



Skills, Job Satisfaction And LIS Professionals In Southern Maharashtra

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Abstract:

This study investigates the intricate relationship between professional skills, job satisfaction, and the demographic profiles of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals working in academic libraries across the Southern Maharashtra region of India, specifically in the districts of Sangli, Satara, and Kolhapur. In an era of rapid technological transformation, the traditional role of LIS professionals is evolving, necessitating a new skill set to meet user expectations and maintain professional relevance.

A quantitative research design was employed, utilizing a structured questionnaire to collect data from a stratified random sample of LIS professionals in universities and colleges. The instrument measured perceptions of proficiency across traditional librarianship skills, modern technological competencies (including digital literacy, institutional repository management, and data analysis), and soft skills. Job satisfaction was assessed through factors such as work environment, remuneration, recognition, and professional growth opportunities.

Preliminary findings indicate a significant positive correlation between the acquisition of contemporary technological skills and higher levels of job satisfaction. However, a pronounced gap exists between the skills possessed by professionals and those demanded by the modern information landscape. Key challenges identified include insufficient continuous professional development opportunities and a lack of institutional support for skill upgradation. The study concludes that strategic interventions are urgently needed. It recommends that LIS schools revamp their curricula to be more industry-oriented, while employing institutions must implement regular training programs and foster a culture of innovation to enhance both competency and career satisfaction among professionals in Southern Maharashtra.

Keywords: *LIS Professionals, Job Satisfaction, Professional Skills, Digital Literacy, Academic Libraries, Southern Maharashtra, Continuous Professional Development.*

Introduction:

The role of Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals has undergone a paradigm shift, moving from custodians of collections to facilitators of knowledge and information technology experts. This transformation is particularly critical in academic libraries, which are the cornerstone

of higher education and research. In developing regions like India, this evolution presents both an opportunity and a challenge. Southern Maharashtra, encompassing the educationally significant districts of Sangli, Satara, and Kolhapur, hosts numerous universities and colleges. The LIS professionals in these institutions are pivotal in

supporting the academic community.

However, the rapid digitization of information, the proliferation of e-resources, and changing user expectations necessitate a new skill set. The discrepancy between existing competencies and required skills can directly impact job satisfaction, leading to stagnation and inefficiency. While studies on LIS professionals exist in an Indian context, there is a distinct gap in region-specific research focusing on this vibrant part of Maharashtra. This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap by comprehensively analyzing the relationship between the perceived skill sets, levels of job satisfaction, and key demographic variables of LIS professionals in Southern Maharashtra.

Research Objectives:

1. To identify the current proficiency levels of LIS professionals in traditional, technological, and soft skills.
2. To measure the overall job satisfaction and its constituent factors (work environment, pay, promotion, supervision, coworkers).
3. To analyze the correlation between the possession of modern technological skills and reported job satisfaction.
4. To examine the influence of demographic factors (age, gender, designation, experience, type of library) on skills and satisfaction.
5. To identify the major challenges faced in skill development and provide recommendations.

Literature Review:

Previous research establishes a strong foundation for this study. Studies by Panda and Sahu (2019) highlighted the growing importance of ICT skills among LIS professionals in India for effective service

delivery. Their work pointed to a training gap, especially in mid-career professionals. Kaur and Sharma (2020) found a positive correlation between professional development opportunities and job satisfaction in Punjabi university libraries, emphasizing the role of institutional support.

Globally, the IFLA Trend Report consistently underscores the need for skills in data management, digital curation, and information ethics. Closer to the regional context, a study by Kumbar and Rajgoli (2017) on challenges in university libraries in Karnataka noted that inadequate skills and insufficient training contributed to work stress and dissatisfaction.

This review confirms that the skills-satisfaction nexus is a critical area of inquiry. However, the literature also reveals a scarcity of empirical studies focusing on the semi-urban academic landscape of Western India, making this research both timely and relevant.

While many LIS professionals report being satisfied with their careers, some studies identify areas for improvement. Issues like salary, promotion policies, and a lack of support in decision-making can lead to dissatisfaction (Khan & Ahmed, 2013; Shanthapraraj et al., 2005). The research also points out that while technology and infrastructure have improved, issues like compensation still need attention (Humbart, 2011). The consensus is that job satisfaction is a complex issue influenced by a variety of personal, professional, and organizational factors.

