future Research

i. The present study is conducted on the Punjab level; a further study may conduct on the whole of Pakistan.

ii. The current study carried out only medical and dental college libraries; a further study

may conduct on high courts, public/private universities, colleges and special libraries.

iii. To investigate or explore the use of reference services by users of medical college libraries; this kind of study ought to be conducted on an extensive scale with a different population like judges, doctors, teachers and engineers. Further, the new Researchers should think of the investigation of this subject with various situations and places.

iv. This study can be replicated after five years.

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