



## Continuing Professional Development for Lis Professionals in University Libraries of Punjab

Syed Tahir Mehmood<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Younus<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. Scholar, Department of Information Management, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.  
Email: syedtahirmehmood@gmail.com

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Information Management, The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan.

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### ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to assess the competencies, needs, and trends in continuing professional development for Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in university libraries in Punjab, Pakistan. The study covered both public and private sector universities and included sub-campuses. Data was gathered through convenience sampling using questionnaires distributed through various methods. The findings revealed that LIS professionals were well-versed in certain aspects of their field, such as library advocacy, ethics, and collection management. However, they exhibited a moderate level of familiarity with other areas, including the lifecycle of information, cataloging standards, and organizational principles. The study identified areas where LIS professionals required further training, including communication skills, knowledge of library history, problem-solving techniques, awareness of social and cultural policies, legal frameworks, and various aspects of information lifecycle management. Additionally, the study identified several barriers to continuing professional development, such as a lack of interest, limited resources, a shortage of experts, inadequate infrastructure, time constraints, unsupportive work environments, and a scarcity of training opportunities in the country. In summary, the study highlighted the need for targeted professional development opportunities for LIS professionals in Punjab, Pakistan, while recognizing the challenges they face in accessing such opportunities.

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Corresponding Author's Email: syedtahirmehmood@gmail.com

## 1. Introduction

Continuing Profession Development (CPD) and Continuing Education (CE) aim to support individuals in ongoing learning. For societal success, institutions must offer a rich educational environment, encompassing formal and self-guided lifelong learning. Informal lifelong learning, also known as continuing education, plays a crucial role. In the context of Information Technology (IT) changes, updating skills in Library and Information Science (LIS) is imperative. Failure to do so can lead to passivity and unprofessionalism, particularly in regions like Punjab, Pakistan, where IT access is challenging (Adomi & Nwalo, 2003; Cooke, 2012; Ramaiah & Lakshman Moorthy, 2002). University libraries face challenges in acquiring IT tools and software, financial constraints, and resistance to change. Professional development, such as CPD, is essential for LIS professionals to stay abreast of technological advancements. Librarians must adapt to the growing complexities in information needs, especially with the expansion of the internet and media technologies. However, challenges like financial constraints and a focus on ICT training hinder librarians' participation in CPD (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Ameen, 2021). While academic libraries face similar challenges highlighted two decades ago, including technology, leadership, and financial constraints, they struggle to innovate. Young professionals lack opportunities for creativity and professional growth due to traditional hierarchies. Despite the swift shift from print to digital, libraries operate

conventionally, and users are still drawn to Google. Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach to CPD, not only in ICT but also in soft skills, ensuring that information professionals stay adept and responsive to evolving needs (McGillis, 2016).

### **1.1. Statement of the Problem**

Degrees have a shelf life of 5 to 10 years due to evolving technologies, necessitating ongoing professional development. Despite Punjab's high literacy rate, the LIS profession in university libraries requires urgent attention. The current system is inadequate for efficient LIS procedures. To address this, immediate focus on comprehensive CPD programs is crucial. However, Punjab's university libraries lack attention to this issue. A study is undertaken to assess CPD status for LIS professionals in both public and private university libraries in Punjab, aiming to reshape and enhance their competencies and knowledge.

### **1.2. Research Questions**

1. What are existing competencies of LIS professionals in university libraries of Punjab, Pakistan?
2. What are LIS professionals' needs for continuing professional development in university libraries of Punjab, Pakistan?
3. What are the barriers to continuing professional development for LIS professionals in university libraries of Punjab, Pakistan?
4. What are opportunities available for continuing professional development of LIS professionals in university libraries of Punjab, Pakistan?

### **1.3. Research Method**

This study in Punjab, Pakistan, emphasizes the significance of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for university library professionals in Library and Information Science (LIS). Objectives involve assessing CPD trends, examining competencies, identifying requirements, and exploring opportunities. Using a survey approach, data was gathered from dispersed LIS professionals in public and private universities. A structured questionnaire with 84 statements, covering CPD aspects, was used. Data collection included mail, online links, and personal visits, analyzed using SPSS. Ethical considerations were addressed through institutional approvals, ensuring a rigorous and ethical survey methodology in assessing CPD needs and attitudes among LIS professionals in Punjab.

## **2. Review of Related Studies**

For the professional advancement, librarians in both developed and developing countries must pursue ongoing education. Programmes for continuous education help employees develop their abilities and get ready for positions with more responsibility and challenge (Ojo-Igbinoba, 1995). In recognition of LIS practitioners' commitment to lifelong learning, IFLA (2000) suggested that:

*"In order to assist practicing librarians and information specialists to maintain competence in a changing society and to keep educators aware of issues and trends in practice, the programs should either conduct suitable workshops and short courses for the benefit of practicing librarians and information specialists or partners with other organizers in doing so. If distance learning methods of course delivery are used, the quality of the educational experience should be comparable to similar experience offered on site"*

IFLA has asked LIS schools to promote continuing professional development (CPD) of LIS practitioners by providing the most pertinent seminars and quick developments. It recommends that aspiring practising librarians stay current by taking advantage of opportunities for continuing education available through pertinent conferences, workshops, and even advanced learning programmes and degrees like MPhil and PhD; to shape their knowledge and skills in the field of information science. There are undoubtedly many opportunities for LIS professionals to participate in continuing education programs. Gulati (2004) reported that ICT application training in libraries should be the main focus of regular LIS courses. Singh (2006) claimed that in order for LIS professionals to become more customer-focused in the age of new information and communication technology and global competition, new hybrid skills are needed. Kendrick, Leaver, and Tritt (2013) revealed that attending conferences, doing live trainings and seminars, and reading books were the most

