

Barriers to Customer Relationship Management practices: A survey of university libraries in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to find out relationship between customer relationship management (CRM) practices and barriers in university libraries of Pakistan. The study also focused on CRM's barriers and its correlation with types of university, regions of university and gender. This study adopted correlational research design with survey method based on quantitative data collection. A structured and open-ended questionnaire was distributed among the head/in-charge librarians of universities libraries in Pakistan. The results have demonstrated that major barriers of CRM are financial resources/budget, qualified, experienced and trained staff, human resource satisfaction and motivation, information technology infrastructure, CRM knowledge and understanding by staff, library culture and collaboration, library users, and leadership commitment. Insignificant variations were found in the overall mean score of CRM barriers based on types of university, regions of university, and gender of the respondents. There is a strong negative (inverse) relationship exist among CRM practices and overall barriers as well as its four sub-facets, while three attributes having moderate negative relationship respectively. This study has numerous practical and theoretical contributions about CRM for academic libraries, especially those engaged in customer relationship management strategies, practices and implementation. The results enlighten library employees to be effective, proactive and successful performers for users' satisfaction, retention and loyalty.

Keywords: Customer relationship management; Academic libraries; Head/in-charge librarians; Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The world has radically changed into a global community at this time. Building and maintaining strong and lifelong relationship with the customer is the primary priority of all successful organisations (Agnihotri and Bhavani 2018). Today's libraries are facing many challenges and the most prominent is to accomplish user needs and preferences which able to keep and encourage the users to continue using a library. The rapid growth of the Internet and information superhighway linked to digital technology, as different information sources are increasingly available to library users to satisfy their quest for knowledge. User groups in academic libraries especially are becoming more knowledgeable, informed, and aware of various information sources, and their expectations, information needs, preferences, and choice of various information products and services are growing daily, hence they are becoming more selective. Academic libraries need to build a mutually beneficial, collaborative, strong, and lifelong relationship with users, and it appears to be one of the most practical ways to keep track of the users' increasing expectations and influencing them (Khan and Kamal 2015; Bahader et al. 2020).

However, libraries are less aware of user service demands, contentment or dissatisfaction due to a lack of appropriate customer relationship management (CRM), and appears to be unable to meet users needs and expectations (Shaon and Rahman 2015). CRM is a widely used approach for managing organisational communication with customers. It entails operations such as identifying, acquiring, and maintaining new customers, nurturing and retaining existing customers, luring former customers back into the fold, and minimizing marketing and customer service expenditures, as well as increasing customers' happiness, trust, loyalty, and retention (Rababah, Mohd and Ibrahim 2011; Bhakane 2015; Bin-Nashwan and Hassan 2017).

Developing nations such as Pakistan are still in the early stages of implementing CRM approach and building customer relationships within their library landscape, particularly in libraries of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Province of Pakistan) and Islamabad (Capital of Pakistan). CRM requires a large investment, information technology (IT) infrastructure, trained and motivated staff, library culture and collaboration, therefore, the libraries are still not prepared to completely prioritize customer experience. Most of the academic libraries have limited library automation software that could enable their staffs to comprehend CRM, marketing, and analytics with the integrated library systems, in order to reach out to their users more effectively, and delight them with every interaction. As far as CRM is concerned, no study has been conducted on CRM implementation in libraries. Studies on CRM are limited to those conducted by Idrees (2007) and Bahader et al. (2018, 2020, 2021) on CRM perceptions, CRM current status, CRM activities and practices. There is a knowledge gap in the literature of library and information management in Pakistan particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Islamabad university libraries about barriers to CRM practices. To fill in the literature, a study of CRM barriers and its relationship with CRM practices among the university libraries of Pakistan were conducted, with the aim to assist librarians in comprehending the barriers and hindrances of CRM as required and critical components of running any successful information enterprise.

