STUDENT'S PERCEPTIONS OF LIBRARY SERVICES IN ACADEMIA OF BANGLADESH: A CASE STUDY OF RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an outcome of a case study conducted at the University of Rajshahi in order to measure perceptions and satisfaction level of undergraduate and master's students. The main objectives were to identify the purpose of library visit and to trace out the service quality of university library, while other objectives were to determine whether digital libraries can replace traditional libraries or not, and to explore the preferences of students as study place. The findings show that more than 42% students visit the library for exam preparations. The study also revealed that the service quality of the library is associated with the preferences of study places and collections of the library and 74.60% of the respondents reported that digital library can replace traditional libraries.

KEYWORDS: Academic libraries, Students Perceptions, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Present age is called information age and it is merely not possible to keep track with improvement activities in the nonappearance of a reliable library and information system in a developing country. An effective library system is an essential requirement for research and development in every field of study. Scientists and researchers need to know about the information tools and resources available for better utilization of information. Failure to provide accurate and adequate information to the target groups may perhaps guide to defective results which will, in turn, hinder national development. The solution lies in identifying the available information resources and ensuring rapid dissemination of information to the concerned users through various channels of communication. In this regard libraries and information centers can be considered crucial media, which can play a dynamic role in the universal diffusion and advancement of knowledge and can provide right information to the right user at the right time (Mannan, 1997). Academic libraries are libraries established in tertiary institutions. They include libraries in Universities and Colleges of Education. The roles of these libraries are similar and that is to effectively support institutions to attain the key functions of teaching and research service. These institutions are responsible for the creation of middle and higher level manpower for national development. The extent to which they are able to effectively accomplish that task depends largely on how well their libraries are equipped with the relevant information resources. At the present time Bangladesh needs a healthy structured and planned library and information system. Though both the government and private bodies in current times have exposed a consciousness of the importance and necessitate of information system. The existing libraries and information centers in Bangladesh are not accurately organized and suffer from diverse problems such as, acute shortage of funds, inadequate information resources, lack of qualified staff, modern technological facilities, and a lack of willingness of the authorities (Siddike 2011).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Okiy (2012) carried out a study on the current state of development of education and hence academic libraries in Nigeria, and noted that education at the tertiary level is responsible for the production of the necessary middle and higher level manpower for national development. While lamenting the age-long neglect in funding and infrastructural provision by government for tertiary institutions and academic libraries, it was emphasized that academic libraries are the pivots of any successful teaching and research that goes to produce the necessary competent manpower for national development.

Douglas et al. (2006) carried out a study in a UK university to evaluate students' satisfaction and established that the majority important aspects were those connected with teaching and learning, while the slightest important ones were those related with physical facilities.

Oldfield and Baron (2000) measure students perceptions of service quality in a UK university, found that students perceived service quality has three dimensions which include requisite elements acceptable elements and functional elements.

Sohail and Shaikh (2004) found responded of 310 students in College of Industrial Management, King Fahd University of Petroleum, and Minerals and found the "contact personnel" the most influencing issue in the evaluation of service quality. However, other aspects like classrooms, building, lightening and overall cleanliness also significantly contributed.

Gibson (2010) discovered the research literature of the last 15 years examining the reasons for students' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with their higher educational experience. Results showed that variables academic staff/teaching and classes/curriculum were found significant in all the cited studies in the paper. The study also found that as well the availability of IT and advising, services also played an important role in students' academic satisfaction. Also, for non-academic factors, degree of student centeredness and social integration were found important, especially in large institutions.

Butt and Rehman (2010) conducted a survey on student satisfaction in higher education and collected data from 350 students from different universities. The result found that teachers' expertise is the most influential factor on the students' satisfaction, whereas courses offered and learning environment are the next vital factors, while the classroom facilities is the slightest important factor among all the variables.

