

# Academic library leaders' conceptions of library leadership in Pakistan

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## ABSTRACT

*The aim of the study is to investigate the conceptions of academic library leaders' about library leadership, library management, the best attributes for academic library leaders and the ways to develop leadership skills. A qualitative approach was used and data were collected through in-depth interviews from 15 experienced academic library leaders in Pakistan. Phenomenology was used to explore the common conceptions of the participants about library leadership, library management, smart leaders' attributes and significant ways to develop leadership. Academic library leaders perceived that a library leader is all about being visionary and innovative, being bold, and being a knowledge worker. Majority of the participants differentiated between library leader and library manager however, others had similar conceptions about both roles. The best attributes of academic library leaders conceived by professionals are having a humanistic and charismatic personality, being a team leader, and having building relationship skills or social outreach. Humanist aspect of a leader prevails among participants' voices and this might be an addition to the existing literature. Continuous professional development, mentorship, and being in a competitive environment are the best ways for library leadership skills development. The study would be helpful for library leaders, university management, library associations and library schools in policy making and offering of professional training and education of library leaders.*

**Keywords:** Library leadership; Academic librarians; Library management; Leadership skills; Library professionals.

## INTRODUCTION

Academic libraries are considered to be the heart of academic institutions (Wong and Chan 2017) however, digital technologies, posing major threats and competitions, challenge the libraries' survival and growth (Aslam 2018; Herson 2010). The prime responsibility of an academic library is to support and promote research activities (Jain 2015) while ensuring the efficient working of a library (Harland, Steward and Bruce 2017). The Educational Advisory Board on the future of digital information services in the USA highlighted that the monopoly of printed information sources are displaced by the digital information sources but this paradigm extended the library services as the library is still helpful for students' learning and scholarship (Monroe-Gulick, O'Brien and White 2013). The central point behind this is

technology driven change (Aslam 2018; Hernon 2010; Le 2015; Wilson and Corral 2008). The web and social media may well be history's greatest change agent. In less than two decades, this technology has connected billions of people across the globe and reshaped the practices of commerce, communications, politics and education (Hendrix 2010).

Academic library leaders' role in this age of transition is a key determinant of success through the provision of satisfactory library services (Aslam 2018; Fought and Misawa 2016; Wong and Chan 2018). Fought and Misawa (2016) believed that a skilful and competent leadership is required in this time of complexity and transformation. A library leader ensures the relevancy of library to its users through promoting a customer focused, creative and collaborative culture in the library (Harland, Steward and Bruce 2017). Similarly, McMenemy (2008) drew attention to the need of developing modern library leaders to make their professional identity visible and prominent.

Albeit, this era is considered a tremendous change in academic environment (Aslam 2018; Hendrix 2010) but on the other hand, very little literature on leadership from the standpoint of library and information science is available (Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009; Hernon 2017; Hernon and Pors 2013). The situation in Pakistan is not ideal, and there have been some studies that addressed library leadership in Pakistan (Ameen 2006; Ashiq, Rehman and Batool 2018; Haider 2003; Bashir 2014). Poor curriculum content and implementation by library schools and weak library associations were the major obstacles towards the development of modern library leadership (Ameen 2006; Bashir 2014; Haider 2003, 2004; Mahmood 2003; Ahmad and Rehman 2007; Rehman and Ahmad 2007). This study attempts to delve further on the subject of library leadership, examining it from the viewpoint of academic library leaders. It addresses the following research questions:

- (a) How do academic library leaders conceive library leadership?
- (b) How do library leaders see the difference between a library leader and a library manager?
- (c) What are their conceptions of the best library leaders?
- (d) How do they think about developing the best library leadership skills?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Understanding Leadership and Its Theories**

Although leadership is the most explored area in the social sciences (Gill 2006), there is no coherent understanding of the concept of leadership due to its subjective, uncertain and multi-dimensional nature (Brundy 2018; Harrison 2018; Hicks and Given 2013; McMenemy 2008; Rost 1991; Wong 2017). Every subject or discipline used the concept of leadership according to its specific conditions, construct, and culture (Giesecke 2007; Gill 2006; Hernon and Pors 2013; Hicks and Given 2013; Riggs 2001). There are as many definitions of leadership as many individuals tried to define it (Stogdill 1974). Some researchers linked leadership to culture and described that culture has great impact on leaders (Hernon and Pors 2013; Harrison 2018; Rossiter 2007), some considered leadership as an influencing process for achieving mutual goal (Hernon 2017; Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010), while, some highlighted leadership as a chronological development (Rost 1991; Northouse 2016). According to Ryan (2010) "leadership is like a muscle, the more you train the stronger you get" (p.2). For this study, it has been assumed that leadership is an influencing and transformative process that foresees the future and prepares a team for achieving common goals.