LITERATURE REVIEW

People are an organisation's most valuable resource, and as businesses evolve rapidly and become more complex, given the new technological skills to identify, analyse, and manage communications with their customers, an organisation must focus on purposefully increasing the value of its patron base in order to thrive. As such, it is crucial for organisations to focus on their single most valuable asset, i.e. customers. CRM is a concept based on the philosophy of developing relationships by combining customers and marketing (Kotler 2003), and it is a business strategy for improving customer acquisition, retention, commitment, and profitability by gaining a better understanding of and impacting client activities through significant communications (Swift 2001). A few studies have recommended key CRM components. According to Buttle (2004), there are four major aspects that influence CRM chain values namely, leadership and organisational culture, people, data and information technology, and process. Kincaid (2003) identified information, processes, technology, and people as the major ingredients of CRM. Radcliffe (2001), considered eight building blocks of CRM: vision, techniques, customer experience, organisational collaboration, processes, knowledge, technology and CRM Metrics. Other scholars have also performed empirical works on the following eight variables that contribute to CRM success.

Leadership commitment: This aspect mostly concerns people, or university top management and library administrators, who should be able to (a) set the vision and lead the business by introducing CRM effectively, (b) be responsible for defining CRM strategies, and (c) drive CRM implementation by establishing resources, time, working environment, and technology. Torugsa, Yawised and O'Donohue (2019) identified proactive engagement, learning and change management, and managerial support as the primary barriers to CRM implementation success any organisation need to overcome. University top management should convince their employees of the advantages and future consequences of the plan and become the key promoters of CRM, as well as pass on encouragement and dedication to other levels of the organisation to implement CRM (Alshourah, Alassaf and Altawalbeh 2018).

Human resource satisfaction and motivation: Employees' satisfaction and motivation play a leading role in fostering and maintaining healthy partnerships with users, and it is important that they are active in and dedicated to the CRM programme and inspire them to meet the suggested goals (Mendoza et. al. 2007; Rafiki, Hidayat and Razzaq 2019). Bill Cooney cited in Benjamin and Rews' (2010) study that applied principles of CRM and service quality in higher education declared that *"If you do not transact with the employees, they cannot manage business with the users. We give workers all they need to be pleased and absolutely fascinated to be here. If they are not pleased, we will not have pleased users in the long run"* (p.40).

CRM knowledge and understanding of organisational staff: The organisation often depends on its workforce's CRM knowledge and understanding, knowledge about system, customer information, customer preferences, and customer database, and implement innovative methods based on internal information and thereby enhance customer experience (Shang and Lin 2010; Zerbino et al. 2018). Organisational staff must have knowledge and understanding of CRM and its relational abilities, as well as use of knowledge to meet user needs, process-oriented behavior and technological competence (Abu Amuna et al. 2017).

Organisational culture and collaboration: Business lifestyle contains culture and structure, knowledge of consumers, abilities, beliefs, anticipations, approaches, and skills of employees and common values of all staff (Shahzad et al. 2012). It also includes developing of key working lifestyle, developing contract for collaboration, and developing group interaction made up of people of various professions that take different positions, integrative collaboration, and effective interaction, all of which require contribution of employees at all stages, from directors to front desk service providers (Stone et al. 2019). Library culture and environmental features affect users' behavior and emotion directly, therefore user friendly and CRM centred approach is vital for CRM implementation (Kakhki, Harati and Doreh 2019).

Information Technology infrastructure: Information technology is essential strategic device of an organisation to obtain success in CRM programme (Badwan et al. 2017; Bahrami, Ghorbani and Arabzad 2012). Mainly, the user control technique requires a centre or system to store all users' informational details. This centre must have efficient technological innovation framework that is flexible according to the changing environment (Buttle 2004; SB and Bala 2014). It must contain a methodical CRM in order to connect with users through direct distribution of details to them, a way of maintaining users with the organisation. In this respect, a programme of technological innovation can be used to update the details features to librarians consequently enhancing the customer relationship

management in public libraries (Stokić et al. 2019). Bahader, Idrees and Naveed (2021) in a recent study highlighted that Information technology infrastructure is the key issue in university libraries of Pakistan to accept the CRM in library culture.