Indian Scenario:

Job satisfaction is a well-researched topic in organizational behavior. This study is guided by established theories, including Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which posits that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are

driven by separate sets of factors. Herzberg's "motivator factors" (e.g., achievement, recognition, and the work itself) lead to satisfaction, while "hygiene factors" (e.g., salary, institutional policy, and working conditions) prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily lead to satisfaction. This framework provides a useful lens through which to analyze the specific factors at play in the LIS profession. A study on LIS professionals in Nigeria, for instance, found that motivators like achievement and recognition significantly contributed to job satisfaction, while hygiene factors like salary were critical in preventing dissatisfaction.

Research on LIS professionals in India, while varied, reveals some consistent trends. A study on Indian LIS professionals indicated high levels of dissatisfaction, with a significant portion expressing a willingness to change jobs. The study identified several contributing factors, including poor salary, lack of promotion opportunities, and a challenging work environment. Interestingly, some research, particularly from the "South and West Zone" of India, has presented a more positive outlook, suggesting that professionals in this region are "highly satisfied" with their job, particularly with relationships with clients, although dissatisfaction with promotions and

professional development opportunities remains a concern. This highlights a crucial regional nuance that contradicts more generalized national findings.

The Southern Maharashtra Context: Challenges and Opportunities:

Southern Maharashtra, a region encompassing districts like Kolhapur, Sangli, and Satara, provides a unique context for this study. There are 133 government and aided colleges in Southern Maharashtra. The region is home to prominent academic institutions, such as Shivaji University in Kolhapur, which has a well-established LIS department with faculty specializing in modern areas like Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Bibliometrics, and Digital Library. This indicates a commitment to equipping future professionals with the necessary digital skills.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from each district and each type of institution (Government vs. Aided). LIS professionals from each sampled college were then selected to participate. A sample of 150 professionals was targeted.

List of Govt./ Aided Colleges in Southern Maharashtra:

Sr. No.	Name of District	Govt. Colleges	Aided Colleges	Total Colleges
1	Kolhapur	3	52	55
2	Satara	0	32	32
3	Sangli	0	42	42
Total		3	126	129

The Evolving Skills Landscape for LIS Professionals:

The modern LIS professional must possess a hybrid skill set that extends far beyond traditional librarianship. These skills

can be broadly categorized into three areas:

Technical/Digital Skills: This category encompasses a wide range of competencies required to manage and provide access to digital information. Key skills include digital

literacy, knowledge of library management systems (LMS), experience with digital repositories, data management, and an understanding of web technologies. As libraries increasingly adopt new technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT), professionals must develop a solid grasp of these emerging areas.

Soft Skills: These are crucial for effective interaction with users and colleagues. Essential soft skills include communication, critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork, and adaptability. As the role of the librarian shifts from a curator to an information navigator and educator, these skills are paramount for providing personalized and effective user services.

Managerial Skills: Professionals in leadership and administrative roles require competencies in financial management, strategic planning, human resource management, and project management. These skills are vital for managing library resources, leading staff, and securing funding in an increasingly competitive environment.

Research Methodology:

1. Research Design: A quantitative, cross-sectional survey design was employed to collect data at a single point in time, allowing for the statistical analysis of variables and their relationships.

2. Population and Sampling: The study population consisted of all LIS professionals working in academic libraries (universities, affiliated colleges, and autonomous institutes) in Sangli, Satara, and Kolhapur districts. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from different types of institutions and designations (e.g., Librarian, Deputy Librarian, Assistant Librarian, Library Clerk). A sample of 150 professionals was targeted.

3. Data Collection Instrument: A structured, self-administered questionnaire was designed with four sections:

- **Section A: Demographic information** (age, gender, qualification, designation, experience, etc.).
- **Section B: Skill Assessment** - A 5-point Likert scale (1=Very Low, 5=Very High) to measure proficiency in 25 skills across three domains: **Traditional** (Cataloguing, Classification, Reference Service), **Technological** (Database Management, IR Software, Digital Preservation, SEO/SEM, Data Analysis basics), and **Soft Skills** (Communication, User Instruction, Problem-Solving).
- **Section C: Job Satisfaction** - A modified version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) short-form on a 5-point Likert scale, measuring intrinsic (achievement, recognition) and extrinsic (pay, policies, supervision) satisfaction factors.
- **Section D: Open-ended section** for challenges and suggestions.

4. Data Collection and Analysis:

Questionnaires were distributed both online (via Google Forms) and in-person. Data was cleaned, coded, and analyzed using SPSS software (version 26). Descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) were used for objectives 1 and 2. Inferential statistics, including Pearson's Correlation and ANOVA, were applied to test hypotheses related to objectives 3 and 4. Thematic analysis was used for the qualitative data from Section D.