Leadership theories are 'plagued by inconsistency and contradictions' (Horrison 2018, p. 16). However, these can be traced back from the nineteenth century when The Great Men theory had emerged. In this theory, leaders are considered as great 'men' possessing heroic personalities, intelligence, and wisdom (Harrison 2018; Rost 1991). Nevertheless, this theory is criticized due to its gender biased and masculine nature (Spector 2016; Wart 2003). The Great Men theory resulted into some certain traits for a leader (Wright 1996). Trait theory encompasses a long list of characteristics (Harrison, 2018; Wright 1996; Hernon and Pors 2013). Stogdill (1948; 1974) conducted a comprehensive investigation on trait studies. In his first research, he analysed 124 studies from 1904 to 1947 and pointed out eight distinguished traits namely intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability. In his second research, he analysed 163 studies from 1948 to 1970 and identified that one's having traits does not mean that he becomes a leader, rather a leader should demonstrate these trait relevant to situation. Katz (1955) suggested a shift from traits to skills. Traits are innate and inherited (Stogdill 1948, 1974); however, skills can be learned and developed (Katz 1955). According to Katz (1955), three essential skills for an administrator that can be learned are technical, human and conceptual. Technical skills deal with things, human skills deal with people and conceptual skills deal with concept and ideas. Mumford et al. (2000) advanced the concept of Katz and conducted an inclusive study on more than 1800 USA army offices in which they presented a skill based model. Three essential skills in this model are problem solving, social judgment and knowledge skills.

The inconsistency in the evidences of traits and skills theories moved the researchers to think about the behaviour of a leader, i.e. what leaders do and how they do it (Harrison 2018). The behavioural approach emphasizes leader's actions and leader's capabilities are of lesser concern (Northhouse 2010; 2016; Wright 1996). The first important study on leader's behaviour was conducted at Iowa State University (Lewin, Lippert and White 1939) in which they identified three leadership style i.e. autocratic, democratic and laissez-fair. Blake and Mouton (1985) presented a 'most popular' behavioural leadership grid model where they presented five leadership styles i.e. authority compliance, country club management, impoverishment management, middle of the road management, and team management. They believed that 'team management' is the most effective leadership style in an organisation. Nevertheless, behavioural studies in leadership were unable to reflect the situational contingencies of leadership (Horrison 2018; Yukl 1999). The contingent theory puts forward that there is no 'ideal style' of leadership (Hernon and Pors 2013; Horrison 2018); hence, the best style for a leader is what suits the situation. It might be a style which has been effective in the past but does not work in future (Fiedler 1978).

After certain shortcoming and uncertain evidences in traits, skills, situational and contingent theories, the implicit leadership attributes emerged namely leader-member exchange, servant, charismatic, transactional, transformational, distributed, authentic and entrepreneurial leadership (Horrison 2018). In implicit leadership theories, the focus of 'attributional perspective' shifted from a leader to a follower on what the follower think about the leader (Calder 1977; Yukl 2010) as Lord and Maher (1991) described "a process of being perceived by others as a leader" (p. 11). Transformational leadership approach started giving much focus after the 1980s and was considered the most popular approach in leadership (Diaz-Saenz 2011; Harrison 2018; Hernon and Pors 2013; Northhouse 2016). This theory perceives that people will go beyond their self-interest and follow the person who inspires, shares vision, passion and also demonstrates ethics, values and emotions (Burns 1978; Northhouse 2016). However, transactional leadership proposed exchanges between leader and followers (Burns 1978; Northhouse 2010; 2016). There is a clear hierarchy of

work, rewards and punishment criterion in transactional approach. Usually, followers often simply do what their leaders direct.

### **Library Leadership**

Leadership is considered a central element in libraries (Mullins and Linehan 2006b) but unfortunately it is quite sacred (Ameen 2006; Mullins and Linehan 2006a) and rarely focused (Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009; Herson 2017; Herson and Pors 2013). A reason can be that the library is a part of an institution and a library director may be a leader within the library but not within the institution or organisation (Herson and Pors 2013). According to Jokitalo (2013; p. 3) that “the library is one of the largest organisations among public institutions, there are numerous staff members to supervise who are more heterogeneous than before and many of whom do more independent work than before”. Wong (2017) revealed that leadership in libraries is still dominated by traditional headship approach. This was endorsed by Maciel, Kaspar and Vanduinkerkin (2018) who examined the library dean and directors’ job advertised data from 2011 to 2015 and found that there is still focus on the traditional library skills and transactional management perspective. Sullivan (2015, p. vi) stated that, “as we continue to make the transition to a digital future, we need library leaders with the knowledge, abilities, and drive to transform our organisations”. Management and accountability are the key aspect of leadership in librarianship for making the organisation successful (Herson and Pors 2013). According to Martin (2019), followers played a vital role to make leadership successful. In addition, the success of any organisation largely depends on vigorous organisational culture and interaction between leaders and followers.