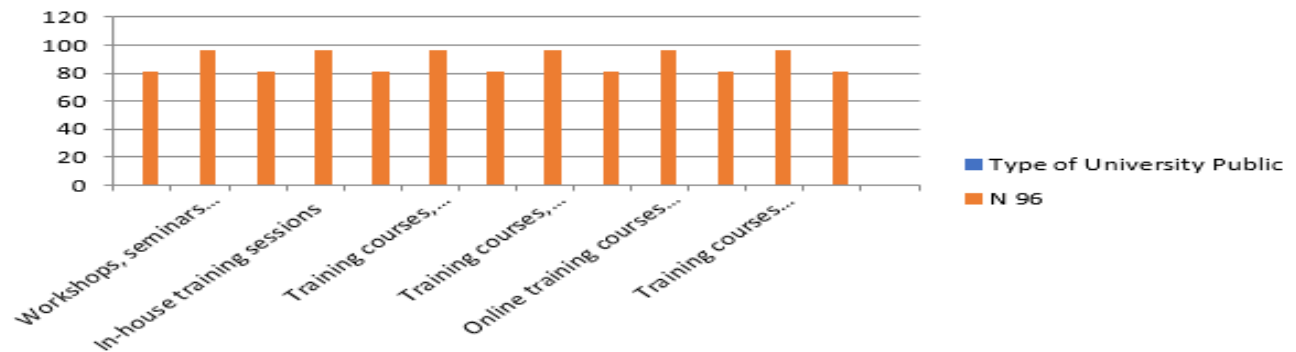
popular ways for academic library professionals to acquire continuing professional development (CPD) activities. The authors went on to say that barriers to continuing professional development (CPD) participation for library workers include a lack of funding, limited staff, insufficient time to participate, travel distance, budget cuts, and a few other things. Raikar (2013) found that some of the barriers for LIS professionals to participate in continuous professional development (CPD) programmes in India included travel distance, costs, and frequent participation. The author also discovered that LIS professionals were needed trainings in the fields of ICT planning and application, digital libraries and web- 2 technology.

Pakistan Scientific and Technological Information Center, pioneered computer usage in 1968 for selective information diffusion, notably establishing the first Union Catalogue of Scientific Periodicals. Agricultural institutions adopted computers in the 1980s, influenced by the Netherlands Library Development Project. Despite initial librarian reluctance, collaborative efforts enhanced ICT in Pakistan's libraries (Haider, 1998). Mahmood (1996) highlighted the importance of continuous education in ICT for librarians. A review of previous operations revealed that while surveys regarding LIS professionals' general continuing education needs had been done, no such surveys had previously been made in Pakistan for their ICT-specific training requirements. Hamid and Soroya (2017) noted the focus on software, automation, and searching strategies in CPD programs. Challenges included insufficient attention to emerging fields and inadequate policy frameworks. The Professional Development Council of Pakistan and universities contribute to CPD initiatives. Limited literature emphasizes the need for enhanced CPD awareness and policies to meet evolving professional demands in Pakistan.

### 3. Data analysis and interpretation

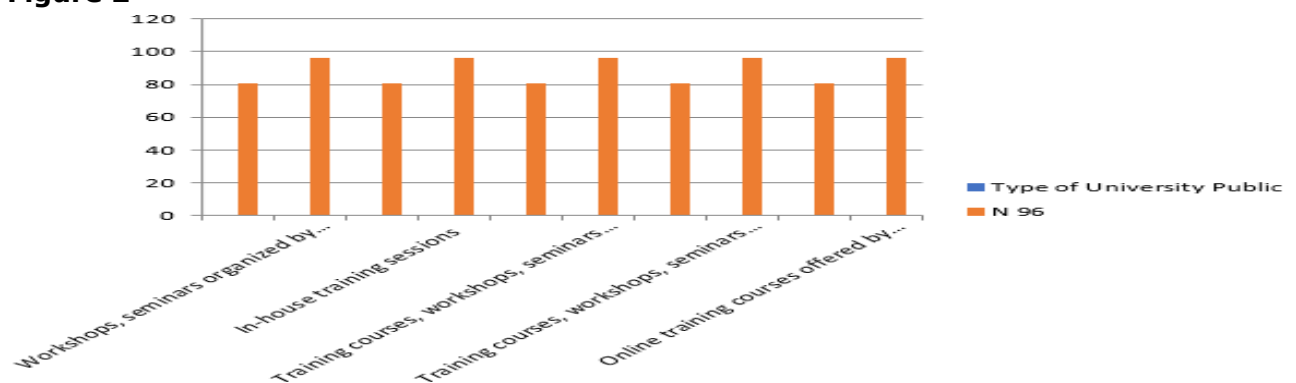
This chapter focuses on analyzing data from 178 Library and Information Science (LIS) professionals in Punjab province, examining Continuing Professional Development (CPD) trends, competencies, needs, barriers, and opportunities. Demographically, 78% were male, and age-wise, 36.2% fell in the 26-30 range. Education-wise, 49.2% had M. Phil, 41.2% MLIS, and 9.6% a PhD.

Figure 1



In professional backgrounds, 88.1% were librarians, 54.2% affiliated with public universities, and 45.8% with private ones. Most had less than 5 years of experience.

Figure 2



It was assessed familiarity with specific skills, revealing high familiarity in various areas.

