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SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION OF LIBRARY RESOURCES: TRENDS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades there has been a transition to digital learning and a decrease in the circulation of printed materials. However, the utilization of libraries has notably increased in university affiliated libraries, underscoring their significance in the realms of education and research in the digital era. Libraries continue to serve as pivotal hubs for concentrated study, creative pursuits, and beyond. The current research is aimed at analysing why students still use libraries. In this regard, a comprehensive literature review is presented and a survey questionnaire is designed to assess the responses of university students. The findings of the study revealed that libraries still hold significance for students due to several reasons – to access diverse range of physical and digital research material, to attend library organized events and conduct research in a serene setting.

Keywords: Sustainability, Library Resources, University Students, Utilization Patterns, Trends and Practices

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INTRODUCTION

The essence of education lies in the provision of high-quality learning. Among the key components, libraries hold a secondary yet crucial status for students, owing to their significant role in fostering quality education. Libraries serve as an optimal environment for nurturing students' moral values, a pivotal platform for enhancing

their scientific and cultural aptitudes, and essential facilities for advancing specialized technological education. They create favourable conditions that contribute to the overall development of students' comprehensive qualities. In addition to that, libraries are tasked with promoting a wholesome and dynamic cultural ideology. A well-equipped library can offer a broader spectrum of knowledge and information for both educators as well as students. Libraries hold immense value for students, particularly those facing challenges in reading. Research indicates that the presence of a library has a positive influence on student achievement and reading scores.

The current paper is aimed at analyzing the significance of libraries for students in today's modern world where books are more easily accessible and available in digital format.

Literature Review

The current review of literature is highlighting the importance of libraries and their utilization in the modern age that attracts the students towards these places.

According to Yang (2011), quality education is closely linked with the presence of libraries, which play a more crucial role and hold greater significance within the realm of quality education. Libraries serve as repositories of human cultural information, accumulated knowledge, and experiences, serving as the epicentre for the initiation of scientific and technological innovations. Mr. Yuanpei Cai has emphasized the vital role of libraries, alongside teaching staff and facilities, as the "three pillars" of college education. He acknowledges that education extends beyond the confines of schools, with libraries occupying a paramount position as the primary institution.

Itseokr and Nwokeoma (2017) stated that in the context of college education, libraries serve as an extension of classroom teaching, representing the second tier of education for students. They symbolize the level of spiritual and cultural development within the college. Libraries undertake the significant responsibility of supporting college teaching and research, acting as a crucial resource for students to enhance their knowledge. With rich and diverse informational resources, libraries create tranquil and aesthetically pleasing study environments, fostering a civilized atmosphere conducive to reading and learning.

Ahmed (2022) asserted that libraries serve as a form of self-directed process of education for students. Through independent study, students have the opportunity to enhance their learning effectiveness, gaining a psychological understanding of cognitive acquisition and processes. This fosters the integrated connection between acquired knowledge and the act of studying.

Foundation (2023) asserted that libraries function as educational environments that enhance the academic journey through resource provision, intellectual development, and the establishment of areas for exploration and interaction. Undoubtedly, their importance in enhancing the educational standard is substantial, playing a key role in shaping individuals into well-rounded, knowledgeable, and empowered individuals ready to confront the complexities of the world.

From the viewpoint of Rodrigues and Mandrekar (2020), in the era of information technology, there is a belief that the Internet might render libraries obsolete. However,

the necessity of libraries has never been more pronounced. The online realm is inundated with both information and misinformation. As students navigate a landscape filled with social media, advertisements, and propaganda, the need for guidance in discerning reliable sources and conducting effective research is paramount. Soria et al. (2013) further added that imparting digital citizenship is crucial – educating students on safe internet usage, emphasizing the importance of privacy, and fostering awareness of their online conduct. Cox (2023) stated that libraries serve as vital spaces for acquiring and honing these research and internet safety skills. It has the potential to inspire the cultivation of readers' innovative personalities and encourage the growth of divergent thinking. The statement "No high-quality library, no high-quality college education" underscores the essential role libraries play in ensuring the excellence of college education. Thus, emphasizing the significance of libraries in quality education becomes imperative.