Library leadership is intermixed with management and both seem difficult to be differentiated (Farrell 2013; Harrison 2018; Mullins and Linehan 2006a; Wong 2017) and a clear line need to be drawn between these (Herson and Pors 2013; Herson, Powell and Young 2003; Hunter 2004). According to Hunter (2004) “management is about things we do: the planning, the budgeting, the organizing, problem-solving, being in control, maintaining order, developing strategies, and a host of other things. Leadership is who we are” (p. 32). Just knowing how to do the job well does not mean a person possesses the skills needed to inspire others to do the job well. Leadership means “influencing people to contribute their hearts, minds, spirits, creativity and excellence and to give their all for their team. Leadership is getting people to commit to the mission, to take the hill, to be all they can be” (Hunter 2004, p. 33). Herson, Powell and Young (2003) stated “leaders lead people and managers manage people” (p.13). Further, it is the leadership that transforms the potential of the employees into the reality. Mullins and Linehan (2006a) investigated the insights of public library leaders about leadership and management. Data were collected through interviews from 30 public library leaders from Ireland, Britain and USA. It is notable that 80 percent of the participants were unable to differentiate between library management and library leadership, and the majority of the leaders focused on administration/management instead of leadership. Farrell (2013) differentiated amongst the supervisor, manager and leader in the context of library leadership and described ‘supervisor’ as a person who watches and directs others within a unit programme or project such as budgeting, reviewing and reporting. A manager has broader responsibilities and accountability such as hiring and assisting in the development of individuals and library. A library leader foresees the future and sets forth a vision and also promotes a shared culture.

A successful leader in the twenty-first century is the one who shares power, builds strong relationships, involves staff in the decision making process and stays focused on the goals and objectives of respective organisation (Giesecke 2007). According to Ryan (2010), five most important leadership attributes for leaders and organisation are collaboration and

teamwork, innovation and creativity, communication, growth mindset, and judgment. The central leadership competencies for academic library leaders are vision, innovation, advocacy and influence (Martin 2019; Stewart 2017). The core competencies needed for academic library leaders are communication skills, vision, social interaction, team building, organisational understanding and knowledge sharing (Ashiq, Rehman and Batool 2018). Various library leadership programmes in the world such as Leading Modern Public Libraries (LMPL) and Future Leaders Programme (FLP) are now offered for the development of library leadership and leadership skills. Library leaders are now learning greatly through these programmes (Cromer 2009; Fallon et al. 2011; Wilson and Corral 2008).

The literature discussed several factors for library leadership development, and among others, technology is one of the most important factors due to globalization (Hernez-Broome and Hughes 2004). Experience and problem solving abilities are integral components for library leadership development (McMenemy 2008). Observing successful leaders, reading leadership materials and mentoring are helpful tools for leadership development (Hernon 2007). Fallon et al. (2011) identified leadership development tools such as 360 leadership practice inventory, interviewing an inspirational leader, changing management projects, assessment and feedback, and recommended reading. Le (2015) reported that the best ways to develop leadership skills are mentorship, professional development, apprenticeship, leadership roles and self-awareness. Hoffman (2012) revealed that 'on the job training' was the most used method followed by conferences and seminars, informal mentoring, training programmes, advanced degrees, and formal mentoring. According to Wong (2017), mentorship, special projects/assignments, workshops and specific programmes are the best ways to develop library leaders. However, the main deficiency in the development of new skills is that parent organisation of library leaders are not providing constant support and opportunities (Aslam 2018; Harris-Keith 2016; Wong 2017). Further the personal interest of leaders is also important to inculcate new skills (Ameen 2006; Aslam 2018).

Few studies addressed library leadership development in Pakistan (Ameen 2006; Ashiq et al. 2018; Haider 2003). Weak library associations and poor curriculum were the main hurdles towards the development of modern library leadership (Ahmad and Rehman 2007; Ameen 2006; Bashir 2014; Haider 2003, 2004; Mahmood 2003; Rehman and Ahmad 2007). Mahmood (2003) revealed that out-dated contents of library and information science (LIS) curricula were no more the requirement of job market. Haider (2003) wrote that the absence of required leadership and weak management were the biggest among various issues in libraries. Ameen (2006) identified the necessary leadership traits for Pakistani library leaders i.e. to be innovative, creative, imaginative, visionary, committed, team player, adaptable, and having self-confidence. A study by Bashir (2014) described the perceptions of working librarians of Punjab University about the needed leadership skills, where he found the skill attributes as visionary, fairness, knowledgeable, diversity, and having good skills in communication, technology and motivation. In this critical time, serious efforts are required from LIS schools and professional library associations for the improvement and development of library leaders of the future (Ashiq et al. 2018; Awan and Mahmood 2010). The major reasons were that professional library associations did not play their role for the improvement in library leadership and the situation gets worse by out-dated curriculum offered by most of the LIS schools.

