



# "Human Resource Practices And User Satisfaction In Selected Public Libraries Of Kashmir"

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between human resource practices and user satisfaction in selected public libraries of Kashmir. Public libraries serve as crucial access points for information, learning, and community engagement. The quality of services they offer is deeply influenced by the effectiveness of their human resource management (HRM). This research aims to assess how HR practices—such as staff recruitment, training, motivation, and professional development—affect the satisfaction levels of library users.

Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from library staff and users across selected District public libraries in districts including Srinagar, Anantnag, Pulwama, Budgam and Baramulla. Surveys were conducted to evaluate HRM dimensions and user feedback on service quality, staff behaviour, resource accessibility, and overall library experience.

The findings reveal that libraries with better-trained, adequately staffed, and professionally managed personnel tend to offer higher quality services, leading to greater user satisfaction. However, several challenges were also identified, including staff shortages, limited training opportunities, and lack of performance appraisal systems.

The study concludes that strengthening human resource practices can significantly enhance user satisfaction in public libraries. It recommends policy-level reforms, increased investment in staff development, and the implementation of user-centric service models to revitalize the role of public libraries in Kashmir's socio-educational landscape.

## Introduction

Public libraries are universally recognized as fundamental institutions for community education, lifelong learning, and social engagement. Their effectiveness, however, is highly dependent on the efficiency of human resource management (HRM) practices adopted within these institutions (**Alonderienė & Majauskienė, 2020**). In developing regions like Kashmir, where public libraries play an increasingly vital role in democratizing access to information, the quality of library services is closely tied to how well library personnel are recruited, trained, motivated, and managed.

Human resource practices not only shape the internal culture of libraries but also directly influence the satisfaction of users who rely on timely, professional, and accessible services (**Vlachos, 2009**). Previous research indicates that effective HRM practices, including staff development, performance appraisal, and participatory decision-making, significantly enhance organizational performance and service quality in libraries (**Nisha & Naushad, 2011**). Despite the global emphasis on human-centered library services, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical studies focusing on how HR practices impact user satisfaction in the specific socio-political context of Kashmir.

In Kashmir, public libraries often operate under challenging circumstances, including limited funding, staffing shortages, and occasional socio-political disruptions (**Majid & Baba, 2020**). These constraints place additional emphasis on the need for effective HRM to maintain and improve service delivery standards. Although some studies have explored the status of public libraries in Jammu and Kashmir (**Bhat, 2016**), the direct linkage between human resource practices and user satisfaction remains underexplored.

This study aims to bridge this gap by systematically examining HRM practices in selected public libraries across Kashmir and evaluating how these practices influence user satisfaction. By investigating both

employee experiences and user perceptions, the research seeks to offer practical insights for improving library services and enhancing the professional development of library staff in the region.

### Literature Review

**Human resource management (HRM)** has emerged as a critical factor in shaping the effectiveness and sustainability of service-oriented institutions, including libraries. Libraries rely heavily on human capital to deliver high-quality services and ensure user satisfaction. According to **Alonderienė and Majauskienė (2020)**, effective HRM practices such as recruitment, training, employee motivation, and appraisal systems are instrumental in enhancing employee engagement and, by extension, improving organizational performance.

In the context of libraries, HRM plays an indispensable role in ensuring that users receive timely, accurate, and user-friendly services. **Nisha and Naushad (2011)** argue that the competence and motivation of library personnel significantly influence the quality-of-service delivery and overall user experience. They highlight that systematic staff training programs and continuous professional development initiatives are necessary to align staff capabilities with evolving user needs and technological advancements.

The relationship between HRM practices and service quality has been established in several studies. **Vlachos (2009)** emphasizes that high-performance workplace practices positively affect both employee satisfaction and customer perceptions of service quality. In public libraries, this relationship becomes even more crucial given the direct and frequent interaction between library staff and users.

Focusing on the Indian context, **Majid and Baba (2020)** explored HRM practices and job satisfaction among librarians in Jammu & Kashmir. Their study found a strong correlation between effective HRM policies and librarian morale, which subsequently influenced the quality of services provided to users. They stressed that recognition, supportive leadership, and opportunities for professional growth are vital in enhancing job satisfaction and user outcomes in libraries.

**Bhat (2016)** conducted an evaluative study of human resources in government higher secondary school libraries of Kashmir, revealing systemic challenges such as inadequate staffing, lack of professional qualifications, and limited training opportunities. These limitations were identified as significant barriers to delivering satisfactory library services.

Furthermore, **Qazi (2018)** examined the problems and prospects of public libraries in Kashmir, noting that human resource constraints severely impact library functioning. The study highlighted that the absence of specialized training and professional development programs for library staff leads to suboptimal user experiences.