Methodology

In order to gather data, Survey research was conducted. Primary data has been gathered through questionnaire survey. The rationale for conducting survey using questionnaire lies in time and cost-effectiveness of this research instrument, which constitutes a pivotal component of primary research endeavours. Moreover, the administration of questionnaires can be done remotely or in person, making it a versatile tool for gathering data across diverse settings and populations. Additionally, the ease of dissemination and administration of questionnaires contributes to their efficiency and affordability.

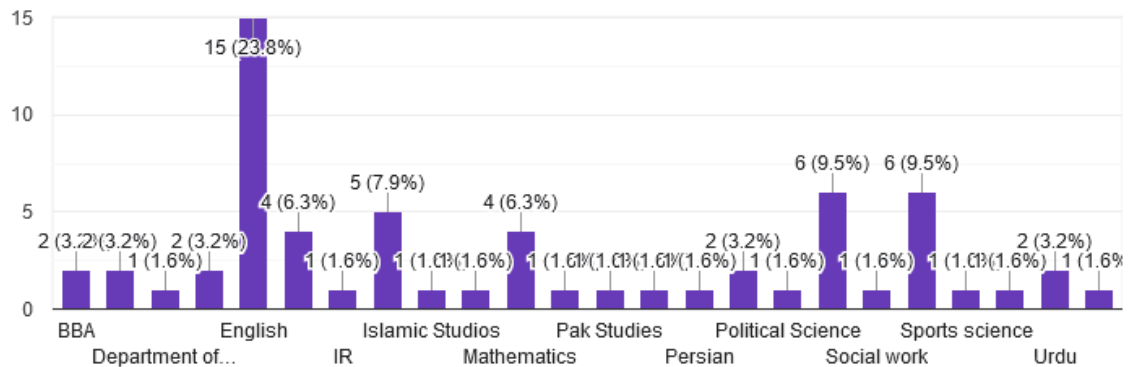
The research employed two methods for distribution of questionnaire. Firstly, questionnaire was distributed to students who were physically present at Wazir Agha Library of University of Sargodha. Later, questionnaire was distributed via Google Forms to collect data from academic students. A randomized survey was carried out to identify students who utilize the library and gather information about their library usage and its significance. One hundred questionnaires were dispersed to students with diverse academic backgrounds, and a total of 63 respondents provided feedback. The questionnaire was distributed amongst the students belonging to different departments of the University of Sargodha.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data gathered through survey has been presented below:

DEPARTMENT

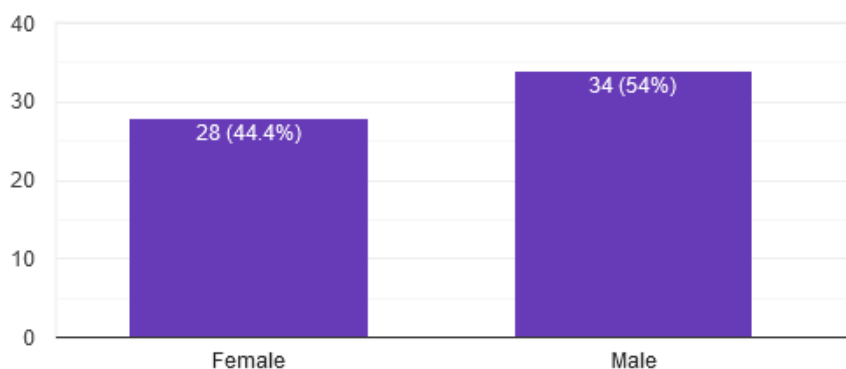
63 responses



The graph indicates that the responses were collected from students of 11 departments. The students belonging to the Department of English holds highest percentage.

