



Understanding Library Anxiety in Undergraduate Students: A Study at Mehran University of Engineering and Technology Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the level of library anxiety, its primary causes, and gender-based differences among first-year students at Mehran University of Engineering & Technology (MUET). Data was collected from students in the Architecture, City & Regional Planning, Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Water Resources Engineering & Management departments via an online questionnaire distributed through WhatsApp and email with the assistance of teaching staff. A total of 100 responses were analyzed using the AQAK Library Anxiety Scale. The findings reveal that students experience a mild level of library anxiety. The most significant contributing factors are the library environment and library resources, while user education contributes the least to library anxiety. Additionally, no significant gender-based differences in library anxiety levels were observed. To mitigate library anxiety, the study recommends that librarians and faculty collaborate to organize targeted programs and assign library-related tasks to familiarize students with library resources and encourage their use effectively.



Introduction

Academic libraries are an essential part of student's life. By providing effective and efficient services, resources, and programs libraries can help students to build up a successful career (Zohong and Alexandar 2007). Students get some negative feelings while approaching librarians for help. Therefore, researchers have been working to study such negative feelings. While the most valuable was work of Melon (1986) she was the first to call such negative feelings as "library

anxiety” in a two-year qualitative research paper. According to Melon about 75 to 85% of students are hesitant to use library, while this hesitation was reported as a kind of fear, confusion, helplessness, and loss. Melon’s work allows researchers to dig up information about library anxiety and to provide solutions to make users comfortable (Jan et al., 2016; Afaq et al., 2022; Sibte-e-Ali et al., 2024). Bostick (1992, as cited in Van Scoyoc, 2003) invented and verified the “Library Anxiety Scale (LAS)”, a five-dimensional scale based on Melon’s theory that can measure level of library anxiety quantitatively among students.

Library anxiety is a natural phenomenon that occurs due to lack of knowledge about Information Searching Process (ISP) (Kuhlthau, 1991). Library anxiety is a painful emotional state experienced in a library setting that has cognitive, emotional, physical, and behavioral consequences. It is characterized by anxiety, tension, dread, uncertainty, helplessness, self-critical thoughts, and mental bewilderment (Jiao & Onwuegbuzi 1995). LAS was out dated and not suitable for further research then Van Kampen (2004) developed and validated “Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale (MLAS)” based on LAS of Bostick through survey on PhD scholars. A number of research were conducted using MLAS to help librarians in reducing the phenomenon of library anxiety in students. Later on due to rapid change in technology Anwar et al. (2012) find MLAS of Van Kampen not suitable to study on undergraduate students and “AQAK Library Anxiety Scale” with 90% of reliability. They studied on undergraduate students of Kuwait university and collected about 1512 statements on library anxiety. After three phases of discussion 1472 statements were dropped out due to irrelevant answers, while remaining 40 statements were used and divided into 5 factors containing: library resources, library staff, user knowledge, library environment, and user education.

Numerous researches have been done on library anxiety in different parts of world. But there are not many in Sindh, Pakistan. Therefore; the main purpose of the present study is to fill this gap. The study use AQAK library anxiety scale of Anwar et al. (2012) to identify; existence of library anxiety, level of library anxiety and to identify difference in library anxiety level based on gender among 1st students of Mehran University of Engineering & Technology Jamshoro, Sindh, Pakistan.

Literature Review

Kunjuzwa et al., (2024) conducted quantitative study based on LAS to learn role of library anxiety and attitude as determinants of digital library system usage. Responses were collected from 316 students, which revealed that hurdles like barriers of library staff, barriers of library comfort, barriers library knowledge, barriers of resources affect student’s intention and attitude use digital library systems. Finding revealed library anxiety affect negatively on attitude of students to use digital library system while the attitude towards usage affect positively on the intention to use digital library system.

Ukwueze et al., (2023) examined impact of library education on library anxiety among 1st year students of Coal City University, Nigeria. They distributed e-copies of questionnaires and got 111 responses. Analysis shows that library’s environment, space, and staff contributed too little to library anxiety. The reason was student’s participation in different Library Education Programs. Findings revealed first year students at coal city university have no library anxiety mainly because correct usage of library and its resources.

Ismail et al., (2022) investigated the effect of library anxiety on academic performance of undergraduate students of Management Science faculty of Peshawar University. They described library anxiety as a psychological hindrance towards academic success. The study used AQAK

library anxiety scale and distributed questionnaires among students, at the end 240 responses were collected. Findings revealed that majority of students were anxious about library staff due to their behavior. Which leads students to less use of library and that results in poor grading. Therefore, it was suggested that librarians should maintain a pleasant behavior to make users comfortable.