**Figure 3**

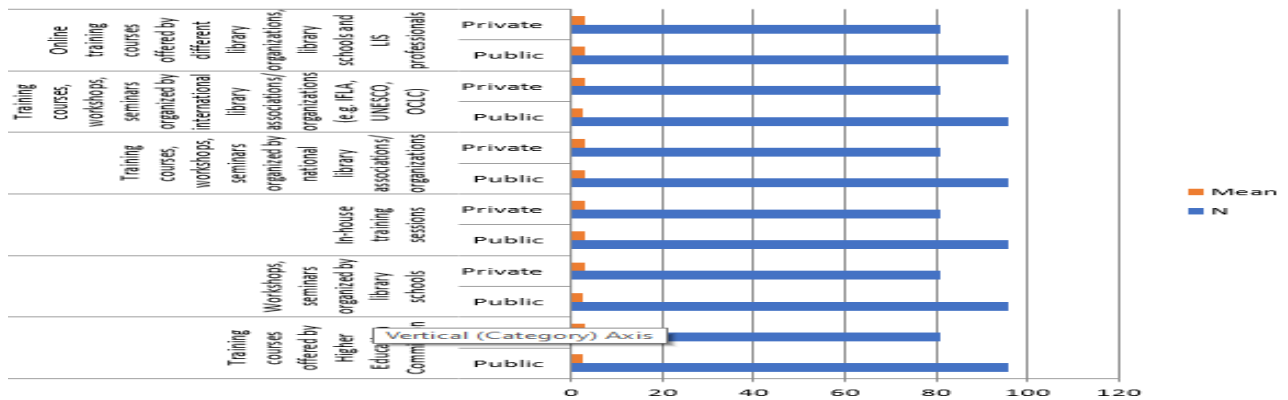
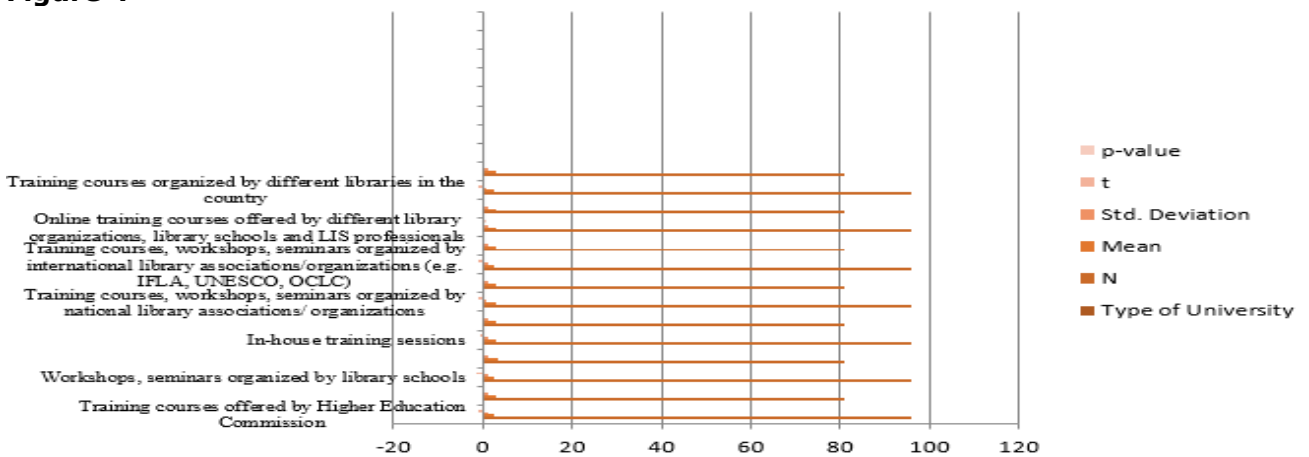


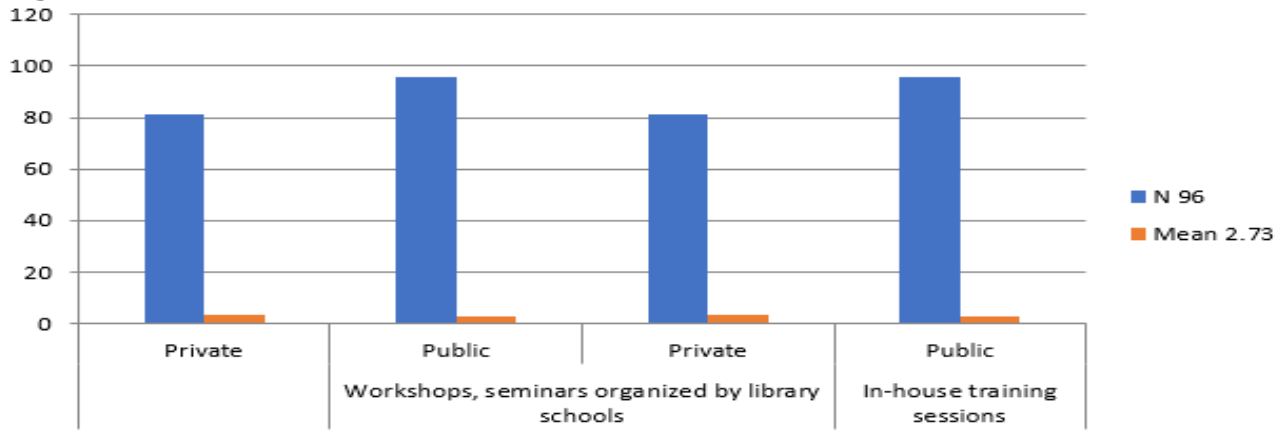
Table 4.4 provides a comparison of respondents' knowledge regarding the foundation of their profession in public and private sector universities. It includes 11 statements, and the p-values for all these statements indicate that there is no statistically significant difference in knowledge between these two groups of university library professionals, as they all exceed the significance level of < 0.05.

