



REPRESENTATION AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF WOMEN LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES OF PAKISTAN

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Abstract

Academic libraries evolve to meet the demands of the contemporary era and it is imperative to critically examine the composition of library professionals, specifically focusing on the representation and responsibilities of women librarians. The role of women in the library profession has undergone significant transformations over time, and understanding the challenges and opportunities they encounter within this dynamic environment is essential for fostering inclusivity and equality. The current study shed light on the perspectives, difficulties, and suggestions of female librarians at the university libraries in Punjab in respect of leadership practices. The current study used quantitative research approach. An extensive literature review was conducted to develop questionnaire for the current study. This questionnaire survey was shared with chief librarians, deputy chief librarians, senior librarians and librarians. Descriptive and inferential statistics was used to analyze data.

The results show that female librarians share working in different organizations 31.67% but the female's share as a heads in different organizations is 8.2%. The most females are working in different sections like, Circulation patterns, Cataloging / Metadata Services, Acquisitions, and very low numbers of females are working in digital services / electronic resources sections. Women librarians intend to work in digital resources and library automation systems departments. Their less preferred areas are user literacy and collaboration with different stakeholders. The study also explores that female librarian indicated a need for regular evaluations and extensive training courses in this regard. The results highlight how important it is to implement gender-inclusive policies, and leadership professional development to improve the efficacy of women librarians.

Key Words: Women librarians; Leadership; management; administration; representation; responsibilities; Difficulties;

Introduction

Libraries play an important role in advancing a country's education, business, and technology. The nation's progress is dependent on the sophisticated knowledge accumulated by its educators, technicians, engineers, and scientists. The goal of libraries at universities and other educational institutions is to support the efficient and effective flow of knowledge from generation to usage (Collins & Halverson, 2018). To address user needs, libraries must thus play a crucial role in higher education.

Academic libraries have long been considered bastions of knowledge and enlightenment, serving as vital hubs within educational institutions. The role of libraries

in academic institutions extends beyond the mere storage and dissemination of information; they are dynamic spaces that reflect and shape the intellectual landscape of a society (Pather, 2016). The women's involvement in library professions globally provides insight into the broader societal shifts and challenges that have shaped the landscape of gender representation in these environments (Jones, 2019). Libraries, often seen as conservative institutions, have not been immune to the historical biases and systemic barriers that women faced in entering and advancing within professional spheres.

In the context of academic libraries, the representation and roles of women librarians need to be understood within the broader framework of societal expectations, cultural norms, and institutional practices (Ahmed, 2018). As educational institutions grapple with questions of diversity and inclusion, understanding the experiences of women librarians contributes to the ongoing dialogue on gender equality and professional representation. In much of the world, librarianship is typically seen as a career that is dominated by women. Around America, women began to enter the field of library and information science (LIS) around the middle of the 1800s (Deyrup, 2016). The women, who were mostly from working-class middle-class households, were hired by the male library directors to staff the branches because, at the time, they provided a highly skilled and affordable labour force. However, there were few women in leadership roles in librarianship at the time, despite the fact that they made up the majority of the profession's workforce during the 20th century (Carmichael, 1992).

Women were receiving absolutely no promotion into leadership roles and very little effort was being made to develop them for such responsibilities (Rehman & Ashiq, 2021). According to Epps (2008), minority and African-American library professional women needed the same nonminority library abilities, but they also need other qualities that would help them get past racial preconceptions in the workplace. According to Zemon and Bahr (2005), women occupied around 70% of the LIS occupations in the United States in 2005. Currently, meanwhile, the majority of leadership roles in LIS are held by men, despite the fact that women make up the majority of the field's professional workforce (Ashiq et al., 2021). As the institutions evolve to meet the demands of the contemporary era, it is imperative to critically examine the composition of library professionals, specifically focusing on the representation and responsibilities of women librarians. The role of women in the library profession has undergone significant transformations over time, and understanding the challenges and opportunities they encounter within this dynamic environment is essential for fostering inclusivity and equality.