Asghar et al., (2021) studied with aim to know library anxiety level among graduate students of Library and Information Science in public sector universities, along with relation to their gender and frequency of library visit by the help of Multidimensional Library Anxiety Scale (MLAS). The result pointed out presence of library anxiety in mild level, no difference in anxiety based on gender, and no difference between frequency of library visit and library anxiety. Study suggested academic libraries and faculty to work together in order to create a link between students and libraries to reduce level of library anxiety.

Gogoi et al., (2021) surveyed to understand library anxiety faced by university students of Northeast India. A total of 119 students submit their response which was analyzed. The conclusion showed that students regardless of their gender, language, discipline, and caste face library anxiety which is mostly because of lack of information literacy. It was also disclosed that students have more problems while approaching librarians but are confident to use the library and its resources.

Ahmed et al., (2021) studied to learn about library anxiety among medical students of Khyber Medical College. The AQAK library anxiety scale was used, and 306 responses were collected. The study was done to know level of library anxiety among students with respect to their gender. Finding show mild level of library anxiety and female students have more anxiety than of male students. It was also analyzed that 1st year students feel more anxious in comparison with 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year students.

Asghar et al., (2021) conducted study to determine existence of library anxiety among graduate students of Library and Information Science enrolled in public sector universities of Pakistan. They used MLAS of Van Kampen for survey. Study shows about 3.32 (mild level) of anxiety presented in LIS graduates. No significant difference was found on the basis of library usage, information search process, staff interference among students of different semesters. It was suggested to organize an information literacy program to decrease library anxiety in students.

Naveed et al., (2020) systematically reviewed literature to find out reliability and validity of different anxiety scales, including AQAK Library Anxiety Scale. It was simplified that AQAK is worthy to be reported highly reliable and validate scale to measure library anxiety. Studies also mentioned that AQAK was the first scale to identify 'user education' as a factor in library anxiety which led researchers to better direction in finding solutions.

Norri et al., (2017) conducted quantitative study to explore library anxiety among 146 undergraduate and post graduate students at University Technology Mara (UiTM) based on their age, gender, CGPA, and frequency of library visit. The study used quantitative, descriptive survey methods and questionnaire based on 4 parts; 1-demographic information, 2-frequency of reading other material than of academic, 3-frequency of library visit, while 4-was library barriers based on Bostick's LAS. Study reported that students have moderately low anxiety level and no difference in level of library anxiety based on student's demographic information.

Jan et al., (2016) examined the level of library anxiety and its relationship with emotion perception among 279 social science students. The study reported that reported students mostly feel anxious in terms of 'user education' and 'user knowledge'. And it was clarified if students become able to

recognize their own emotions regarding library usage than they can overcome such negative students.

Jan et al., (2016) investigated phenomenon of library anxiety with relation to library use and academic performance of undergraduate students of Pakistan. Study revealed a mild level of library anxiety among majority of students as well difference in library anxiety based on gender and major discipline. Further paper reported that library anxiety is due to lack of information literacy in students.

Remhan et al., (2015) surveyed to explore library anxiety among 550 undergraduate students of Punjab University, Quaid-e-Azam Campus using AQAK library anxiety scale. The study revealed that the mild majority of students have mild level of anxiety and 1st semester students are more anxious than of others. While study suggested that library professionals and faculty members of university should work together to organize programs and enhance syllabus to level of anxiety.

Statement of Problem

Library anxiety is actually a common problem for many students, which pushes them towards tension, confusion, fear and other negative feelings. But these negative feelings can be overcome through different means. Therefore, for this purpose multiple research projects have been done all around the world. And those studies show that this can be overcome if students have control over their emotions. However, this paper aims to know the causes and level of library anxiety among 1st year students of MUET.

Research Objectives

The study has the following three objectives:

- To learn about the cause of library anxiety among 1st year students at Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro, Pakistan.
- To analyze library anxiety level among 1st year students of MUET.
- To explore difference in library anxiety level among students based on gender.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

- What are the causes of library anxiety among 1st year students at Mehran University of Engineering & Technology, Jamshoro, Pakistan?
- What is library anxiety level among 1st year students of MUET?
- What is the library anxiety level among students based on gender?

Research Methodology

Population

Total population was based on 100 undergraduates from selected departments of Mehran University of Engineering & Technology respectively; Architecture, City & Regional Planning, Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering, and Water Resources Engineering & Management.

Data collection instrument: this study was adopted

The AQAK library anxiety scale designed by Anwar et al., (2012) specially for undergraduates was used to collect data. This scale has 90% validity and reliability.