**Figure 4**



Section compared knowledge between public and private university professionals, showing generally small and nonsignificant differences

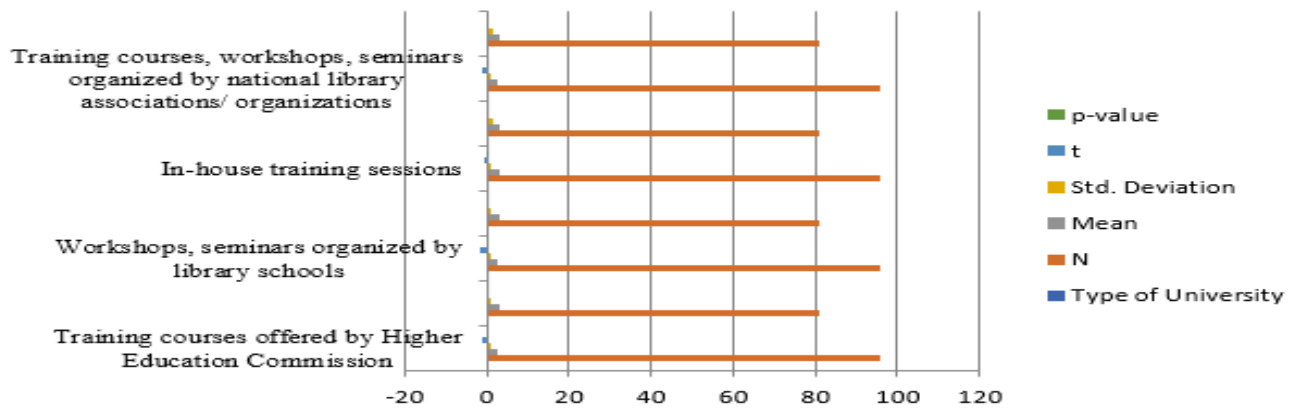
**Figure 5**



Above graph shows whether there are any differences in the ability to utilize information resources between respondents from public and private sector universities.

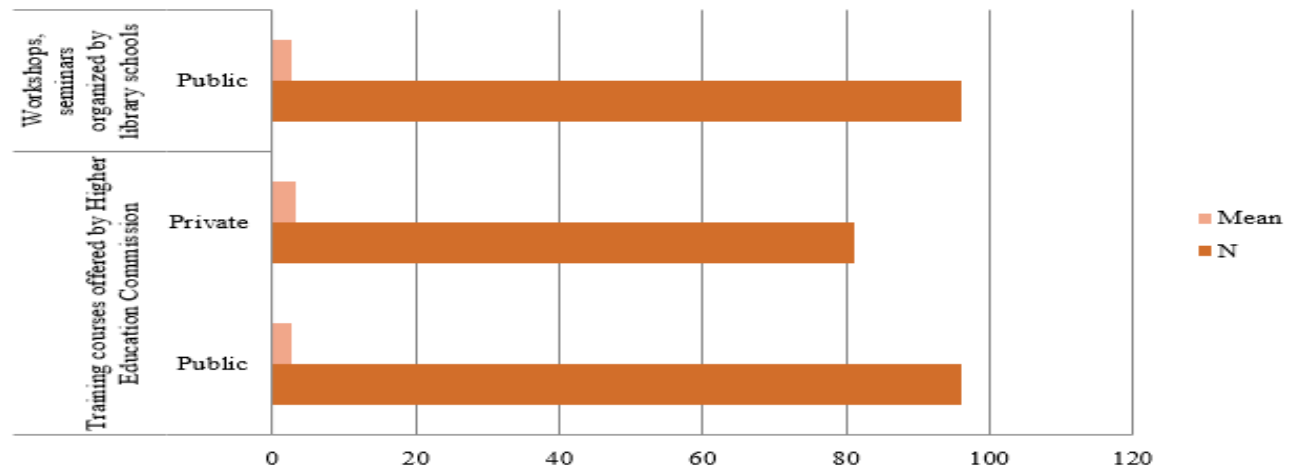
Respondents were asked to respond to four statements, and for all four statements, the p-values exceeded the significance level ( $< 0.05$ ), indicating that there is no statistically significant difference in their ability to employ information resources.

**Figure 6**

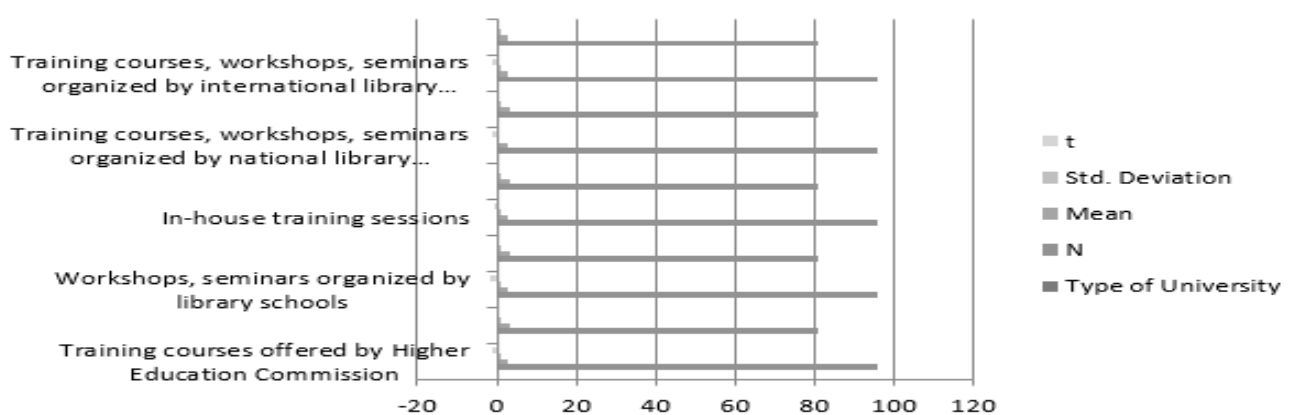


It assessed familiarity with information resource activities, with small and nonsignificant differences between public and private university professionals. Section 4.1.6 evaluated technological knowledge proficiency, revealing comparable abilities among respondents.