## **METHOD**

To further explore the condition of library leadership in Pakistan, the researchers found qualitative research suitable for the present study. Qualitative research design allows the researchers to discover and understand the less focused area in library leadership development Pakistan. Phenomenological qualitative research approach was used to explore the common conceptions of information professionals about library leadership, library management, smart leaders' attributes and significant ways to develop leadership. Phenomenology research approach reduces personal biases and emphasizes subjectivity and commonality of human experiences (Christensen, Johnson and Turner 2015). Most commonly, qualitative data are collected through interviews and findings present collective stance of human experiences and perceptions. As this research approach is focused on the technique of "bracketing off" and investigating 'the what' and 'how it is experienced' (Sloan and Bowe 2014), the researcher did not take part in the interpretations of results and highlighted what happened and how it was commonly perceived.

The Punjab Higher Education Commission (HEC) recognized 33 universities in Lahore, while five universities were recognized by the Federal Higher Education Commission of Pakistan whose main campuses are situated in Islamabad although they have branch campuses in Lahore. As such, data collection for this study would be applicable from a total of 38 academic libraries. A criterion has been established to get rich data from the participants who were purposively sampled i.e. the chief librarians who have had ten years of professional experience and at least five years experience as chief librarians or head librarians. A consent letter including the aims of the study was sent to 17 university library leaders who fulfilled the criterion. Two participants declined to participate in the study due to their busy schedule. Finally, 15 academic library leaders from private and public sector universities in Lahore (a capital of Punjab Province and a renowned city for educational institutions in the country) participated in the study. Interviews were conducted in Urdu, the national language and digitally recorded. All interviews were conducted at the offices of the interviewees and each interview session lasted about 35 minutes. Data were transcribed both in Roman Urdu and English language for consistency. Although this was rather time-consuming, the trustworthiness of these data were believed to be enhanced by these measures.

All interview transcripts were typed in a separate Microsoft Word files and each participant was identified with a code (P1 to P15) to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. Data were analysed using Nvivo software (Version 12 Plus). A new project in Nvivo was created and all fifteen interview transcription files were imported in it. Each interview was read seven times to thoroughly understand the content and was finally coded. The open coding scheme was used and relevant sub-themes were arranged under their broad theme. After completing the coding, the researchers again rechecked, rectified and merged the themes where applicable.

The 15 participants comprised 12 males and 3 females, reflecting that the majority of those in the library leadership positions were men (Table 1). Eight library leaders came from public universities. All library leaders hold professional LIS degree, including three holding a doctorate degree. Professional working experience ranged between 10 to 35 years, experience as library leader ranged between 5 to of 35 years. This shows that the participants had a good years of experience in terms of library leadership positions in academic libraries.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Participants

Participant code	Gender	Qualification	University sector	Professional Experience (in years)	Leadership experience (in years)
P1	Male	Master	Public	11	05
P2	Male	MPhil	Public	12	08
P3	Male	MPhil	Private	10	05
P4	Male	PhD	Public	21	21
P5	Male	PhD	Public	15	10
P6	Male	PhD	Private	22	06
P7	Male	MPhil	Public	14	11
P8	Male	Master	Private	21	06
P9	Female	MPhil	Public	20	15
P10	Female	Master	Private	23	23
P11	Male	Master	Private	11	09
P12	Male	MS/MPhil	Public	30	07
P13	Male	MPhil	Private	18	15
P14	Male	Master	Public	30	16
P15	Female	Master	Private	35	35

## RESULTS

### Academic Library Leaders' Conception of Library Leadership

The participants were asked to describe their conceptions about library leadership – their idea or understanding about leadership in academic libraries. Three themes related to what a library leader “should be” emerged in the interviews: (a) being visionary and innovative; (b) being bold and the initiator; (c) being a knowledge worker.