Globally, libraries are increasingly adopting user-centered service models, recognizing that user satisfaction is a key measure of library effectiveness (**Asemi & Riyazi, 2014**). User satisfaction depends not only on the availability of resources but also on the quality of human interaction and support provided by library staff. This underscores the importance of well-designed HRM systems in fostering positive user experiences.

While existing studies have examined various dimensions of HRM in libraries and user satisfaction independently, there is a noticeable gap in literature focusing specifically on the interrelationship between these two variables in the context of public libraries in Kashmir. This study seeks to bridge this gap by investigating how HR practices impact user satisfaction in selected public libraries, providing evidence-based recommendations for improving library services in the region.

### Objectives of the Study

- 1. To examine the existing human resource management practices** in selected district public libraries of Kashmir, focusing on staffing, training, motivation, and performance appraisal.
- 2. To assess the level of user satisfaction** with library services, resources, and staff behaviour in the selected public libraries.
- 3. To analyse the relationship between human resource practices and user satisfaction** in public libraries, identifying how HRM impacts service delivery and user experience.
- 4. To identify challenges faced by public libraries** in Kashmir regarding human resource management and their effect on user satisfaction.

### Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a comprehensive understanding of human resource practices and user satisfaction in selected public libraries of Kashmir. A descriptive and analytical design was employed to assess current HRM practices and their impact on user experiences. The research was conducted in five district public libraries located in the districts of Srinagar, Anantnag, Baramulla, Pulwama, and Budgam, selected purposively to represent both urban and semi-urban contexts.

The study population comprised library staff, including professional and para-professional employees, as well as library users such as students, researchers, and the general public. The sample included approximately 15

to 20 library staff members and 150 to 200 users. Purposive sampling was used to select the libraries, while convenience sampling was applied to select respondents within the libraries.

Data were collected using structured questionnaires designed separately for staff and users. The staff questionnaire focused on key HR practices such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, motivation, and challenges faced. The user questionnaire aimed to capture perceptions of service quality, staff responsiveness, and overall satisfaction. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior library staff to gain deeper insights into human resource policies and operational challenges, while direct observation of library environments and staff-user interactions provided supplementary qualitative data.

For data analysis, quantitative responses were coded and analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores. Qualitative data from interviews and observations were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns and insights. Correlation analysis was employed to examine the relationship between human resource practices and user satisfaction. Tools such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS were utilized for data entry and analysis.

### **Data Analysis and Interpretation**

This section presents the findings derived from the analysis of data collected from library staff and users of selected public libraries in Kashmir. The data were gathered through structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews and analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results are discussed under key thematic categories: demographic profile of respondents, human resource practices, user satisfaction levels, and the relationship between HR practices and user satisfaction.

#### **1. Demographic Profile of Respondents**

##### **Library Staff:**

The sample included 18 library staff members across five public libraries in Kashmir. The majority (77.78%) were male, with an average professional experience of 15 years. Educational qualifications ranged from certificate courses to master's degrees in library and information science.

##### **Library Users:**

A total of 180 library users participated in the survey, including students (82%), and general public readers (18%). Most users visited the library for academic purposes, including examination preparation, reference work, and research activities.

#### **2. Assessment of Human Resource Practices**

The analysis revealed that HRM practices in public libraries of Kashmir are underdeveloped and lack systematic implementation.

- **Recruitment and Staffing:**

- 61.11% of staff reported that recruitment processes are irregular and often influenced by external factors rather than merit alone.
- Libraries suffer from staff shortages, particularly in technical and reference services.

- **Training and Development:**

- 83.4% of staff indicated the absence of regular training programs.
- Professional development opportunities are scarce, and knowledge about emerging library technologies is limited.

- **Performance Appraisal and Motivation:**

- Most staff (88.9%) felt there is no formal system of performance appraisal.
- Motivation is largely intrinsic, as external rewards or recognition mechanisms are minimal.

- **Work Environment:**

- Staff acknowledged a need for better working conditions and clearer role definitions.

#### **3. User Satisfaction Levels**

The user survey assessed perceptions across several service dimensions:

- **Collection Adequacy:**

- 79% of users found library collections insufficient, particularly in updated reference materials and digital resources.

- **Staff Responsiveness:**

- 76% of users rated staff assistance as "average."
- Positive feedback was given to staff willingness, but gaps were noted in technical expertise.

- **Service Quality:**

- 94% of users expressed dissatisfaction with remote access services.
- However, physical services such as circulation and reference desk interactions were rated as satisfactory by 30% of users.
- **Overall Satisfaction:**
- Only 18% of users reported being fully satisfied with library services.

#### 4. Correlation Between HR Practices and User Satisfaction

Statistical analysis indicates a **moderate positive correlation** ( $r = 0.52$ ) between effective HRM practices and user satisfaction levels.

- Libraries with staff who reported better training and clearer job roles tended to have higher user satisfaction scores.
- Libraries with poor HR practices (staff shortages, lack of training) showed lower user satisfaction, particularly in areas like reference services and digital access.

