

# **Impact of the University Library Usage for Academic Purpose by Undergraduates in Sri Lankan Universities on their Academic Performance**

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## **Background**

The library is a result of social evolution and the present library is not something born overnight. The contribution made by the library in transferring the knowledge possessed by one generation to another is immense. It is not definite when and where it was born but it is clear that it goes back to the origin of human civilization. Thus by looking at the progress of libraries in the world, it is apparent that a majority of libraries came into being along with Universities.

Above facts show the contribution of a library towards the academic activities of a university. Thus the world history has established the fact that the center of knowledge of a university is the library. University libraries are the knowledge hub of the universities. Undergraduates, as well as the academic staff, can gather trustworthy information from University Libraries. According to Kuh and Gonyea (2003), the library is the physical manifestation of the core values and activities of academic life and the library's central role relating to the academic community is unquestioned. This can be further established by looking at the role of the university library and understanding how this role has been interpreted in the Vision and Mission Statements of the university libraries. As such, in Sri Lanka, the libraries in universities functioning under the University Grants Commission receive recognition and attention among the library system of this country. The target of every university functioning under the University Grants Commission is to impart higher education for undergraduates who are selected to follow a respective stream of subjects on passing the GCE Advanced Level examination. Therefore the first target group of a university library is undergraduates. Further, when the degree courses offered by these universities are considered, it is evident that 90% of these courses are prepared by focusing on undergraduates. Again, when the attention is drawn towards the academic and non-academic staff of the university, it is clear that they too are working towards the educational necessities of these undergraduates. Taking the full-time student population of a faculty of a university, more than 90% of them are engaged in undergraduate studies.

The university libraries are maintained in a complex and large space incurring a great expense with the assistance of a big cadre. Though the situation is this, it seems that the present-day undergraduates do not effectively use the university library for their education and they tend to extract informal information from the unauthenticated sources. Besides this, the majority of academic and non-

academic staff of university libraries is of the opinion that undergraduates do not get maximum use from the facilities offered by the university library.

Though a systematic study in this connection has not been conducted by senior library staff members, their observations too are that the undergraduates do not use the libraries sufficiently. Further, underutilization of the university libraries by the undergraduates can be shown clearly up to some extent by looking at the following three ratios.

1. Undergraduate students to borrowing library resource ratio
2. Undergraduate students to online resource usage ratio
3. University students to library visits ratio

Also as an assistant librarian, the researcher's experience is that the library reading rooms always look empty and many students use the E-resource Center of the library to watch extracurricular programmes such as dramas, films, Facebook, parts of mega teledramas, etc. In other words, there is a considerable reduction in undergraduate's use of libraries for academic purpose. While the researcher was working at the University of Sri Jayewardenepura as a Temporary Lecturer in the Faculty of Management and Commerce, he was assigned a project that analyzed the behavioral aspect of the undergraduate's library usage for their academic activities. As a part of that study, the relationship between university library usage and the classes (honors passes) obtained by the students of the Accountancy Department who passed out in the year 2008 was analyzed. Results of that study were surprisingly amazing. According to the analysis, there was no relationship between the university library usage and the Classes (honors passes) obtained by these undergraduates at the end of their degree programme. Afterward, these results were analyzed against the classes (honors passes) that they received after issuing the final results. There were 165 students at the Accountancy Department. Out of them, 46 students obtained First classes, 75 students obtained Second Class Uppers, 29 students obtained Second Class Lower and only 5 students obtained General Passes. Results obtained by all the above students are summarized below.

*Table 1. 1 : Library usage for academic purpose and the classes obtained, Accountancy Department, Faculty of Management and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura*

Class Received	GPA	Number of undergraduates				
		Highly Used	Moderately used	Averagely used	Rarely used	Not used
<b>First Class</b>				2	18	26
<b>Second Class Upper</b>			2	10	35	28
<b>Second Class Lower</b>		2	3	5	9	10
<b>General Degree</b>		3	2			
<b>Total</b>		5	7	17	62	64

By now, with the introduction of “Good Governance Principles” to the public institutes by the government the concept of accountability has become a popular topic. In keeping with this good governance principles, every public organization attempts to demonstrate the accountability concept through their institutional reports. According to this concept, every institute is bounded to show the service that the Institute renders for its stakeholders with respect to the cost incurred by the respective institute. Public institutes in Sri Lanka have now started to demonstrate their service to society by means of their annual reports. By these reports, they hope to show the general public the benefit they offer to the society in return for the public funds invested in these institutes. Public universities are obliged to demonstrate preferably faculty-wise, the number of graduates they produce along with the class (Honors) passes yearly. As mentioned above a large sum of funds is spent on the maintenance and the development of the University Libraries (real knowledge hub of the Universities) in order to support academic activities of undergraduates. As these libraries are maintained by public funds library authorities are responsible to demonstrate their value, contribution and effectiveness for the academic success of the undergraduates. To fulfill the above responsibility the Sri Lankan University Libraries have already developed some mechanisms like reporting to the Internal Quality Cell of the University, submitting monthly and annual reports to the University, participating in various progress meetings held by the University and many others. All these mechanisms demonstrate the fund utilization and the actions taken by the libraries. However, up to now, Sri Lankan Government University libraries have not developed an appropriate and systematic procedure to demonstrate the economic value of the funds spent on libraries to achieve the academic success of undergraduates to external agencies and public although undergraduate success is the main requirement of maintaining University Libraries.