GENDER

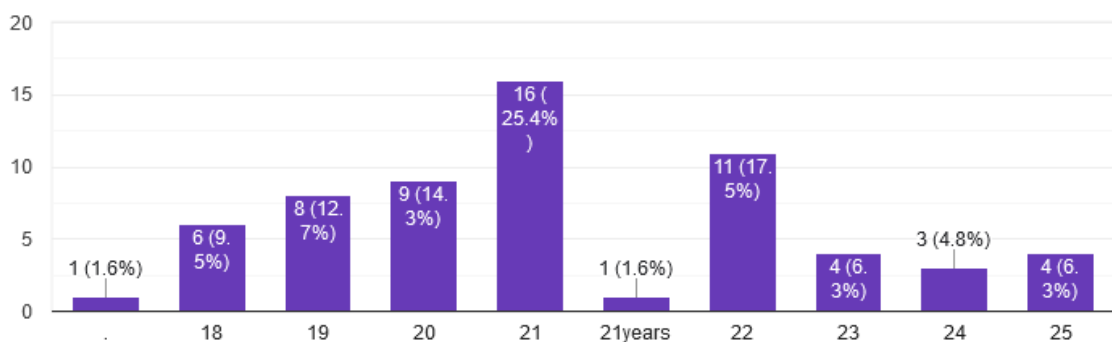
63 responses



The percentage of male respondents was high i.e. 54% as compared to the female respondents with a percentage of 44% in the survey.

AGE

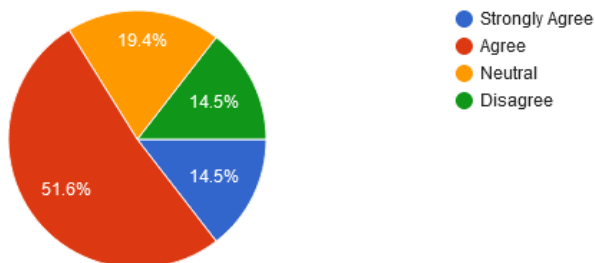
63 responses



The respondents were aged between 17 – 25 years as depicted in the graph.

To what extent do you agree with the statement: "I visit the library for access to a diverse range of physical books and materials?"

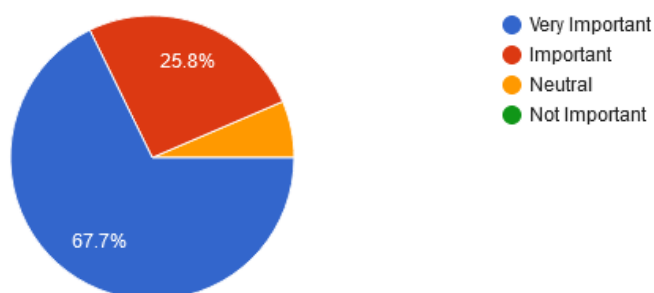
62 responses



The graph indicates that there are 14.5% of the students who strongly agree and 51.6% of the students who agree to the fact that they visit the library to access a wide range of physical material and books. These students find the resources and quality of information available in library useful as it aids in enhancing their learning skills. 19.4% of the students are neutral and 14.5% of the students disagree to the fact that they visit library for this purpose.

How much importance do you place on the availability of quiet study spaces in the library?

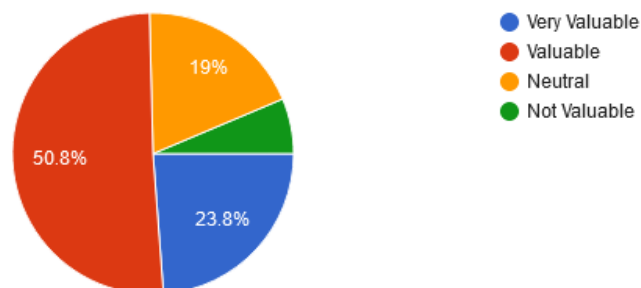
62 responses



The above graph indicates that a majority i.e. 67.7% of the students prefer quiet study spaces in library. Quiet spaces in library do not only aid in reducing external disturbances but further provide such an environment in which the students can concentrate on their studies. The students are more capable of retaining and comprehending information in such a tranquil setting.

To what extent do you find the library's online resources (e-books, databases, etc.) valuable for your research or learning needs?