Research Questions:

1. What is the share of female librarians in university libraries of Pakistan?
2. How much women are working as a head in libraries?
3. Which kinds of activities are performed by female librarians in university libraries?
4. What are the preferred library operations in which female librarians intend to work?

Significance of the Study:

The social structure of Pakistan is changing and women are coming out from their houses and joining professional lives. Librarianship is considered a decent job for the

female and numbers of females are increasing every year that are joining this profession. This study will identify trends towards greater scopes of women in universities libraries of Pakistan. We need to understand whether a professional life of female librarian is comfortable.

The findings will indicate the positions of different departments and their interest in which departments they want to work and which sections mostly women are working that has actually grown in recent decades, as representation of women in every field of life has continuously improved while representation in women in universities libraries has remained relatively flat.

Literature Review

A literature review is a kind of academic conversation that brings together many viewpoints, and empirical results to create a coherent story around a main research question or topic. Literature reviews clarify the corpus of current knowledge and point out gaps, inconsistencies, and directions for future research through this process of synthesis and critique. Review of literature is organized under different themes.

Women in Library Profession: Activities and Responsibilities

To counteract the challenges faced by women in library professions globally, initiatives promoting gender equality have gained prominence. Mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and targeted professional development initiatives have been implemented to address the specific obstacles encountered by women in the field. These programs aim to create supportive environments that empower women to overcome systemic challenges and advance in their careers. By providing mentorship and training tailored to the unique needs of women librarians, these initiatives contribute significantly to breaking down barriers and fostering a more inclusive and equitable professional landscape (Brown & LeBold, 2018).

The representation of women in the library profession has experienced noteworthy changes on a global scale. Over the past few decades, there has been a significant increase in the number of women entering the workforce within library science. However, challenges persist, and studies indicate that gender-based discrimination and biases continue to impact women in various ways. Unequal pay, limited access to leadership roles, and the pervasive glass ceiling effect present formidable barriers to the full and equitable representation of women in library organizations worldwide (Jones, 2019; Smith & Brown, 2020).

According to Khan et al., (2021) there are a number of problems that women in Pakistani LIS face, including a lack of capacity building, a lack of representation for marginalised genders in institutional publications, a lack of a gender-friendly environment for staff and users in the library, and a lack of privacy when retrieving information. Ameen believed that ongoing professional development activities might be the solution to the general administrative and leadership problems faced by female librarians. Yousaf et al., (2021) did a research to look at the difficulties that female librarians in a top-ranked Pakistani institution face on the job. The findings showed that although being a librarian is not thought to be a difficult job, female librarians had less benefits and advantages than their male counterparts.

In general, women hold a prominent position in the workforce in the field of librarianship since they are essential to any society's well-being. The previously mentioned research, which is conducted from the standpoint of developed nations, mostly depicts a leadership path that presents several difficulties for female librarians. Despite possessing several personal qualities that make them excellent leaders, women librarians may not have the same opportunity to advance their professional growth. Additionally, there is a paucity of literature on women's leadership roles in libraries, particularly in Pakistan (Qurat Ul Ain et al., 2021).

However, compared to female librarians, men librarians tended to have greater levels of professional competences. The least useful tool for improving technical abilities, is social media, which women librarians mostly used for personal and professional activity. Privacy, parental education levels, marital status, and family support were among the factors that affected the ability to find chances for ongoing professional growth on social media. In general, it was found that Pakistani women librarians had limited access to professional development opportunities (Farooq et al., 2022).

Women representation in university libraries

Over time, there has been a substantial shift in the proportion of women in university libraries, which can be attributed to larger shifts in gender dynamics and professional prospects. Historically, one of the few careers that allowed women to pursue education, employment, and career progression was librarianship. Because of this, women are well-represented in university libraries and have had a major influence on the development of library science (Eccles, 2011).

These empowerment initiatives collectively contribute to fostering an environment where women in library professions can thrive, overcome challenges, and actively contribute to the advancement of the field. As libraries continue to evolve, these initiatives play a crucial role in ensuring that women are not only well-represented but also empowered to take on leadership roles and shape the future of library science (Askey, & Askey, 2017).