Suleiman (2012) carried out a study on user education programs in academic libraries. The findings of the study revealed that users are in favor of various programs due to their adaptability, online public access catalogue, and easy access to several sources of information. For library services to keep pace with the needs of students, library should increase number of employees' expert and skillful librarians who can provide user education programs.

Yu (2003) explored how Taiwanese college and technical institution libraries familiarize user with library facilities and information resources. The most common programs are a basic introduction to library services, OPAC instruction, searching tools, internet instruction, CD-ROMs, databases and electronic journals, and audio and video materials.

Oyesola, (1984) studied on the problems facing the library in increasing students' ability to locate materials they need, extend their knowledge of useful library tools, encourage learners to make extensive use of the library and to give

them rudimentary knowledge of appropriate study methods. One of the objectives of user education program is to enable students to patronize libraries for their academic activities.

Clarcke (1999) revealed the growth of user education within the context of arguments for and against it. Library orientation tours and different approaches to them are described, as well as the development of undergraduate and postgraduate programs of user education.

Muogilim, (1986) found the lack of ability of the students to exploit library facilities after taking a course in the use of library. The conclusion of his findings shows that students were allowed few connections with the library and its staff during the orientation program. Also, they were overloaded with so much information within such a short period of time that the chances of retention and internationalization of the avalanche of new information is quite slim. He concludes that high enrolment with inadequate physical facilities made effective work difficult.

The Role of the Library in Education and National Progress

In present time library is the central part and most of any standard educational institution. This is because, as a resource, it occupies a central and primary place serving the functions of teaching, learning, and research in the creation of new knowledge, promotion of current information in professional practice and transmission to posterity of the learning and culture of the present and past age. Near about ten years ago Opeke (2004) said that he world has entered an era where the source of wealth and power is increasingly from information and human mental creativity as compared with physical resources. Thus global economy has become not only knowledge intensive but also transactional and extremely competitive.

As information in national development is exemplified by the uppermost economies of the world, Bangladesh needs to conventional libraries and information in her development plan. This necessitates that information be perceived, portrayed and utilized as a requirement for the peoples survival and be used to harness their feelings, energies and capacity for appropriate development actions. In this regard, librarians in academic libraries and other libraries for that matter must be the major actors in providing, designing, coordinating, maintaining and steering the course of information powered development. Such information must be accurate, timely, relevant, complete, and concise. Furthermore, in this 21st century which is the age of the internet, Information and Communication Technology (lCT) will be employed at its highest level to connect the necessary information globally for speed up the national improvement.

The library is regarded as the heart of any educational institution, particularly the tertiary institutions which are relied upon to produce the middle and higher level manpower for national development. This is because the quality of the products of these institutions are measured to a very large extent by the information resources provided by their libraries for teaching and research required to equip the students with the necessary skills and knowledge for national development.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To find out the frequency of library visit of the students.

- To identify the purpose of library visit.

- To measure the service quality of university library

- To determine whether digital libraries can replace traditional libraries or not.

- To explore the preferences of students as the place of study.

METHODOLOGY

Based on random sampling, seventy five structured questionnaires were distributed among the students of different faculty of Rajshahi University. This group includes only students of the faculty of Social science, arts, BBA, and science. The questionnaires were sent to 75 respondents and among them 63 completed questionnaires were returned. The quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 16.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Profile of the Respondents

Gender of the Respondents

In total 63 respondents responded against the questionnaire, of which 43 (68.3 %) were male and 20 (31.7%) were female (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Age of the Respondents

Age is the important factor for any study. The figure in the below shows that 85.7 % respondents belonged to 20-24 years, 14.29% of the total respondents belonged to 25-29 years. Most of the respondents belonged to 20-24y aged which is 85.71 percent.
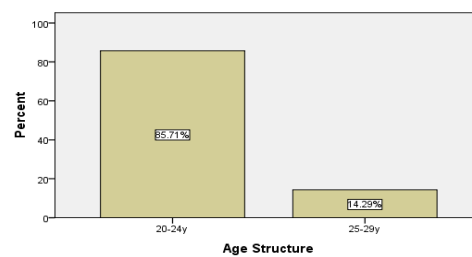