Training and experience of library staff: CRM training and experience of the end-users can make all the difference to whether or not CRM system adoption succeeds. It indicates that making and organising training programmes can be of a great help to the execution of the project since it results in the achievements of the project. In other words, by training and experience, employees will comprehend completely the beneficial effects of user services, collection development, technological innovation, and user preferences to provide better products and services to customers, so, former will agree to the changes easier (Yakubu et al. 2022). It should be regarded that user training must be done early in the implementation of CRM (Bose 2002).

Library users: Users are an integral part of the library and their participation in CRM excavation and practices play key role. Library users keep very little interest in library planning and developing products and services. When users do not give value to library services, the library staff would become indifferent and apathetic. CRM is in fact a two-way traffic; library users should keep having good relations with the staff and encourage them, value them for rendering services, and show gratitude towards them. In return, library staff would be happier, and provide services in far better way.

Financial resources: Funding has always been the biggest challenges that libraries are facing. Inadequate budget and funding cuts badly affect library collection development, IT services and library services such as reference, document delivery, current awareness services and inter-library loans (Mapulanga 2011). For CRM's proper activation, organisation always needs financial assistance from the top management, therefore finance is crucial for CRM.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Based on the literature review, this study conceptualized a framework to study the barriers to CRM practices at university libraries in Pakistan (Figure 1). This study has identified nine independent variables namely qualified and trained staff; CRM knowledge and understanding; human resource satisfaction and motivation; leadership commitment; financial resources; library users; library culture; information technology infrastructure; and the overall barriers; that make up the barriers to CRM practices (the dependent variable) to apply to library organisation. Additionally, this framework will assess the main obstacles to CRM adoption that academic libraries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad are facing.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To identify barriers to CRM practices in the university libraries of Pakistan, the following research questions are posed:

- (a) What are the barriers to CRM practices faced by university libraries in Pakistan?
- (b) Is there any significant variation in barriers to CRM practices across types of university, region of university and gender of the respondents?

The hypotheses being tested in this research study are as follows:

- H₁: CRM overall barriers has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₂: Qualified, experienced and trained staff has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₃: Human resource satisfaction and motivation has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₄: CRM knowledge and understanding has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₅: Leadership commitment has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₆: Financial resources has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₇: Library users has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₈: Library culture and collaboration has significant relationship with CRM practices
- H₉: Information technology infrastructure has significant relationship with CRM practices