**Figure 7**

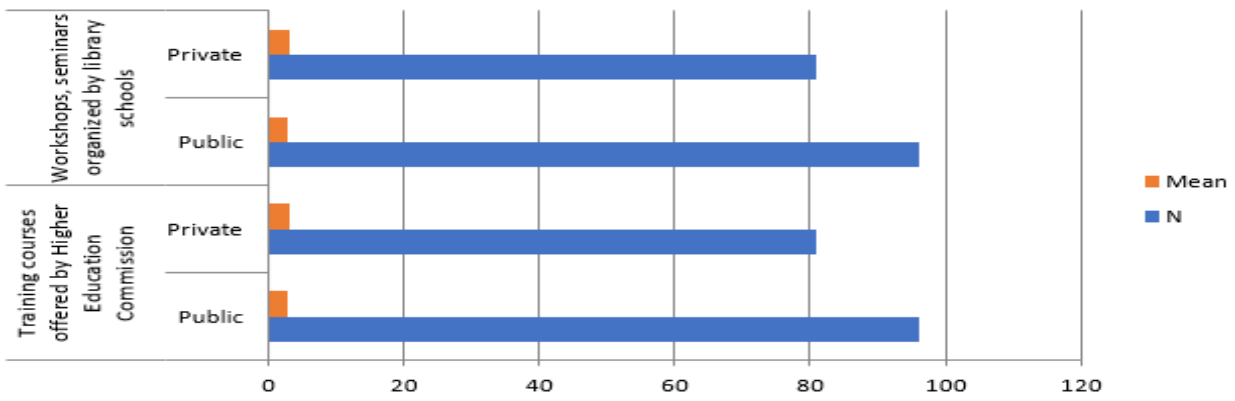


**Figure 8**

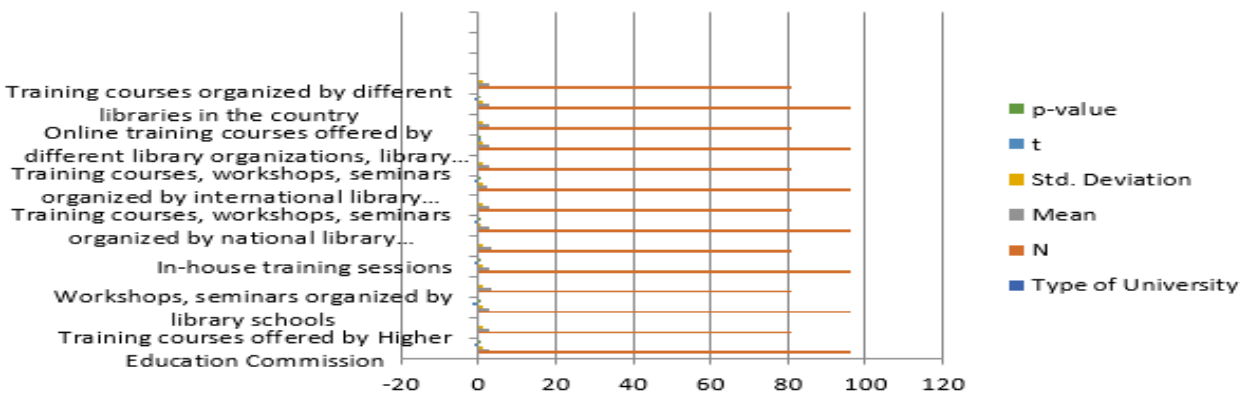


Administration and management concepts and skills were assessed, with generally moderate familiarity and proficiency across areas. Section investigated opportunities for continuing professional development, with minimal and nonsignificant differences between public and private university respondents.