Data collection and analysis techniques

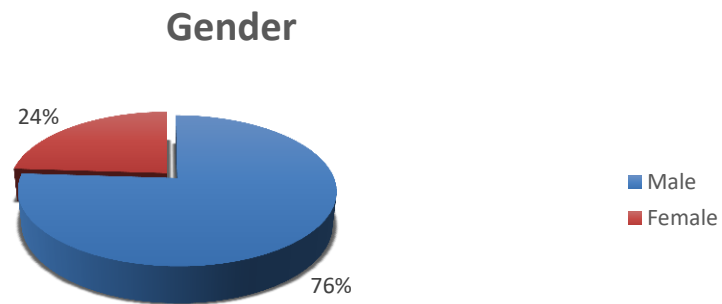
The quantitative research technique was used to design online questionnaires which were distributed through email and WhatsApp. A total of 100 students were chosen to complete the questionnaire. The data collected was evaluated with statistical social science software (SPSS 22). The following statistical approaches will be used: Descriptive statistics: Determine the central tendency mean and dispersion (standard deviation) of demographic factors and library anxiety ratings.

Results

Gender Wise Distribution

Figure no.1 shows that majority about (76%) are male, while only (24%) are female respondents.

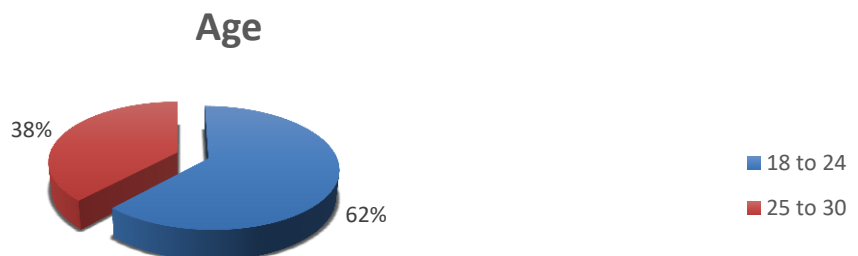
Figure 1:



Age Wise Distribution

Figure 2 shows that majority about (62%) respondents have age in between 18 to 24, while (38%) are 25 to 30 years.

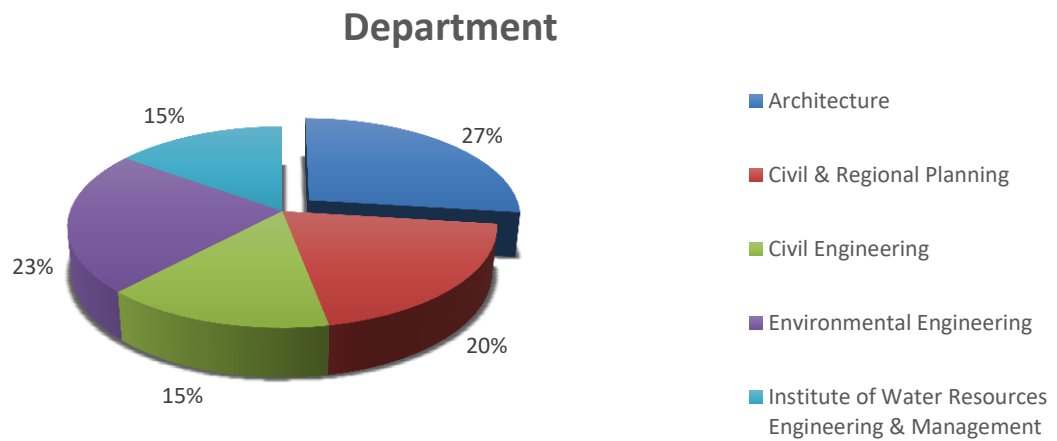
Figure 2:



Department Wise Distribution

Table and Figure 3 shows that 27% respondents belong to Architecture department, 20% belongs to Civil and Regional Planning, 15% are students of Civil Engineering, 23% are from Environmental Engineering, and 15% respondents are from department of Water Resources Engineering & Management.

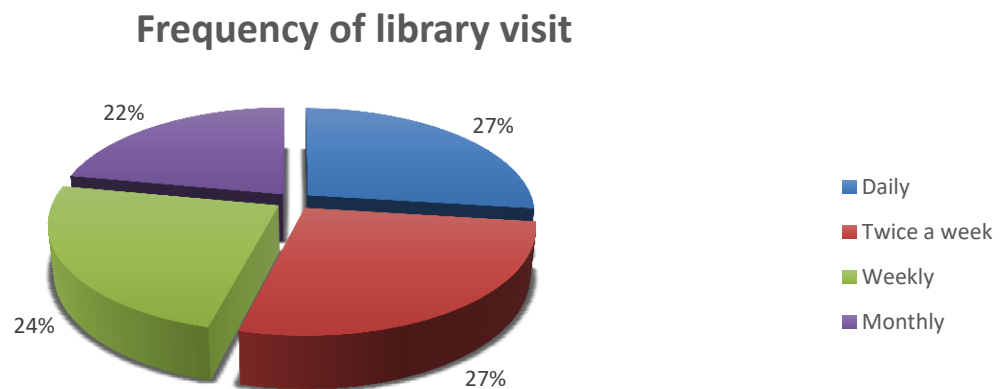
Figure 3:



Frequency of Library Visit

Table and chart no. 4 shows frequency of library visit and that is 27% respondents visit library on daily basis and 27% visit twice a week, 24% use library weekly, while 22% use library monthly.