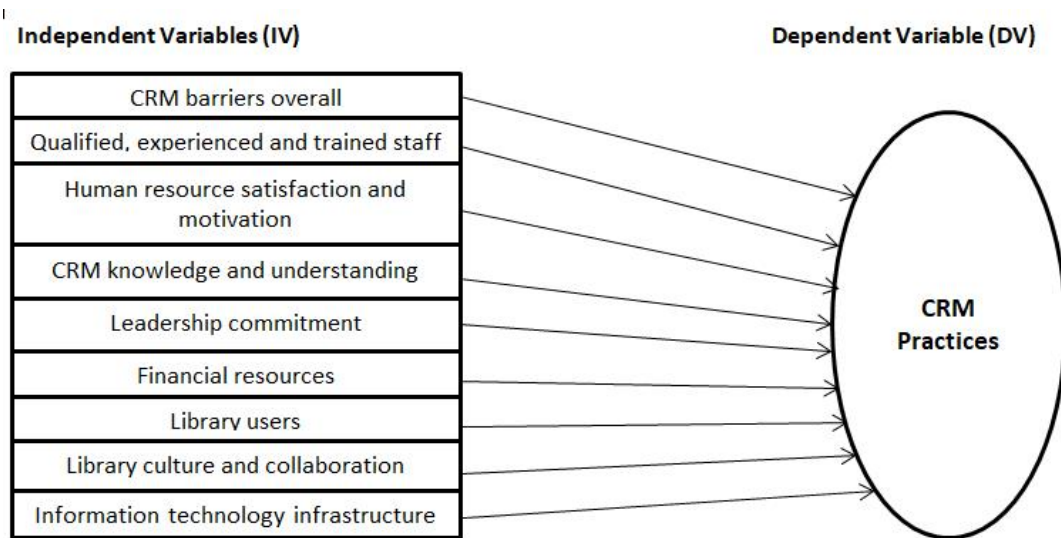


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Barriers to Customer Relationship Management Practices

METHODS

This study is descriptive in nature with the purpose to investigate the barriers to CRM practices among university libraries. The survey approach was used to address the objective on the basis of a cross-sectional quantitative research design. Self-administrated questionnaire was used as a technique for data collection. For this purpose, a structured, close ended questionnaire, with one open ended question was created and sent to the target population. A questionnaire is considered economical, comfortable for respondents, quick and convenient to implement. The questionnaire was developed after systematic analysis of the literature to understand the complex theoretical and functional implications of the research. Different CRM strategies, practices, factors and barriers were identified and conceptualized as the research framework (Figure 1). The questionnaire's content validity was determined by an expert panel review and pilot testing. The value of Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.94, indicated the acceptability of the survey items' internal reliability.

The questionnaire consist two sections, the first section contains demographic information about the university libraries: types, region, and year of establishment, library opening, and working days in a week, total number of staff in universities and gender of the respondent. The second section of the questionnaire included eight attributes of the barriers to CRM practices namely qualified, experienced and trained staff; CRM knowledge and understanding of staff; human resource satisfaction and motivation; leadership commitment; financial resources/budget constrain; library users; library culture and collaboration; and information technology infrastructure. Each of these these items were measured using a five-point, Likert Scale with the following anchors: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree. In addition, the second section also contained an open-ended question on CRM practices and strategies used in libraries to enhance library user relationship.

The population of the study consisted of all public and private sector universities and degree awarding institutes of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) and Islamabad, approved by the Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is the province and Islamabad is the capital of Pakistan. The total universities are 35, in which 20 are in KPK and 15 in Islamabad. Similarly, 22 are public universities while 13 are private universities. Data were collected from all head/in-charge librarians of all universities in KPK and Islamabad.

The questionnaires were administered via post and e-mail to all members of the population along with a cover letter. Initially the response rate was low. However, after continuous multi-fold efforts and follow up strategies and techniques, a response rate of 80 percent (28 responses) from both public and private sector universities.

After collection and compilation, data were updated and cleaned to ensure reliability. Missing values were allocated a neutral value. To simplify entry, the coding numerals were applied to the answers. The Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS) software version 20 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean) were determined and inferential statistics were used to find mean score differences in barriers to CRM practices with respect to demographic variables and to test the proposed conceptual framework in Figure 1.

RESULTS

Barriers to CRM Practices in Libraries

In order to identify the barriers to CRM practices in university libraries, the respondents were presented with different possible obstacles for their agreement or disagreement with the statements. As shown in Table 1, the attribute that has the highest mean score as CRM barrier is "Financial resources/Budget" (M = 4.09, SD = .701), followed by "Qualified, experienced and trained staff" (M = 4.06, SD = .591) and "Human resource satisfaction and motivation" (M = 4.00, SD = .727). "Information technology infrastructure", "CRM knowledge and understanding by staff" and "Library culture and collaboration" received similar mean of agreement (M = 3.94 respectively). "Library users" and "Leadership commitment" also received similar mean of agreement (M = 3.68 respectively). The overall mean score for barriers to CRM practices is 3.92, which reflects that the respondents are in agreement about the barriers to CRM practices in academic libraries of Pakistan.