**Figure 9**

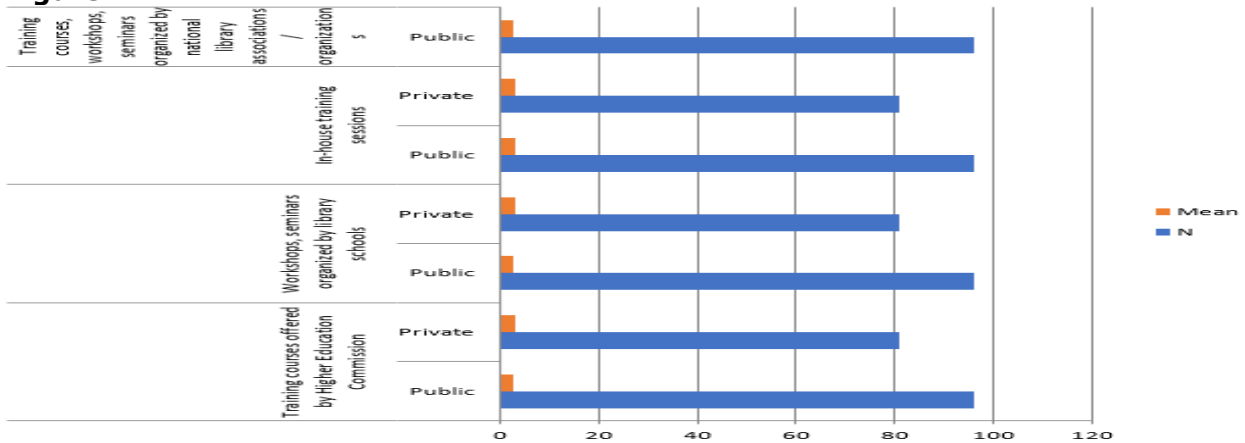


**Figure 10**

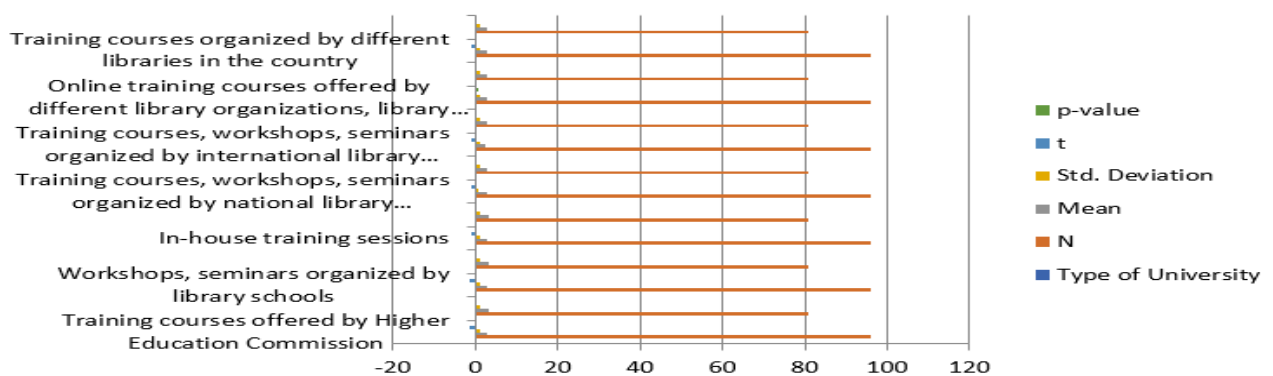


Competence in delivering reference and user services was assessed, showing high proficiency in most areas. Section evaluated research-related services, indicating a moderate level of familiarity across topics

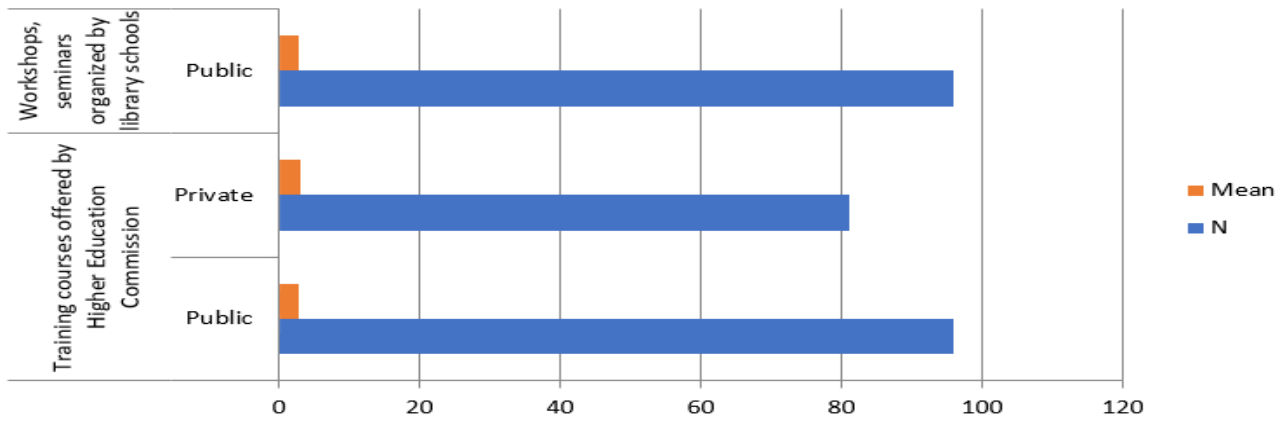
**Figure 11**



**Figure 12**

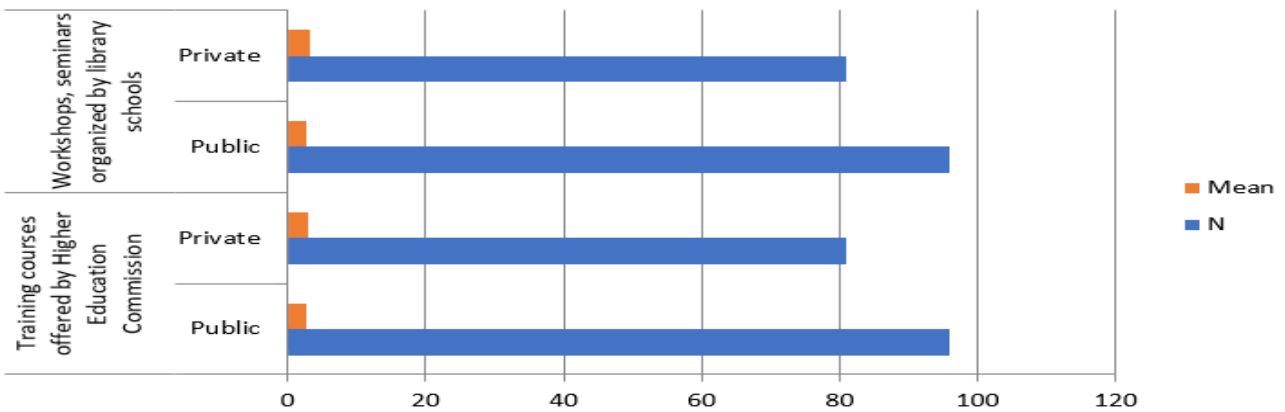


**Figure 13**

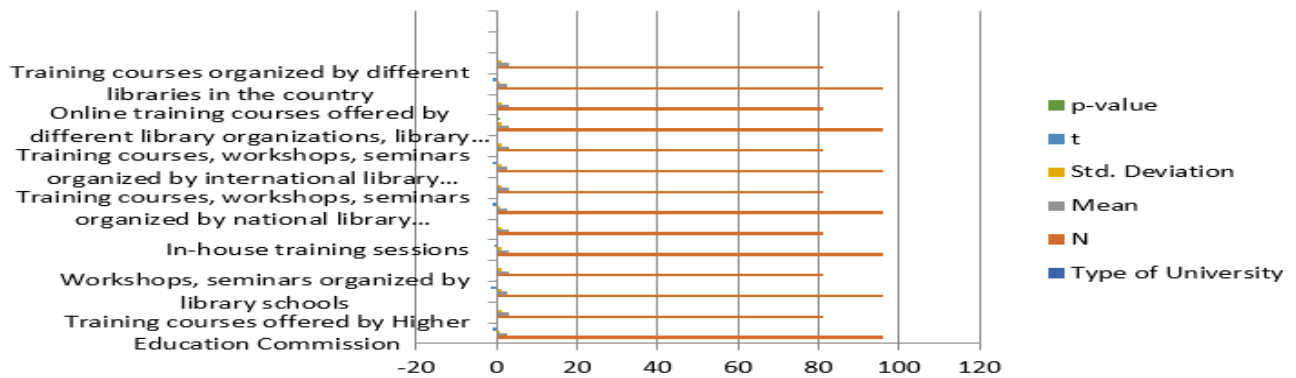


Examined the use of research methods, revealing generally small and nonsignificant differences between public and private university respondents. Section 4.1.9 explored continuing education and lifelong learning, with no significant differences based on university type.