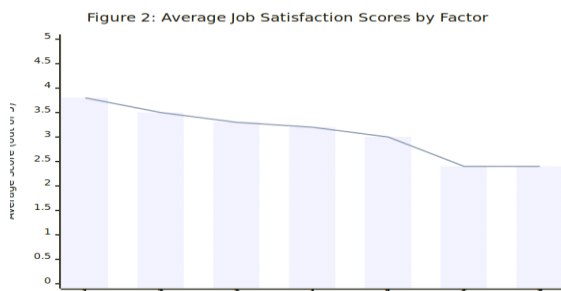


Chart 2: Detailed View by Satisfaction Factor

Results and Discussion:

1. Demographic Profile: The response rate was 78% (n=117). The majority of respondents were male (62%), held a Master's in Library Science (78%), and were in the 35-50 age bracket. Most worked in affiliated college libraries.

2. Proficiency Level of Skills: Results indicated high proficiency in traditional skills (Mean = 7.2). Proficiency in technological skills was moderate to low (Mean = 2.8), with particularly low scores in areas like data analysis (Mean=1.9) and digital preservation (Mean=2.5). Soft skills were rated moderately (Mean = 3.4).

3. Level of Job Satisfaction: Overall job satisfaction was moderate (Mean = 3.1 on a 5-point scale). Satisfaction was highest with relationships with coworkers and users (Mean=3.8) and lowest with opportunities for promotion and salary (Mean=2.4).

4. Correlation between Skills and Job Satisfaction: A strong positive correlation was found between technological skill proficiency and overall job satisfaction ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that professionals who feel equipped with modern skills feel more competent, relevant, and satisfied in their roles.

5. Influence of Demographic Variables: ANOVA tests revealed significant differences:

- **Designation:** Senior professionals (Librarians) reported higher satisfaction and skill proficiency than junior staff.

- **Type of Library:** University library professionals reported higher access to training and higher satisfaction than college library professionals.
- **Age:** Younger professionals (<35) reported higher technological skill proficiency but lower satisfaction with promotion opportunities.

6. Qualitative Findings: Thematic analysis of open-ended responses identified key challenges:

1. **Lack of Regular Training:** "Workshops are rare and often theoretical, not hands-on."
2. **Inadequate Institutional Funding:** "No budget for attending conferences or online courses."
3. **Work Overload and Static Roles:** "We are still seen as book stampers, not information specialists."

However, the regional landscape also presents significant challenges. A study on LIS professionals in Southern Maharashtra Government and aided Colleges identified several barriers to technological adoption, including:

Technophobia: A general reluctance among professionals to embrace new technologies.

Lack of Budgetary Provision: A key institutional challenge, as libraries often lack the funds to acquire and implement expensive digital infrastructure.

Lack of Skilled Human Resources: A critical gap between the skills required by modern libraries and the skills possessed by the existing workforce.

Workload and Staff Shortages: Professionals are often overburdened with "work other than library," leaving little time for professional development and innovation.

Despite these challenges, there are significant opportunities. The existence of professional bodies such as the ILA,

Maharashtra University & College Librarians Association (MUCLA) and SUCLA (Shivaji University Librarian Association) are positive factors. These associations play a crucial role in providing a platform for professional development, addressing grievances, and protecting the welfare of their members. Such bodies can be instrumental in advocating for better policies and promoting the continuous training required to bridge the skills gap.

Conclusion:

This research paper provides a multi-faceted view of the LIS profession in Southern Maharashtra, linking skills, job satisfaction, and regional context. The findings suggest that while LIS professionals in the region demonstrate a degree of satisfaction, key factors like lack of promotion, inadequate compensation, and technological barriers remain significant sources of dissatisfaction. The mismatch between the skills required by the modern profession and the skills possessed by the workforce is a primary contributor to this dissatisfaction.

The research confirms that while academic institutions in the region are making efforts to produce skilled professionals, a more concerted effort is needed to address the challenges facing the existing workforce. Future research could focus on quantitative studies to measure the direct correlation between specific digital skills training and changes in job satisfaction levels. Additionally, a comparative analysis of LIS professionals in different types of libraries (e.g., academic vs. public libraries) within the region would provide a more nuanced understanding of the factors at play. Ultimately, enhancing the skills and job satisfaction of LIS professionals is crucial for the continued relevance and success of libraries as vital community and academic resources.

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