#### (a) Being visionary and innovative

Most of the participants perceived that library leadership is all about being visionary and innovative. P6 stated “A library leader should be visionary, should foresee the upcoming new trends and trained his staff accordingly”. Another participant explained “A leader works proactively rather than passively” (P5). They opined that a library leader keenly observes the technological innovation and changes in the society as reflected from the following verbatims: “We have to see the current trends, emerging technologies and its problems” (P13); “A leader visualizes the future and makes targets” (P12). One participant specifically stressed on the need of advanced library system and stated “most of the libraries are still running through traditional library systems so here is a need of visionary leaders who can bring changes” (P9). One believed that “A leader applies new experiments and brings ease for the users. He brings innovation and works against the status quo” (P6). Overall, the participants conceived that a library leader should be a change agent and visionary.

#### (b) Being bold and the initiator

A bold leader takes initiatives, is not afraid of taking risks and is ready to face difficult situations. Such initiatives are based on the needs and challenges of future. The participants considered that a library leader has an important role towards taking initiation and bold decision. One participant believed that a library leader breaks the ice through its initiative: “A leader takes initiative other than the routine matters of the library” (P5). Others believed that a leader is not afraid of the failure in applying novelty and innovation: “A leader thinks out of the box and applies innovation. He is not afraid of failure rather he believes that the

*failure will ultimately add to his experience” (P2). One participant P7 stated, “A leader leads from the front, takes bold decision and makes them right”. Another said, “A library leader involves in all decisions regarding library induction process, budgeting, making policies, library awards, and so on” (P15).*

### **(c) Being a Knowledge Worker**

A knowledge worker is often understood as a person who acquires information and knowledge of his organisation and works in a creative way (Gaižauskienė and Tunčikienė 2016). Some participants considered that a leader must understand the context and culture of his organisation as reflected by P2: *“A good leader understands the culture of the organisation, objectives of the organisation then the objectives of the library”*. Participants agreed that a library leader needs to be well-aware with its own library staff as mirrored from P1’s statement: *“A leader must be familiar with the staff strength, challenges, capabilities, and works for improvement”*. The participants also perceived that a leader should be a mind-reader (expert in recognizing soft skills) and has commitment to understand staff issues and how they feel. Participants felt that a leader should recognize their staff capabilities and the latter’s expertise with reference to tasks and areas needed for improvement.

### **Academic Library Leaders’ Conception of Library Leader and Library Manager**

The participants were asked *“Do you think if there are any differences between a library leader and a library manager”*. Most of the participants described the differences between a leader and a manager. Some participants were unable to differentiate the roles between the two and provided interesting viewpoints whereas one participant considered that there was no difference between a library leader and a library manager.

Among those who were able to differentiate between a leader and manager, were of the view that a leader always works with innovation and creates difference. They perceived that leaders accept challenges and are ready to face failures. They also believed that a leader has a vision for the future. One participant (P1) stated that a leader motivates the staff and another (P11) said that a leader sacrifices his personal benefits and facilities over his team and staff. With respect to the managerial roles, the participants seemed to have a limiting conception of library management, rooted only in carrying out library operational service routines and library functions such as financial and human resource management. Some added that, it would be possible that they manage the library successfully but they did not contribute anything new to the development of the library. Only one respondent (P8) from the total of 15 participants demonstrated that there was no difference between a leader and a manager.

Five participants had overlapping views on the roles of leader and manager. They seemed not able to differentiate, or they could wrongly differentiate the roles as expressed by P4, *“A leader is in a better position as compared to manager if he has education and God gifted qualities (sic) then he can also be a good manager but it is not necessary a good manager can be a good leader”*. Some participants answered that a chief librarian or the head of the library is the leader and the subordinates are managers. As a leader, the chief librarian involves in decision making with higher authorities as P12 thought, *“Departmental librarians within the university are the managers to some extent and chief librarian is the leader”*. P14 alleged, *“I think managers involve in lots of administrative duties and cruelty is the central element of a manager. Leaders are not cruel”*.



### **Academic Library Leaders' Conception of Library Leaders Attributes**

In this study, the recurring themes in the participants' conception of the best attributes of an academic library leader are having a humanistic and charismatic personality, being a team leader, and having building relationship skills or social outreach.

#### **(a) Humanistic and Charismatic**

Most of the participants agreed that a library leader should be a humanist and have charismatic personality. Humanistic is basically the belief and behaviour which establishes that people are good and the problems can be solved through dialogue and reasoning (Rosanas 2008). Selected verbatims under this theme are presented below:

*"A library leader should be like a psychiatrist, if a leader can read and understand the individuals, he can lead everyone. I read individuals' minds prior to any work and know how to deal with different people. It is very important for a leader to read the mind of the people"* (P10).

*"If any of my staff members commit mistakes during work, I discuss with them instead of scolding and rebuking"* (P3).

*"A leader has a charisma that inspires, motivates and sacrifices for others"* (P11).