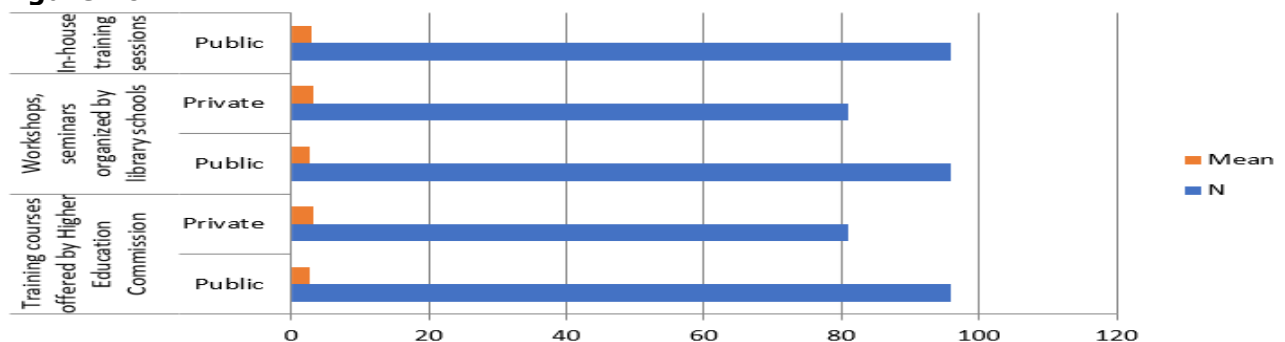
**Figure 14**



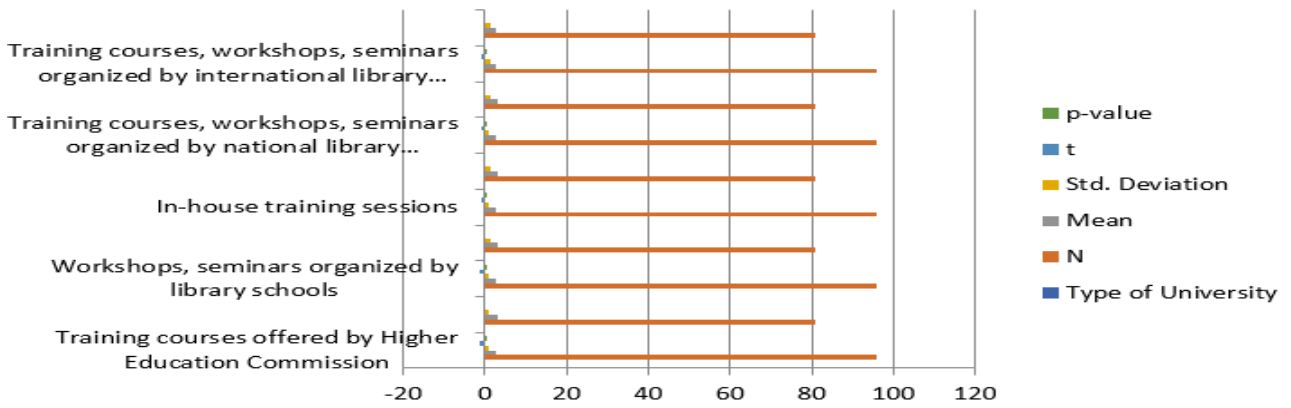
**Figure 15**



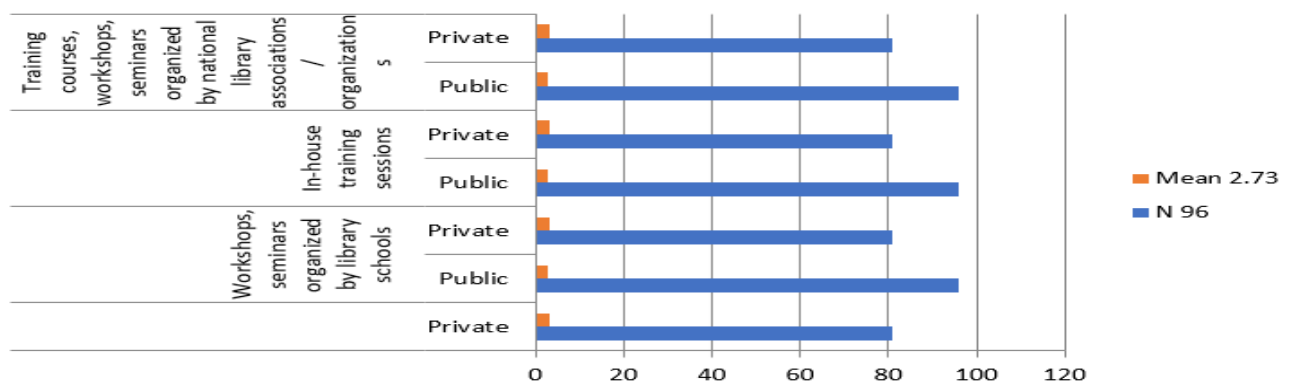