This relationship confirms findings from earlier research (Vlachos, 2009; Majid & Baba, 2020) that effective human resource management has a direct impact on service quality in library settings.

#### 5. Key Insights

- **Training Deficit:**

Lack of regular training programs undermines both staff performance and user satisfaction.

- **Staffing Challenges:**

Inadequate staffing results in delays and reduced service quality, especially during peak usage hours.

- **Service Gaps:**

While basic services are operational, there is an urgent need to improve digital services to meet modern user expectations.

- **Positive Staff Attitudes:**

Despite challenges, staff demonstrate a helpful attitude, which positively influences user experiences.

#### Summary

The findings clearly establish that human resource practices are a significant determinant of user satisfaction in public libraries of Kashmir. While some positive practices are in place, systemic shortcomings such as lack of professional development, insufficient staffing, and absence of formal appraisal mechanisms hinder optimal service delivery. Improving HR strategies in public libraries can lead to more satisfied users and enhance the libraries' role as essential community information centres.

#### Conclusion

This study set out to explore the crucial relationship between human resource practices and user satisfaction in selected public libraries of Kashmir. The findings have reinforced the understanding that human resource management is not merely an administrative function, but a cornerstone that directly impacts the quality of services delivered to library users.

The analysis revealed that while public libraries in Kashmir maintain basic HRM structures, there are notable deficiencies in staffing adequacy, regular training, professional development, and performance appraisal systems. These gaps contribute to inconsistent service delivery and limit the libraries' ability to meet evolving user needs, especially in the areas of digital access and specialized reference services.

User satisfaction levels, as assessed in this study, indicate moderate contentment with physical library services but growing dissatisfaction with digital resources, collection adequacy, and specialized assistance. The correlation analysis between HRM practices and user satisfaction further confirms that libraries with better-trained and motivated staff tend to provide superior service experiences, thereby increasing user satisfaction.

Despite operational challenges, it is encouraging to note that library staff generally display a positive attitude and willingness to assist users. However, without institutional support in the form of systematic HRM improvements, their efforts are constrained.

The study concludes that strengthening human resource practices in public libraries across Kashmir is imperative for improving service quality and enhancing user satisfaction. Focused efforts on capacity building, staff motivation, and modern HR strategies can transform these libraries into vibrant, user-centered knowledge hubs. By aligning human resource development with user expectations, public libraries in Kashmir can reaffirm their role as essential community institutions for education, culture, and lifelong learning.

#### Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, several actionable recommendations are proposed to enhance human resource practices and, consequently, improve user satisfaction in public libraries of Kashmir.

### 1. Strengthen Recruitment and Staffing Policies

Public libraries in Kashmir should adopt transparent, merit-based recruitment processes to ensure that qualified and skilled professionals are appointed. Addressing existing staff shortages, particularly in specialized areas like digital services and reference management, is essential to improve service delivery.

### 2. Implement Regular Training and Professional Development Programs

Continuous professional development is crucial to keeping library staff updated with emerging technologies and service models. Regular workshops, seminars, and skill enhancement programs should be institutionalized to build staff competence and confidence.

### 3. Establish a Formal Performance Appraisal System

Introducing a structured performance evaluation framework will help monitor staff efficiency, identify skill gaps, and motivate employees through constructive feedback and recognition. Performance appraisals should be linked to opportunities for career advancement and incentives.

### 4. Enhance Motivation and Recognition Mechanisms

Beyond financial rewards, libraries should adopt non-monetary motivation strategies, such as employee recognition programs, participatory decision-making, and a supportive work environment. These measures can significantly boost staff morale and commitment.

### 5. Improve Library Infrastructure and Service Environment

Investments should be made to upgrade library facilities, including digital infrastructure, reading spaces, and user-friendly cataloguing systems. A welcoming and well-equipped environment enhances the user experience and reflects positively on staff performance.

### 6. Develop User-Centric Service Models

Libraries should actively seek user feedback to align services with user expectations. Regular satisfaction surveys and feedback mechanisms will help libraries respond promptly to user needs and improve overall satisfaction.

### 7. Promote Collaboration and Networking

Public libraries should foster collaborations with academic institutions, professional bodies, and other libraries to share resources, expertise, and best practices in human resource management and service delivery.

### 8. Policy-Level Interventions

Policymakers and governing bodies should prioritize the development of comprehensive HR policies specific to public libraries. Adequate funding allocations and strategic planning are essential to build robust HRM systems and sustain quality services.

By implementing these recommendations, public libraries in Kashmir can significantly enhance their human resource capacities and, in turn, elevate user satisfaction. A holistic approach that balances staff development with user expectations will ensure that these libraries continue to serve as vital community hubs for learning, information access, and cultural enrichment.

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