*"A leader has knowledge, understanding, intelligence and vision for the future"* (P1).

*"A leader has a personality which empowers other's confidence, commitment, professional skills and well-behaviour"* (P3).

P14 highlighted that a good behaviour with the library staff is an integral attribute of a library leader and expressed that *"well-behaviour with the staff is a big asset."*

#### **(b) Team Leader**

The participants perceived that being able to build teams is another important asset for a library leader, as P9 stated *"A leader gets renowned through his team, if good and skilful people are in a team then ultimately it is a big asset"*. Another participant stated *"A leader should accompany with all his team members and also should create a cooperative environment among each other"* (P1). One expressed his view point that *"A leader in a team sets examples instead of just giving orders"* (P7). Some participants believed that a library leader is a skilful person who nourishes skills among team members and according to P8, *"A library leader is a team leader who play a role towards staff development, creating awareness and organizing various literacy programmes"*. Similarly one said, *"A library leader should know how to run the administration team and be able to amiably deal with the staff and library patrons"* (P14).

#### **(c) Building Relationship and Outreach**

The participants considered that a good relationship with the university management, faculty and students is very useful for a library leader as noted by two participants: *"Building relationship is an art and a leader should aware of this art"* (P14); *"Relationship with the management and faculty played a big role and more importantly how a leader used these relations for the development of library and its resources"* (P9). Another participant (P15), the most experienced in terms of years as a library leader, described the fruits of relationship in details and stated in the excerpt below:

*"Your relationship with the authorities is very important and can facilitate lots of conveniences for the library because library is a need based institution. If the needs of the library are fulfilled, it will be a better for you, for your staff, for your users and more importantly it will be for the betterment of the mankind"*.

## **Development of Library Leadership Skills**

Participants in this study were asked to suggest ways for the development of library leadership skills. Three important ways related to this aspect emerged in the interview, namely through continuous professional development (CPD), mentorship and competitive environment.

### **(a) Continuous Professional Development (CPD)**

Most of the participants think that continuing leadership education and training are the best ways for the development of library leadership skills. They stated:

*“Our profession is greatly changing. Periodical training opportunities are needed to remain up-to-date and highly relevant for users”* (P2)

*“Training on how to communicate with others particularly with higher management is prevalent to rapport building and sociability”* (P5).

*“CPD empowers professionals and gives them confidence while performing their works”* (P12)

The participants also fixed the responsibilities for providing training to current, young and future library leaders. The participants thought that CPD was a shared responsibility of the professional library association and LIS schools, as well as the professional responsibility of the individual librarians and their libraries. P11 stated *“Associations and LIS schools are required to create the training opportunities for current and future library leaders”*. The participants had opinion that professional library associations had a significant role in developing leadership skills:

*‘Associations should play a positive role to arrange courses and training on leadership which update the knowledge and skills of the professionals. The associations should also issue the annual training calendar and the schedule should be arranged in such a way that if someone misses the first opportunity due to some reasons then he will be able to join the course in the next term’* (P10).

Some participants stated that LIS schools had to provide market-based and purposeful education in the development of leadership skills and particularly courses on library leadership should be included in the curriculum:

*“Library schools have a big role to develop future leaders, no doubt it is also the responsibilities of associations but as the formal education of the students starts from the schools so there is a need to set some strategies, courses, pedagogical techniques in such a way which enables them to successfully manage things and also enable them to become a successful future library leaders”* (P7).

In general, the participants believed that it is the librarians’ individual responsibility to develop library leadership skills on their own while a few believed that it is a collective responsibility of the library stakeholders, including professional associations and LIS schools to develop and impart library leadership skills.

### **(b) Mentorship**

The participants believed that the role of mentors in library leadership is very valuable along with the urge for self-development by the younger professionals. Participants who have had more than 20 years of experience as library leaders stated, *“Through my experience, a librarian (who has a mentor) earned confidence and consistency”* (P10). Another said, *“Many professionals talk to me when they start a new project or whenever they face any professional challenge; they ask for guidance”* (P15). Another stated, *“A leader is a person who provides guidance on how to run the institutions, how to perform, how to improve services, how to give benefits to the people”* (P4). Some participants expressed their

concerns about the meagre opportunities for leadership training and development and they believed that quest for self-learning through mentorship is the key to success for any leaders, as reflected from the following responses: *"Very little opportunities for training and development we have, so the important thing is learning through yourself, and from your guide. How much you take interest, your learning will be accordingly"* (P9); *"Mentorship and self-learning are equally and mutually important"* (P10).