Table 1: Mean Score and Standard Deviations of Academic Libraries' Barriers to CRM Practices

Rank	Attributes	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1	Financial resources/budget	4.09	.701	2.0	5.0
2	Qualified, experience and trained staff	4.06	.591	3.0	5.0
3	Human resource satisfaction and motivation	4.00	.727	2.0	5.0
4	Information technology infrastructure	3.94	.539	3.0	5.0
5	CRM knowledge and understanding by staff	3.94	.802	3.0	5.0
6	Library culture and collaboration	3.94	.683	2.0	5.0
7	Library users	3.68	.932	2.0	5.0
8	Leadership commitment	3.68	.866	2.0	5.0
Overall Mean, CRM Barriers		3.91	.385	3.2	4.7

Scale: 5=Strongly Agree; 4=Agree; 3=Neutral; 2=Disagree; 1= Strongly Disagree

Mean Variance Analysis of Barriers to CRM Practices

An independent t-test (two-tailed) sample was used to investigate the mean difference in the overall CRM barriers scale with regard to type of university, either private or public. Findings indicate that there were no significant difference in the composite mean score of barriers to CRM practices based on type of university where p-value is greater than alpha-value 0.05 ($P=0.694>0.05$), where the composite mean scores of CRM barriers for public university is 3.89 (SD = .369) and private is 3.95 (SD = .425). Similarly, no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of CRM barriers attributes were found with respect to type of university.

Similarly, results in revealed that there is no statistically significant difference in the composite mean score of CRM barriers with respect to the geographical location of university where significant value is greater than alpha-value ($P=0.393>0.05$). The overall mean score of CRM barriers for KPK is 3.86 (SD = .347) and Islamabad is 3.98 (SD = .435). In addition, no statistically significant difference in the mean scores CRM barriers attributes were found with respect to the geographical location of university. Additionally, there is no statistically significant variation in the composite mean score of CRM barriers and attributes with respect to gender of respondents where the significant value is higher than alpha-value ($P=0.247<0.05$).

Relationship between Barriers to CRM Practices: A Model Fit

To determine the relationship, direction and magnitude of association between the eight barriers (financial resources/budget constraint; qualified, experienced and trained staff; human resource satisfaction and motivation; information technology infrastructure; CRM knowledge and understanding of staff; library culture and collaboration; library users; leadership commitment) and CRM practices were investigated. Pearson correlation test applied to the data shows that there is statistically significant inverse correlation between CRM practices and eight variables of barriers ranging from $-.347$ to $-.645$ (Table 2) . The composite value of person correlation of CRM practices and barriers is $-.720$, showing strong negative relationship between overall CRM practices and barriers respectively. The negative correlation coefficient means that the higher the CPM barriers among university libraries, the lower their CRM practices will be and vice versa. In other words, problems and barriers have inverse impact on CRM practices, when the barriers increase, CRM practices decrease and when the problems and barriers are removed, then practices enhance respectively. Human resource satisfaction and motivation explained the highest variance towards CRM practices (41%), followed by information technology infrastructure

(32%), library culture and collaboration (27%), qualified, experienced and trained staff, and financial resources (22% respectively). CRM knowledge and understanding by staff explained the lowest variance towards CRM practices (8%), followed by library users (12%) and leadership commitment (17%).

Table 2: Relationship between CRM Practices and the Barriers

Pearson Correlation			
CRM Barriers	CRM Practices (r-values)	Sig (two-tailed)	r ²
CRM barriers overall	-.720**	.000	51%
Qualified, experienced and trained staff	-.479**	.004	22%
Human resource satisfaction and motivation	-.645**	.000	41%
CRM knowledge and understanding by staff	-.504**	.002	8%
Leadership commitment	-.420*	.012	17%
Financial resources/budget	-.479**	.001	22%
Library users	-.347*	.041	12%
Library culture and collaboration	-.525**	.005	27%
Information technology infrastructure	-.570**	.001	32%

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation test presented in Table 2 are detailed in the following hypothesis tests:

H₁: The results of H₁ showed statistically significant strong negative correlation between CRM practices and overall CRM barriers, $r = -.720$, $p = .000$, respectively.