Figure 2: Age Structure

Educational Status

The underneath figure indicates the educational status of the respondents. Among the respondents 6 (9.5 %) honours 1st Year students and 2nd year students, 7 (11.1%) were 3rd year students, 10 (15.9 %) were 4th students and maximum 34 (54%) were masters students.
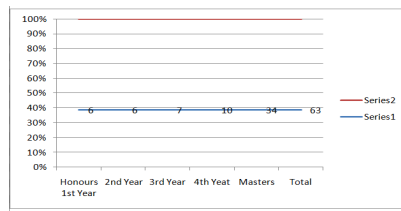
Figure 3: Educational Status

Faculty of the Respondents

The below chart indicates the faculty of respondents. Among the students more than 19% were the students of social science, 38.10% were the students of arts, 14.29% were BBA and rest 28.57% were the students of science faculty.
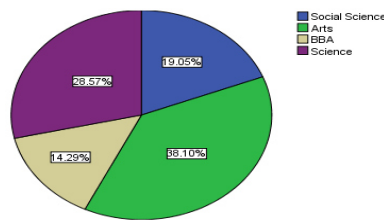

Figure 4: Faculty of the Respondents

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Frequency of Library Visit

The frequency of library visit by the users to their institutional libraries is presented in the figure 5. It denotes that more than 22% of the users visit their libraries every day, 25.40 % weekly, 28.57 % monthly and rest 23.81 % of the users visit their libraries other times.
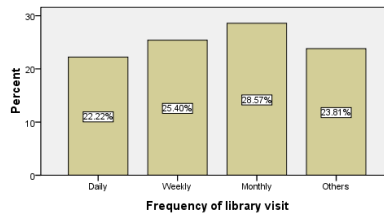

Figure 5: Frequency of Library Visit

Purposes of Library Visit

Figure 6 exhibits that 42.86% students visit the library for exam preparation, 28.57% for other purposes 23.81% students visit the library for purposes journal publications. Only 4.76% replied that they visit the library browsing purposes.
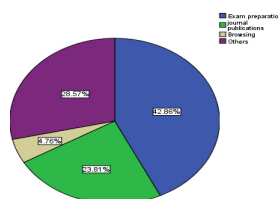

Figure 6: Purposes of Library Visit

Service Quality of University Library

With respect to the rate of service quality of the university library, the figure shows that the maximum number of the students i.e. 29 (46%) rated the services as average, 24 (38.1%) rated as good, 4 (6.3%) said better and rest 3 (4.8%), 2 (3.2%) and only one i.e. 1.6% told the service as worse, bad and poor.
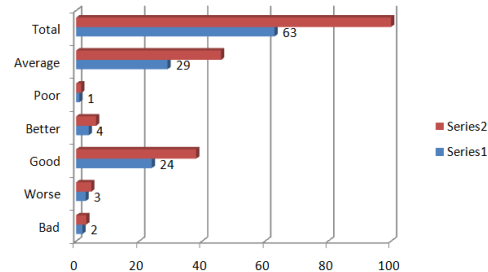

Figure 7: Service Quality of University Library

Preferences of Study Places of the Students

From the figure it clearly indicates that 55.6% of the students prefer library as a place of study, while 36.5% prefer home as a study place. Only 7.9% prefer common room as their place of study. (Figure 8)
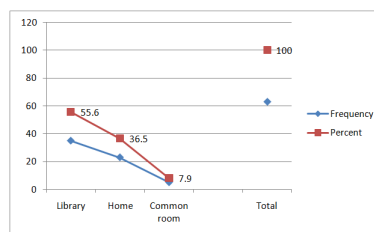