### **(c) Competitive Environment**

The participants considered that a competitive environment was very useful for learning and developing leadership skills, and that librarians should have the opportunity to compete effectively with one another. P6 remarked: *"There is a staff rotation policy here and every professional works in each section of the library. During their limited time rotation, they are given assignments like challenges of the section during their stay at specific section and solution of such challenges"*. P6 further elaborated on the importance of being competitive: *"Some professionals perform remarkably well, while some trying to escape from the work and subsequently leave, but those who perform well certainly have earned a fame not only for the library but also for themselves"*. One participant P8 stated *"A man learns through its mistakes and mistakes nourish the skills of the professionals"*. P9 lamented about the non-availability of a healthy competitive work environment and highlighted: *"There are limited learning opportunities in our environment and you have to learn by yourself. Just tell me if I leave my office to learn something from outside, of course no; I have to learn right sitting here and through all my personal efforts"*.

## **DISCUSSIONS**

### **On Library Leadership**

The participants perceived that a library leader has a vision, embraces the changes and plans proactively. The dominating feature in library leadership from the last couple of years is a 'change' (Aslam 2018; Hernon 2010; Hicks and Given 2013) and particular changes in higher education, cutting edge technology, globalization, and ever changing users' needs (Aslam 2018; Hendrix 2010; Jain 2015). The participants also perceived that a leader should be a 'humanist', advocating or following the principles of humanism, which may be due to the reason identified by Awan and Mahmood (2010) that in most libraries in Pakistan, the library leaders demonstrate autocratic leadership style. Followers played a key role to make the leadership successful (Martin 2019). This aspect of 'humanist' might be an addition to the existing literature of library leadership globally and at the national level. The participants considered that a visionary leader who competes with drastic changes and applies innovation to instantaneous demand of the profession. Visionary leadership is considered one of the core elements in librarianship to overcome the future challenges (Aslam 2018; Boatright 2015; Cromer 2009; Martin 2019). A library leader having a vision can perform better and provide quality services to the modern users through inculcating or casting the vision among the library staff. Often it is assumed that a library leader has to do nothing with decision-making as it is the sheer responsibility of competent authority in universities (Ashiq 2016) but decision regarding all the matters surrounded by the library came under the jurisdiction of the library leader. Therefore, a library leader in this regard takes initiative, bold decision and also takes full responsibility of these decisions. Taking initiative and decision making is a very serious matter for leaders and can enhance the productivity of the organisation (Giesecke 2007; Jain 2015) especially in this era of competition and globalization (Aslam 2018). Kreitz (2009) considered that an intelligent library leader takes initiative and invites their subordinates in decision making and also creates a shared

decision-making environment. Another important library leadership element perceived by the participants was being a knowledge worker. A knowledge worker is often understood as a worker who acquires information and knowledge of his organisation and works proactively in a creative way. This linkage not only provides the financial supports from the university authorities but it also makes a reason of a good standing of the library.

### **On Library Leader and Library Manager**

It is interesting but not surprising that five participants in this study were not able to differentiate between a library leader and library manager. In addition, one participant considered that there was no difference between both roles. These responses validate the findings of a study conducted by Mullins and Linehan (2006a) that 80 percent of the study participants were unable to differentiate between leaders and managers. Leadership is often associated with management and therefore the LIS literature and curriculum may also intermix with these two terms (Hicks and Given 2013). Wong (2017) found that there was no coherent understanding of the concept of leadership due to its multidimensional and fast changing environment. Hence, there is a need to organise comprehensive training programmes for academic library leaders towards leadership, leadership skills and management jointly ventured by library associations and LIS schools (Haider 2003, 2004; Awan and Mahmood 2010; Bashir 2014).

### **On Library Leader's Best Attributes**

Humanistic and charismatic personality emerged as the main attributes of being a library leader equally for both public and private academic libraries. It is unanticipated that charismatic personality is still considered a top leadership attribute in academic libraries, however, humanistic element of leader may be an addition to the leadership theory and existing literature. Humanistic trait is basically the belief that people are good and the problems can be solved through dialogue and reasoning (Rosanas 2008). Another reason that the participants perceived a leader should be humanist is that in most of libraries in Pakistan the library leaders demonstrate autocratic leadership style (Awan and Mahmood 2010). On the other hand, the characteristics of leadership are humility, compassion, communication, listening, positive body language and self-improvement (Northouse 2010; Pors 2013). Charismatic leadership leads others for a positive attitude towards work (Harrison 2018) and leaders exercise strong influence over workers (Hernon 2017; Northouse 2010; Yukl 2010). They instil pride in their subordinates and gain their respect. Employees who have a strong sense of trust and confidence in these leaders, tend to adopt their vision, and develop a strong sense of loyalty (Hernon and Pors 2013). Ammons-Stephens et al. (2009) demonstrated that personal attributes for a library leader is now indispensable. According to Arns (2007), a positive behaviour is very valuable for a library professional particularly in times of conflict and contention. Another important attribute of an academic library leader is team building. Boatright (2015) described that a leader rejects the passivity and builds a team which foster the positivity. Team building also nourishes a culture of cooperation, creativity and innovation (Ammons-Stephens et al. 2009). According to Jordan (2011) teamwork is basically working as part of the team, it is not just always ordering or leading the team. Fought and Misawa (2016) considered that social outreach is the key for the success of the library. Building strong and positive relationship with library stakeholders will ensure the library's relevance and value to them, especially engagement with the academic community through quality and in-time services.