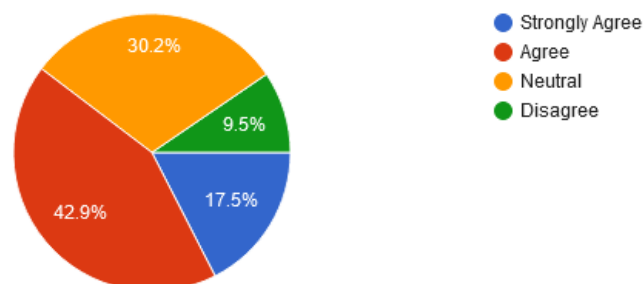
63 responses



There are a large number of respondents i.e. 23.8% and 50.8% who find the online resources of library valuable. The reason behind is that libraries provide a wide range of physical resources and the availability of online resources further allows the users to explore relevant research material and get access to quality and up-to-date information.

Do you agree that the library's staff assistance and expertise contribute significantly to your decision to visit the library?

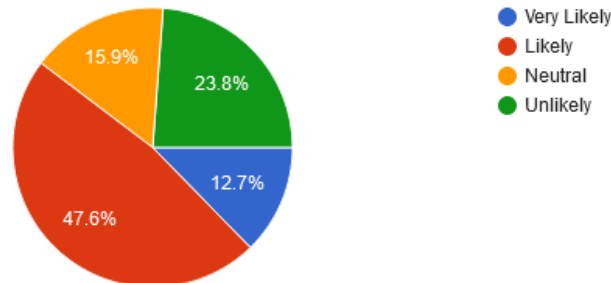
63 responses



Around 60% of the respondents find the assistance and expertise of librarians important when they get to visit the library. Efficient library staff ensures that relevant research material can be located as per the needs of the students. They provide assistance and guidance to the students regarding effective search strategies and troubleshooting technical issues, if any when students are using digital library resources.

How likely are you to visit the library for attending workshops, lectures, or events organized by the library?

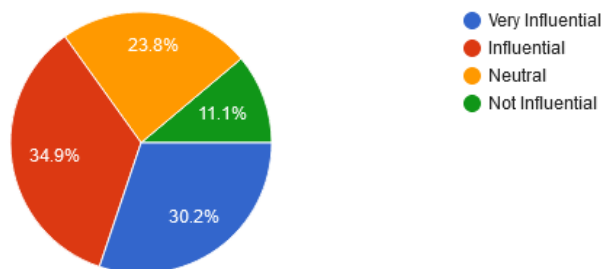
63 responses



There are a large number of respondents who would like to visit the library for the purpose of attending library-organized workshops, events and lectures. Such events provide excellent learning opportunities to students as they gain knowledge and valuable insights that enhance their skills and keeps the students updated as per the trends of industry.

To what extent does the availability of computer and internet access influence your decision to visit the library?

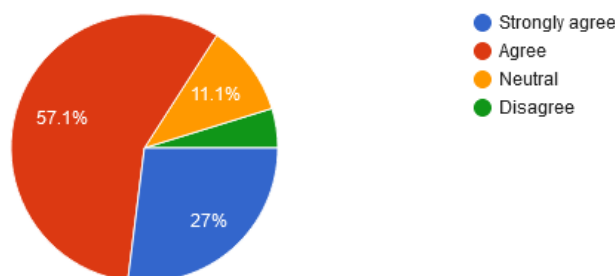
63 responses



More than 60% of the respondents are of the view that availability of internet and computers makes them visit library more often. This is because the students are provided with physical books along with online sources to look for any relevant material. The collaboration of physical and digital resources proves to be instrumental in any research.

Do you agree that the library's extended operating hours positively impact your ability to utilize its resources and services?

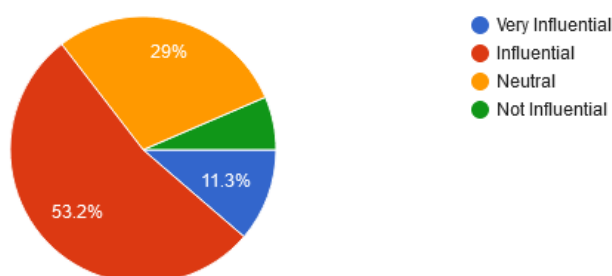
63 responses



More than 70% of the respondents agreed to the fact that extended library hours pose a positive impact upon utilization of library resources as well as services. Extended library hours provide flexibility and allow the students with different timetables to access the resources of library at times that suit them. Students get the option of visiting library when there are fewer crowds and complete their assignments in a peaceful environment.