Figure 4:



Causes of Library Anxiety

Table no 1 measure sub-factors of AQAK scale respectively; library resources, library staff, user knowledge, library environment, user education, to identify causes of library anxiety. It is shown that respondents had highest mean (3.57) for “library environment” and mean (3.27) for “library

resources” that shows these two sub-factors are most prominent causes for library anxiety. And it also indicates that “user education” has lowest mean of (2.63) that means it was the lowest reason for library anxiety. Therefore, it is noted that “library environment: with mean of (3.57) was the highest cause and “user education” with mean of (2.63) was the lowest cause for library anxiety among respondents.

Table 1

Sr. No.	Sub-Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum
1	Library Resources	3.27	0.809	5	1
2	Library Staff	2.85	1.217	5	1
3	User Knowledge	2.88	0.49	4.08	1
4	Library Environment	3.57	0.88	5	1
5	User Education	2.63	1.33	4.8	1

Level of Library Anxiety

Table and chart no. 2 provide a descriptive statistic of overall factors of AQAK scale. Overall mean for all sub-factors is (3.02) mean with (0.407) standard deviation, which lies in mild level of anxiety according to AQAK scale. However, this result shows that all respondents have a mild level of library anxiety.

Table 2

Sr. No.	Statistics	Statistical Values
1	Mean	3.02
2	Standard Deviation	0.407
3	Maximum	3.39
4	Minimum	1.9

Respondent’s Library Anxiety Based on Gender

At last gender wise analysis for library anxiety was done. The mean for male respondents (3.02) was compared with mean for females that is (3.02). A t-test was performed to find significant difference among opinions of both male and female respondents. As shown in the table there is no significant difference for overall mean of male (3.02) and female (3.02) with t-test value of (p=0.51).

Table 3

Sr. No.	Gender	No. of Respondents	Mean	Standard Deviation	Maximum	Minimum	Significance (two-tailed)
1	Male	76	3.02	0.4	4	1.9	0.51
2	Female	24	3.02	0.4	4	2	

Findings

The following are the major findings from the study:

- Most noticeable reasons for library anxiety were sub-factors library environment with mean score of 3.57 and library resources with mean score of 3.27. While user education was the lowest cause with mean score of 2.63 for anxiety among students.
- Respondents have overall mean score of 3.02 for library anxiety that shows there was mild level of library anxiety among students according to AQAK scale.
- The study found no significant difference based on gender in overall anxiety with two tailed significant difference of 0.51.

Discussion

The current study concluded that the highest mean scores were 3.57 and 3.27 for library environment and library resources. Therefore, respondents become stressed and anxious in terms of library sub-factors, library environment and library resources. They get uncomfortable when entering in an automated library environment and searching from vast collection of library resources which is due to lack of awareness about system of automated library.

Our study found that respondents poses overall mild level of anxiety 3.02 according to AQAK scale designed by (Anwar et. Al 2012). Study examined overall library anxiety based on gender using t-test and found no any significant difference. These results resemble with previous findings of Anwar et al., (2004), Remhan et al., (2015), Norri et al., (2017), Khan et al., (2021), Chutia & Nath (2021) and Ismail et. al. (2022) who revealed mild level of library anxiety among undergraduates and no any significant difference based on gender. While our findings are in conflict with results Onwuegbuzie & Jiao (1997) who reported that male respondents pose high level of library anxiety in comparison with female respondents.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study was done in order to learn about library anxiety among 1st year students at MUET, Jamshoro. One of main reasons was the shortage of literature about library anxiety among students in Pakistan especially in Sindh. Majority (76%) of participants was male and only (24%) of female students contribute in this study. Current study was conducted to learn about causes and to draw solutions that can help in decreasing phenomenon of library anxiety. The results of study revealed that there exists mild level of library anxiety among 1st year at MEUT and no significant difference in anxiety level was found based on gender. Library environment and library resources are most dominant sub-factors in creating library anxiety among undergraduates. Which is mainly due to lack of basic knowledge about library its technology and resources. Most of respondents get awkwardness while entering and using library. Thus, it is suggested that library administration with cooperation of faculty encourage students to visit library frequently and use its resources. This can be done by creating opportunities such as; assigning tasks which require students to visit and use library's space and resources.

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