H₂: The results of H₂ showed statistically significant moderate negative correlation between CRM practices and qualified, experienced and trained staff, $r = -.479$, $p = .004$, respectively.

H₃: The results of H₃ indicated that CRM practices and human resource satisfaction were found to be strong negative correlated, $r = -.645$, $p = .000$, respectively.

H₄: The results of H₄ indicated that the variables CRM practices and CRM knowledge and understanding were found to be strong negative correlated, $r = -.504$, $p = .002$, respectively.

H₅: The results of H₅ reflected that CRM practices and leadership commitment were moderate negative correlated, $r = -.420$, $p = .012$, respectively.

H₆: The results of H₆ reflected that there is a moderate negative correlation between the CRM practices and financial resources variables, $r = -.479$, $p = .001$.

H₇: The results of H₇ showed statistically significant moderate negative correlation between CRM practices and library users, $r = -.347$, $p = .041$ respectively.

H₈: The results of H₈ indicated that there is a strong negative correlation between the CRM practices and library culture and collaboration variables, $r = -.525$, $p = .005$ respectively.

H₉: The results of H₉ indicated that CRM practices and information technology infrastructure were found to be strong negative correlated, $r = -.570$, $p = .001$ respectively.

The details of the relationship between CRM practices and barriers with significant values and person correlation coefficient “r” values are presented in Figure 2.