### **On the Development of Library Leadership Skills**

CPD was on the top for learning and inculcating leadership skills as Hoffman (2012) discovered that 'on the job training' was the most used method in CPD. Unfortunately, there

is no single institution in Pakistan for library professionals towards the training of leadership skills. Some library schools recently added a course on leadership, or leadership and management in libraries, but overall it is a gloomy picture towards the development of leadership skills (Ameen 2006; Haider 2003,2004). Theoretically, library schools added leadership content to their curricula, however, not all schools offer it practically to their students. Also practical steps should be taken to improve the present situation, such as training during internship and leadership skills should be a regular feature of CPD programs (Ameen 2006; Haider 2003,2004; Rehman and Ahmad 2007). A few studies conducted in Pakistan recommended the training for leadership and leadership skills (Ameen 2006; Awan and Mahmood 2010; Bashir 2014; Haider 2003, 2004) but yet no significant efforts have been made particularly by the library associations. Without further ado, it is a serious need for offering comprehensive training workshops, seminars and courses on library leadership, particularly for current library leaders and professionals, to cope with the challenges presented by the technology, globalization and ever-increasing users' demands. Although there are little opportunities for training but those library professionals who have found mentors, competitive environment and have been paying continuous efforts towards learning, are the prospective assets of the profession. Mentorship is considered one of the key elements in librarianship for learning and inculcating leadership skills (Hoffman 2012; Le 2015; Wilson and Corral 2008; Wong 2017). Moreover, mentorship in developing countries similar to Pakistan, where there are little opportunities for training, is more significant. Along with mentoring, there is a need to promote the progressive and competitive culture among the professionals and this responsibility lays on the library management, however, the role of library schools and particularly library associations will make a great influence on this process.

Library leadership is not a well explored area in Pakistan. This study will set a milestone to understand the academic library leadership in Pakistani context. In this respect, the followings are the implications of the study.

- (a) Theoretical implications: Library leadership is very important and significant area of study. This study will extend the topic on library leadership in the country and future research will help us to have a deeper understanding on academic library leadership. The results show that humanist aspect of a leader is prevailing among participants' responses and this might be an addition to the existing literature of library leadership and will provide new direction to future researchers.
- (b) Practical implication: Academic library leadership and the involvement of professional library associations and LIS schools in its development is a less focused area in the national literature. The findings of the study are very helpful for the professional training and curriculum design of LIS programmes to prepare for future library leaders.
- (c) Policy implication: The findings of the study will set guidelines for policy makers and policy institutes especially the university management, library management, professional library associations, LIS schools and higher education commission in policy making and offering of professional training and education of library leaders. The findings can also be used as parameters by competent authorities during the induction process for library professionals.

## **CONCLUSION**

Academic library leaders perceived that library leaders should have a vision to foresee the future and plan according in this era of cultural transition and landscape diversity of higher

education, research activities, users' demands and in-time quality services. No doubt, the skilful library professionals can perform in this competitive environment but the important thing is to accept new roles, gain practical knowledge and its subsequent application, and move towards participative leadership. For this, the responsibility may lie on library schools and library associations. Library schools ought to offer leadership course especially with the focus on leadership and managerial skills at various programme levels, undergraduate to doctorate. Library associations need to conduct training workshops as well as refresher courses particularly for mid-career, senior and current library leaders so that they can learn the new dimensions of the profession extended by the emerging technology, globalization, and cultural diversity. Along with, those professionals having the urge for self-development and have found a culture of cooperation, competition and mutual learning can be a gigantic asset for the profession, as McMenemy (2008) identified that the profession must develop library leaders and equip them with the needed leadership skills. This is to make the profession visible and relevant, otherwise the professional self-image and identity of librarians would be problematic. In addition, the humanist aspect of a library leader is prevailing in the participants' voices and this might be an addition to the existing literature of library leadership. This attribute may provide a new direction to future researchers, as well as a trigger for change and development in library leadership.

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