As such, it is a timely requirement to have a research study in this regard considering the fact that university undergraduates may not adequately use the university libraries for their academic purpose. Further, it is necessary to measure the contribution made by the university library to the university to produce graduates, the main output of any university. Further, it is important to show a positive relationship between the university undergraduates’ library usage for academic activities and the results they obtain at examinations if it is possible. If this positive relationship can be demonstrated to the undergraduates through the academic staff, the students’ tendency to use the university library can be enhanced, as the prime goal of every student is to obtain the best results. If it is possible to state that the relationship between the usage of the university library and the students’ examination results lead to achieving better results, students automatically tend to use the university libraries.

This will fulfill the necessity of contributing to the undergraduates’ success which is the prime target of establishing and maintaining the University libraries. In addition, it is necessary to explore this relationship in relation to faculties and respective years if students of any faculty do not show a proper relationship between their academic performance and the use of the university library so that

necessary action may be taken to find the reasons for such performance and to avoid shortcomings. Understanding the nature of the relationship between the undergraduate's academic performance and the use of the university library will help to regulate the distribution of library resources. If students of any faculty of a university use the library more than the students of any other faculty and if those students have a significant relationship between the usage of the library and their results, the faculty in which students show more relationship with the library usage should be allocated more recourse and thereby results may be increased. Further, the service provided by the library can be increased or decreased depending on the relationship between examination results and the usage of the library.

## **Objectives**

### **Main objective**

To ascertain whether there is a significant relationship between undergraduate university library usage for academic purpose and their academic performance and to develop faculty-wise models to forecast the undergraduates' GPA with respect to the library usage types of the faculties in which such a relationship exists and to introduce a systematic way to show the general public the benefit the university libraries offer to the society in return for the public funds invested in accordance with the Good Governance Principles followed by the Government institutes.

### **Specific objectives**

- I. To find out the relationship between the gender-wise undergraduate university library usage for academic purpose and their academic performance
- II. To find out the relationship between the undergraduate faculty wise university library usage for academic purpose and their academic performance
- III. To find out the relationship between the different types of university library usage by the undergraduates and their academic performance
- IV. To find out the different sources used by undergraduates to gather information for academic purpose other than the university libraries.
- V. To find out whether there is any significant difference between the academic performance of the undergraduate users and non-users of the university library for academic purposes.

### **Methodology**

It is intended to analyze the relationship between the undergraduates' university library usage for academic purpose and their academic performance by taking a sample of 1293 undergraduates' from the University of Colombo and the University of Sri Jayewardenepura (the top two universities ranked according to the highest number of undergraduate enrolment per year, age of the university and number of faculties in the university) under five different faculties from 2<sup>nd</sup> year onward using

random sampling technique using 8 library usage types. When collecting data a questionnaire has been used as the research instrument and the survey method was applied using small groups. In relation to the undergraduate's university library usage for academic purpose and their academic performance, it is rare to find theoretical literature that can be used to formulate the concepts in order to create the boundaries for this research. Therefore, the empirical literature has been used to develop the theoretical framework. Student Accumulated Grade Point Average was used as the dependent variable and 8 library usage types were used as the independent variables. The time frame for the literature review was limited to years from 1960 (Knapp, 1961) to 2017 (Banleman & Adjoa, 2017).

## **Results and Findings**

A pilot study was conducted using 20 undergraduates selected randomly (nearly 15% of the sample size of the undergraduates of the Faculty of Management and Finance, University of Colombo). Data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software. According to the pilot study, only one library usage type (Usage of Photocopy service, Scanning and Other services) shows a positive significant relationship with the academic performance of the undergraduates. However, the other library usage types did not show a significant relationship with the undergraduates' academic performance.

## **Conclusion**

According to the researcher's experience regarding the prevailing situation and the results that obtained from the pilot study, it seems that there is very little connection between the undergraduates' university library usage for their academic activities and their academic performance in Management faculties of the Government Universities under the University Grant Commission. However, the complete study has to be conducted to see whether the situation is the same or different with regard to the other faculties. Also, the complete study will introduce a systematic way of showing the general public the benefit the university libraries offer to the society in return for the public funds invested in these institutes as a starting point to follow the Good Governance Principles.

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