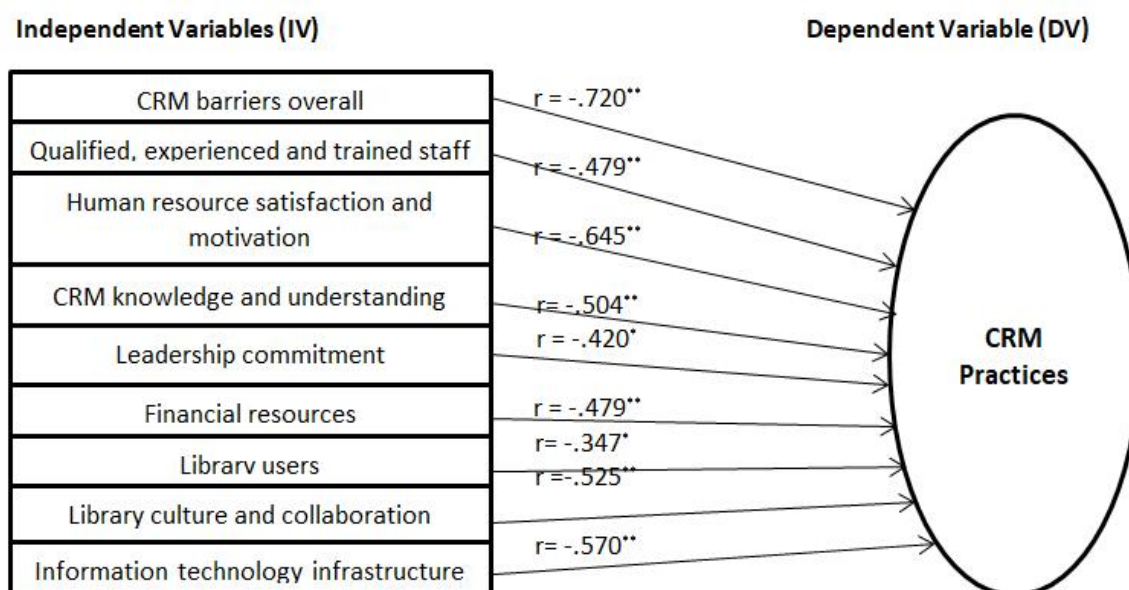


Figure 2: Model Fit for Relationship between CRM Practices and Barriers

DISCUSSION

Although CRM has taken an important place in various services sector, it is relatively a new subject area for university libraries in Pakistan. Holistically, CRM has multiple dimensions and requires resources and expertise in these dimensions. A closer examination of the research findings revealed that university libraries in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad, Pakistan are facing many problems and barriers in the proper implementation and execution of CRM. The key barriers are: financial resources/budget similar to the study by Mapulanga, (2011); qualified, experienced and trained staff, a key component suggested by Bose (2002) and human resource satisfaction and motivation coherent to studies by Wali and Wright (2016) and Rafiki, Hidayat and Razzaq (2019). Findings on information technology infrastructure obstacle are parallel to studies by Badwan et al. (2017), Bahrami, Ghorbani and Arabzad (2012), and Bahader, Idrees and Naveed (2021). Moreover, the importance of CRM knowledge and understanding by staff, library culture and collaboration, library users, and leadership commitment in the implementation of CRM are coherent to the studies by Abu Amuna et al. (2017), Stone et al. (2019), Torugsa, Yawised and O'Donohue (2019) and Alshourah, Alassaf and Altawalbeh (2018). All these studies looked at the aforementioned barriers and the current study further confirmed the barriers that have a partial or overall impact on CRM, organisation performance, and services. This study also revealed that no significant variation were found in the overall mean score of barriers based on types of university, regions of university, and gender of the respondents'.

As far as the relationship between CRM practices and barriers are concerned, there is a strong negative (inverse) relationship exist among CRM practices and overall barriers as well as its attributes such as human resource satisfaction and motivation, CRM knowledge and understanding by staff, library culture and collaboration, and information technology infrastructure. In addition, there is moderate negative relationship found between CRM practices and qualified, experienced and trained staff, leadership commitment, financial resources/budget, and library users respectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Libraries currently operate in a highly competitive world that moves at a breakneck speed. University libraries must actively endeavor to create good and lasting relationships with all types of users in order to maintain their relevance to their users. CRM is a framework for building strong and mutually beneficial user relationships. This research is a valuable and positive approach for academic libraries, especially those engaged in CRM strategies, practices and implementation. It will provide a road map for library professionals to keep in mind the above-mentioned barriers while practicing and executing CRM. The findings empower library staff to be more effective, proactive, and successful in achieving user satisfaction and loyalty. It will not only contribute to the enhancement of library service quality, but will also add a new dimension to it. This study has made a significant contribution to the existing literature on CRM in information service environment, as only a few studies of this type had previously been published. The findings could help library professionals in Pakistan to promote user-friendly services and a user-centred culture in university libraries.

This study revealed that there are indeed major hindrances in academic libraries in Pakistan with regards to CRM implementation. There are some suggestions for overcoming the obstacles that academic libraries have in developing and implementing CRM in their libraries, such as (a) university administration and high authority must support and provide sufficient finance for CRM practices; (b) there will be comprehensive and regular training session for staff regarding CRM practices; (c) job satisfaction and motivation among library staff should be closely monitored and handled; (d) information technology infrastructure in library must fully support CRM; (e) CRM must be well-understood and comprehended by library staff; (f) culture of libraries must be developed as per CRM requirements; (g) the value and importance of CRM will be familiarized to users, and they must acknowledge it; and (h) university top management and library leaders must provide complete assistance for CRM execution.

To conclude, this study has identified the key obstacles to CRM deployment and suggest ways to get beyond them. The findings of this study will benefit in the successful implementation of CRM in academic libraries of Pakistan. It will support in the creation of user centric approaches and strategies in academic libraries. In addition, it will help enhance service quality, optimal information technology facilities and financial utilization, personnel knowledge and skill improvement, leadership support, and foster a learning environment in university libraries.

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