Development and Validation of Competencies for Medical Librarians in Pakistan

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Introduction

- **Background of the Study**

- **The term competency has been defined as the combination of knowledge, skills and proper attitude required to perform a task (Bryant & Poustie, 2001)**

Objectives of the Study

To identify competencies needed for medical librarians in Pakistan and to get these validated from head librarians of medical libraries of Pakistan.

The Research Problem

Medical librarians are an important group of professionals that support health education and service by providing necessary information services. In order to be effective and successful, they must possess certain competencies. The literature on the competencies of medical librarians is limited. No study of the competencies of this group in Pakistan has been carried out. The present study aimed to do that.

Rationale and Significance of the Study

- Competencies for medical librarians need to be identified so that they are adequately prepared to provide effective health information services

- It will help educators to design training programmes for medical librarians in Pakistan

- It will also assist the employers to recruit those that possess required competencies

- This study will be a major contribution to the existing literature on competencies for librarians, especially in the area of health information services

Niche for this Research?

- **Considerable work has been done to identify competencies required by information professionals and to forecast those that will be needed to equip them for change**

- **The available studies about the competencies for medical librarians, though very limited and some of them dated, have been carried out mostly in advanced countries.**

Research Question

This study was guided by the following research question:

- **What are the competencies needed by practicing medical librarians in Pakistan as perceived by the head librarians?**

Research Method and Procesures

- **Structured questionnaire containing 84 competency statements each with five-point Likert scale developed by the researchers, expert-reviewed and pilot-tested, was used for data collection**

- **Questionnaires were distributed among the head librarians of 115 medical libraries**

- **Means and SD of responses were calculated using SPSS**

- **A competency was considered "important" if it received an average score greater than 3.00**

Results

- **This paper presents partial results based on the data collected from the 67 (58%) head librarians.**

- **Five competencies that scored higher in each of the eight categories are reported in the following slides.**

Health Sciences Environment
(Top 5 of 9)

1. Understanding of the institution's information policies (mean, 4.21)

2. Knowledge of different branches and specialties of health sciences (mean, 4.13)

3. Knowledge of accreditation standards that affect medical libraries (4.10)

4. Understanding of medical terminologies and concepts (4.07)

5. Knowledge of education and training patterns of health related professions (mean, 3.69)

Management Theory and Techniques
(Top 5 of 19)

1. Communicating effectively in oral, written and electronic form (mean, 4.54)

2. Ability to make decisions (mean, 4.49)

3. Knowledge of formulating policies and procedures relating to library services (mean, 4.34)

4. Capability of analytical skills and problem solving (mean, 4.31)

5. Personnel management and staff development (mean, 4.28)

Health Sciences Reference and Information Services (Top 5 of 10)

1. **Knowledge of print and electronic reference resources in health sciences (mean, 4.52)**

2. **Expertise in information retrieval and search strategy techniques (mean, 4.43)**

3. **Resource sharing and coordination with other libraries in online environment (mean, 4.39)**

4. **Ability to use medical bibliographic databases (mean, 4.28)**

5. **Ability to develop specialized information services (mean, 4.27)**

Management of Health Information Resources (Top 5 of 10)

1. Knowledge of bibliographic tools, selection aids, and acquisition of materials (mean, 4.55)
2. Knowledge and application of cataloguing rules, standards for bibliographic formats, data conversion and copy cataloguing (mean, 4.39)
3. Knowledge of serials management and operation (mean, 4.25)
4. Ability to operate the process of circulation (mean, 4.19)
5. Capability of indexing and abstracting of documents (3.97)

Information Systems and Technologies
(Top 5 of 11)

1. **Knowledge and understanding of Internet for library use (mean, 4.58)**
2. **Using MS Office (MS Word, MS Excel, MS Power point) and Inpage (mean, 4.54)**
3. **Knowledge of Integrated Library Automation Systems (mean, 4.37)**
4. **Ability to manage automated systems (mean, 4.09)**
5. **Understanding of digitization technology and management programmes to create digital resources (mean, 4.04)**

User Education
(Top 5 of 7)

1. **Ability to make presentations to user groups, visitors, etc (mean, 4.12)**

2. **Ability to enhance presentation with effective a-v aids and handouts (mean, 3.90)**

3. **Knowledge of information literacy standards (mean, 3.88)**

4. **Knowledge of information literacy needs assessment (mean, 3.79)**

5. **Ability to select appropriate delivery methods for information literacy programmes (mean, 3.67)**

Research Methods
(Top 5 of 7)

1. **Basic understanding of research methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative) (mean, 3.81)**

2. **Knowledge and application of citation styles and reference managers (endnote, Procite, etc) (mean, 3.69)**

3. **Ability to use research tools such as questionnaires, focus groups and interviews to conduct user studies (mean, 3.64)**

4. **Ability to write research reports (mean, 3.60)**

5. **Analysis, evaluation, and application of research results (mean, 3.42)**

General and Personal Competencies
(Top 5 of 11)

1. Eager to learn new skills (mean, 4.57)
2. Commitment to service excellence (mean, 4.54)
3. Capability to work independently and under pressure (mean, 4.39)
4. Commitment to lifelong learning and career planning (mean, 4.36)
5. Knowledge and commitment to professional ethics and values (mean, 4.27)

Top Ten Competencies

1. **Knowledge and understanding of Internet for library use (mean, 4.58)**
2. **Eager to learn new skills (mean, 4.57)**
3. **Knowledge of bibliographic tools, selection aids, and acquisition of materials (mean, 4.55)**
4. **Communicating effectively in oral, written and electronic form (mean, 4.54)**
5. **Using MS Office and Inpage (Urdu word processor) (4.54)**
6. **Commitment to service excellence (mean, 4.54)**
7. **Knowledge of print and electronic reference resources in health sciences (mean, 4.52)**
8. **Ability to make decisions (mean, 4.49)**
9. **Expertise in information retrieval and search strategy techniques (mean, 4.43)**
10. **Knowledge and application of cataloguing rules (4.39)**

Conclusions

The results of this study suggest that:

1. Medical librarians are required to be well versed with all those competencies which are needed for general librarianship

2. In addition, medical librarians are expected to have adequate knowledge of health sciences environment including medical terminology and concepts

3. Sound knowledge of some competencies specific for medical libraries is an additional requirement for library personnel

Recommendations

Major recommendations of the study include:

1. **The future LIS education programmes should incorporate some of these needs in the curricula**

2. **Post-MLIS and continuous professional education programmes should be designed to equip medical librarians with needed competencies**

3. **The employing institutions use these competencies to initiate development for their library staff**