Bladek, (2019) validated the academic literature on women's leadership found in university libraries, with a focus on American women. This synthesis aims to showcase study topics and issues that have contributed considerably to the profession's understanding of gender and its effects at the highest levels of administration.

In 2020, Elina Lee talked about the experiences those women librarians have in library programs. Female joining technical services have witnessed several unforeseen difficulties and barriers. At any point in their career, imposter syndrome may demolish a librarian's morale; yet, some experiences are just those of a newly hired librarian who is unfamiliar with their surroundings. Mentorships, practical library experience, and early recognition can all assist young librarians in overcoming these challenges.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Quantitative research approach and survey method was used for the current study. The survey method is most appropriate for studies that have individual people as the part of analysis (Bhattacharjee 2012). "Surveys are capable of obtaining information from large samples of the population. It is also well suited to gathering demographic data that describe the composition of the sample" (McIntyre, 1999, p. 74). The target population of the present study is the female librarians working in the public and private universities in

the province of Punjab, Pakistan. Convenient sampling is a non-probability strategy that was employed to obtain data from the target population. Non-probability sampling procedures, according to Sheble and Wildemuth (2009), do not provide every contributor in the population the same chance of being selected. The researcher employed this type of sampling since Punjab's population is dispersed.

The questionnaire is the most effective tool for gathering data from a large and dispersed population (Blaxter, 2010). According to Rea and Parker (2005), one benefit of the questionnaire is that it can be used several years later in different areas or among the same group. A questionnaire is a tool that many researchers employ when they have a large population (Rea & Parker, 2005). Following final editing, the researcher created a questionnaire on Google forms and circulated the online link in the WhatsApp group of female librarians in the public and private universities in the province of Punjab. There are more than 200 public and private universities in the Punjab and 133 female librarians responded to the questionnaire. After the completion of data analysis phase, the researcher assigned a number to each questionnaire. The data entry and analysis were done using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and demonstrated the results section wise. The mistakes made when entering the dates into SPSS were corrected. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, means, and frequency and percentage counts using SPSS software. Inferential statistics was also used to check differences on the basis of demographic indicators. The Independent Sample t-test and ANOVA were used to see the difference in opinions of respondents.

Results

Demographic details

The results show that the majority of participants have a BS/MLIS degree (88, or 66.8%), followed by M.Phil./Ph.D Doctor of Philosophy respondents closely (45, or 33.2%).

The results of Table 1 that the most accepted job title between library employees is "Librarian," which accounts for 30% of total respondents. Deputy Chief Librarians were 17.3%, Chief Librarians 7%, Deputy Librarian, 16.5%, and Senior Librarians, 29.3%. It is clear from the table 4.2.1 that most of the population is librarians.

Based on their classification as public or private institutions, universities were into two categories. The analysis encompassed that 84 respondents representing 63.2%, were working in private sector, and 49 respondents (36.8%) were working in public sector universities.

Table 1: Demographic detail of respondents

Professional Qualification	Frequency	Percent
MLIS/BS	88	66.8
PhD/ MPhil	45	33.2
Designation of Respondent		
Librarian	40	30.1
Senior Librarian	39	29.3
Deputy Chief Librarian	23	17.3
Deputy Librarian	22	16.5

Chief Librarian	9	6.8
Sector		
Private	84	63.2
Public	49	36.8
Total	133	100.0

Women respondents working as Head and subordinates

A position in administration within a library system or organization may be referred to as "head of libraries." As an alternative, the term "head of libraries" might be used to describe a person who is highly regarded as a leader or authority in the library profession. In a bigger system, this person would normally be in charge of managing one or more libraries as well as its operations and strategic direction. Only 8.2% of women librarians are working as head in different organizations and 91.8% females working as subordinates in others sections like circulation, cataloguing and acquisition section.