To what extent does the availability of special collections or archives in the library influence your decision to visit?

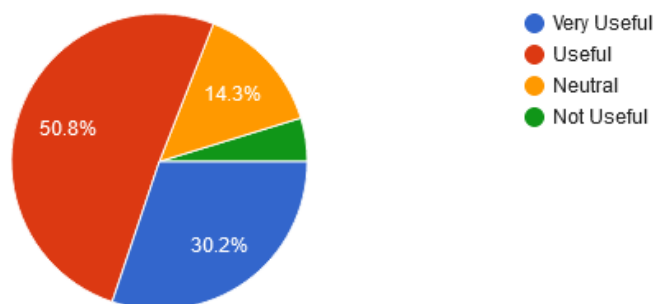
62 responses



The special collections and archives attract more than 60% of the respondents towards library. Special collections and archives are invaluable materials that the students don't find anywhere else except library and these are particularly useful for students interested in conducting historical researches.

How useful is the available research work in library as reference material?

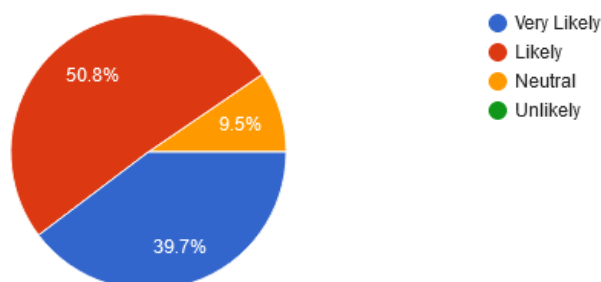
63 responses



A majority of respondents find the library research work useful whereas only a small fraction of respondents doesn't find it useful. The available research work in library is valuable not only for academic but also for scholarly purposes and the reason behind is that there is a huge collection of books, journals, articles and other materials available in library that contributes to comprehensive understanding and a balanced approach towards research.

How likely are you to recommend the library's services to others based on your overall experience?

63 responses



A major number of respondents have positive experience with regards to library services and they are more likely to share positive reviews about it with other people. Library services are comprised of different things such as diverse and extensive collection of books, knowledgeable staff, and comfortable as well as peaceful environment. These services, in combination, build a conducive and learning environment for the students.

Results

The findings of the study revealed that students visit libraries for multiple reasons and there is a large fraction of students who find libraries useful. Students visit libraries as there is a wide range of books and research material available. The environment of the library is quiet and peaceful that serves as an ideal space for the students to study and conduct research. The trained staff of library guides the students regarding research and finding relevant material in the library and online. Students are capable of exploring numerous topics through utilizing reference material i.e. encyclopaedia and specialized resources in library. The availability of online resources through computers and internet further adds into the usefulness of libraries as students can look for digital repositories while conducting research. Moreover, library-organized seminars and workshops aid greatly in the personal as well as professional development of students and extended library hours facilitate the students to conduct research as per the time that is most suitable for them.

Discussion

Students continue to utilize libraries for various reasons, with the primary factor being the recognition of libraries as critical hubs that address both their personal and academic requirements. Secondly, libraries offer a diverse array of resources that support students not only in their coursework but also in their research endeavours. Thirdly, the tranquil environment of the library renders it an ideal setting for focused research and study. Fourthly, the presence of qualified and experienced library staff provides invaluable research assistance to students. Fifthly, the integration of technological resources within libraries serves as a significant draw for students, granting them access to online databases in addition to physical research materials.

Conclusion

The findings of the study concluded that considering libraries as obsolete in the modern age is not at all true as students still find libraries useful. Modern libraries are furnished with digital assets, computer facilities, and internet connectivity. These advancements enrich educational encounters, introduce students to digital literacy, and ready them for the technological requisites of the contemporary era. Libraries offer a secure, tranquil, encouraging, and concentrated setting for studying and learning. This environment aids the students in maintaining focus, fostering collaboration, and actively participating in their studies, devoid of potential distractions present in other places. As research and scholarly practices evolve, academic libraries must adapt to support emerging disciplines and provide versatile spaces for activities such as quiet study, group collaboration, technology access, research initiatives, and various other functions, catering to the evolving requirements of today's students.

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