Figure 8: Preferences of Study Places of the Students

Comments regarding the collections of the library

The students were asked about the collections of the library. Among the respondents most of them said that the collections of the library are good, i.e. 55.56%. More than 30% told that the collections are average and only 14.29% replied that the collections of their library are poor.
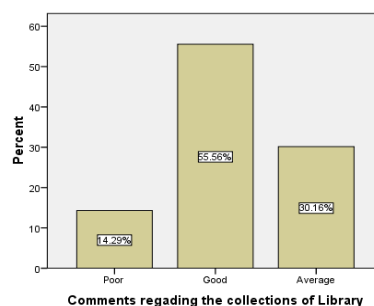

Figure 9: Comments Regarding the Collections of Library

Do You Think that Digital Library can Replace Traditional Libraries?

The students were asked to reply that digital libraries can replace traditional libraries or not? Most of them replied yes and the percentage was 74.60. Only 25.40 said that digital libraries cannot replace traditional libraries (Figure 10).
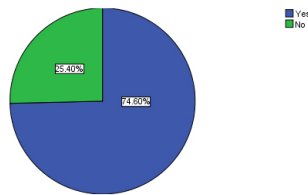
Figure 10: Digital Library can Replace Traditional Libraries or not?

Bi-Variate Analysis

The findings show that the service quality of the library is associated with the preferences of study places and the differences statistically significant (X^2-41.910 (15); $p<.000$). The findings show that the service quality of the library is associated with the collections and the differences statistically significant (X^2-131.47 (25); $p<.000$).

Table 1

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables	Value of Pearson Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided
Preferences of study places	service quality	41.910	15	.000
Collections of library	service quality	131.47	25	.000

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following recommendations may be taken into consideration for better use academic library in Bangladesh:

Increase Number of Employees

For library services to keep pace with the needs of students, library should increase number of employees' with handsome salary and also appointed skillful librarians who can provide user education programs.

Students Learning Program

Library should make students learning training compulsory for all faculties, and provide them with instructional material to present to students as suggested by respondents that postgraduate students should attend user education classes.

There is no doubt that the user education program brought a positive change to the respondents' behavior towards library use,

Contribute on User Education

The Librarians are liable for leading user education development. This study also recommends librarians should be more active that they can contribute on user education and increase the number of users with satisfactory library skills.

Opening Hour of the Library

Libraries may remain open until certain hours after the teaching time for the benefits of the student, teachers and researchers.

Budget

To provide better library services in Bangladesh needs budgetary support. So, the government of Bangladesh, therefore, needs to allocate sufficient budget for educational institutions.

Modern Technology

Modern tools and technology is the key factors to collect and preserved materials for the users. So, the concerned authority of the educational institutions provides facility of modern technology.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of the study suggest that the present scenario of library and information services of the educational institutions libraries are at the subsidiary level regarding users' satisfaction in spite of quite a good number of affluent academic libraries in the country. It is very tough to maintain the users' satisfaction level and it is the duty of the library to fulfill all its users' demands. To refine the existing situation, efforts should be undertaken promptly to facilitate efficient resource sharing systems among the libraries through better management and installing the state of the art of technologies and advancement.

It was found that users have mixed reaction towards service quality of the library. 46% rated the services as average, 38.1% rated the services as good. The study also revealed that the service quality of the library is associated with the preferences of study places and collections of the library. It was also found that among the students 55.6% of the students prefer library as a place of study. 42.86% students visit the library for exam preparation. However, the rest 71 % of the users are unaware of these facilities of the libraries. The users who are familiar with these databases are quite happy with the databases and think that they are very helpful for their research work.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was conducted among the students of Science, Arts, BBA and faculty of Sociology of Rajshahi University and the results could be affected by factors unique to this specific case. This study was also designed to present a preliminary investigation of the understanding of the student's perceptions of Rajshahi University in Bangladesh. It has been successful in providing an initial understanding of how educational institutional library providing library services. The sample was not large enough to depict rigid conclusions, but however gives suggestions for further study.

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