Table 2: Women as head of library

Women as Head of libraries	Frequency	Percent
Females Heads	12	8.2
Females working as subordinates	121	91.8
Total	133	100.0

Total share of female working in universities libraries

Data was collected from respondents about the total strength of librarians comprising male and female. The results of table 3 shows that out of total 420 librarians working in university libraries selected for the current study, 31.67% were females and 68.33% are males. It appears that a greater percentage of men than women work in the university libraries. This may be a reflection of universities preferences or gaps in the female workforce.

Table 4: Female percentage working universities libraries (N=133)

Gender	N	%
Females	133	31.67
Males	287	68.33
Total	420	100.0

Current working department of women respondents

Table 5 shows that the most of the females were working in acquisitions / collection development (25.6%) and 23.3% working in administration. Circulation section has attracted 18.8% participants. Cataloguing section (12.8%), archives section (9.8%) and digital services (9.8) attracted less respondents.

Table 5: Current working in sections

Sections	Frequency	Percent
Acquisitions / Collection Development	34	25.6
Administration / Management	31	23.3
Circulation / Access Services	25	18.8
Cataloging / Metadata Services	17	12.8
Special Collections / Archives	13	9.8
Digital Services /others	13	9.8
Total	133	100.0

Interest of women librarians in responsibilities or operations

The results show that women librarians desire to work in managing digital resources and library information systems as compared to other library operations. Participating in organizing and promoting events, workshops, and programs that bring people together and address community needs preserving historical documents are less preferred areas among respondents.

Table 6: Interest of women in responsibilities or library operations

Sr. No	Statements	Means	Std. Deviation
1	Do you want to work on preservation and conservation of digital resources	3.19	1.38
2	Do you have interest to maintain the library's information systems	3.15	1.41
3	Do you have interest in collection development	3.09	1.41
4	Do you have interest in circulation section	3.01	1.43
5	Do you have interest in archives	3.00	1.36
6	Do you want to participate in organizing and promoting events, workshops, and programs that bring people together and address community needs	3.00	1.38
7	Do you have interest in technical section	2.93	1.38
8	Do you take interest in advocating the importance of library in the community	2.90	1.44
9	Do you have interest in conducting workshops and sessions on information Literacy	2.90	1.41
10	Do you have interest in reference section	2.88	1.45
11	Do you engage with the community by institutions to promote library services	2.81	1.39
12	Do you collaborate with other librarians, professionals to improve library services	2.65	1.40
13	Do you have interest to manage e-book collections	2.41	1.21

Scale (always=5, often=4, sometimes=3, rarely=2, never=1)

Findings and implications

The analysis showed that the number of women entering the field lower than male but there is a significant gender gap in leadership positions. Although more and more women get into the field, most heads of university library are men. Currently, the female librarians are working curriculum relevance, circulation, collection development and administration section. Less women librarians are working in digital services and electronic resources. In respect of interest of women librarians, they intend to work in managing digital library resources and managing library management system. They have less interest in organizing training programs for users and developing collaborations with other organizations.

The study provides a base for further research in this sphere. Further research is possible in the qualitative aspect of women's librarians' experience that can include the interaction between gender and other socio-cultural factors. There is also a need for longitudinal research in order to follow the developments and assess the implications of policy decisions at the ground level. This study of the evolving role of women in librarianship in Pakistan provides a microcosm of the broader movement towards the feminization of professional work in the country. It is a path fraught with hurdles, but one that is also characterized by perseverance and achievement. It is hoped that this research

would not only 'educate' but also inspire further efforts towards a future where women in the LIS arena, and across all sectors, are recognized for their leadership and contribution to the fabric of professional excellence in Pakistan.

Conclusion

This rise in females' deployment, especially in a nation such as Pakistan where traditional values have determined the women's actions, is an evidence of the transforming circumstances in the academic and professional grounds. But the road to total equity is a long way from being over. The research brought to the fore several issues such as an under-representation in managerial positions and differences in current working roles and intended roles. The study supports the ongoing women's empowerment discussion because women librarians are not equally represented. They should come forward and accept management positions. It demands a shift in the approaches of institutions and societal mindsets with an aim to design a terrain in which gender does not act as a deterrent to one's career growth and satisfaction.

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