**Figure 16**



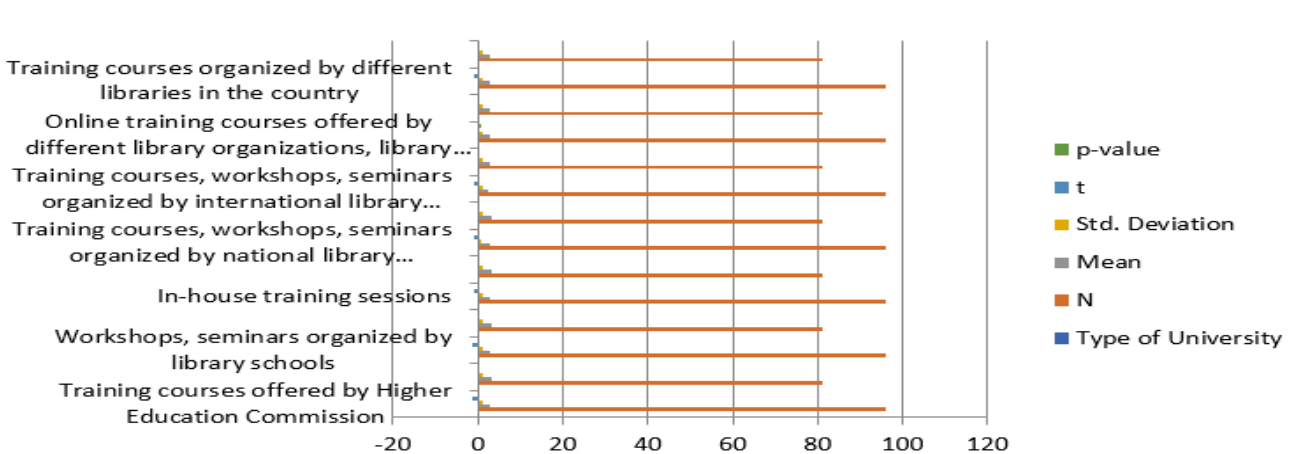
**Figure 17**



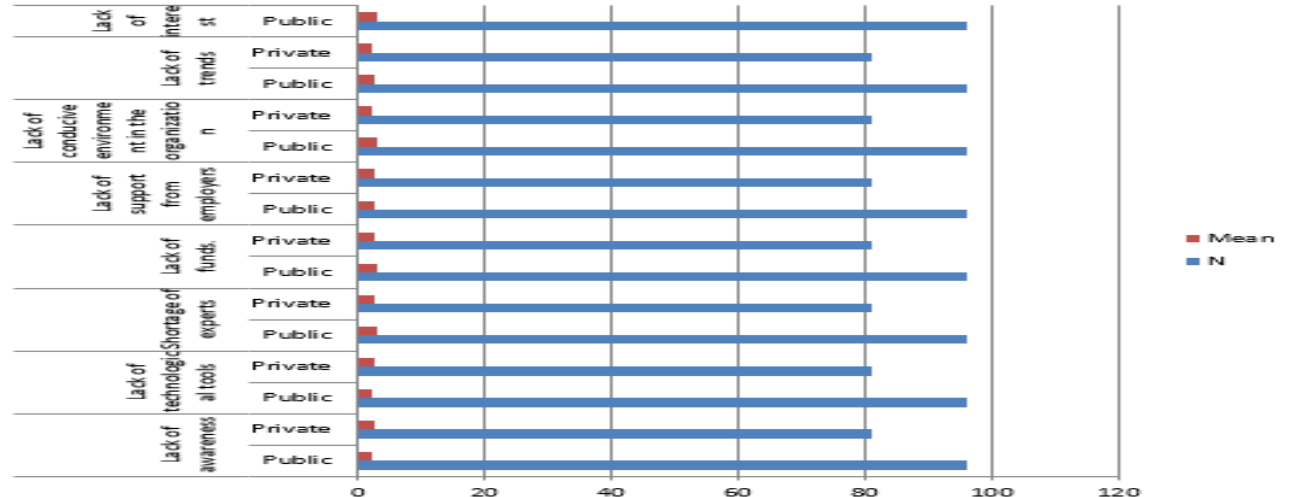
**Figure 18**



**Figure 19**

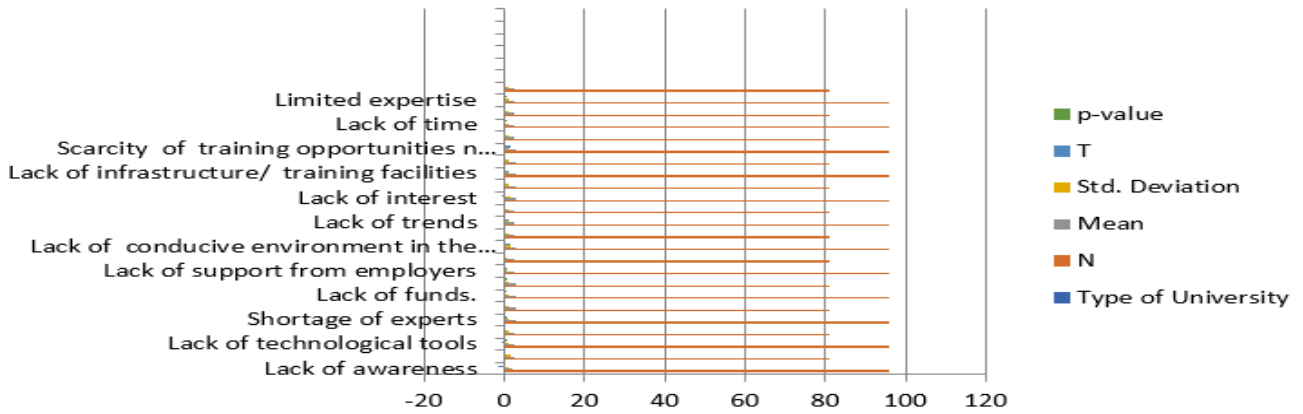


**Figure 20**



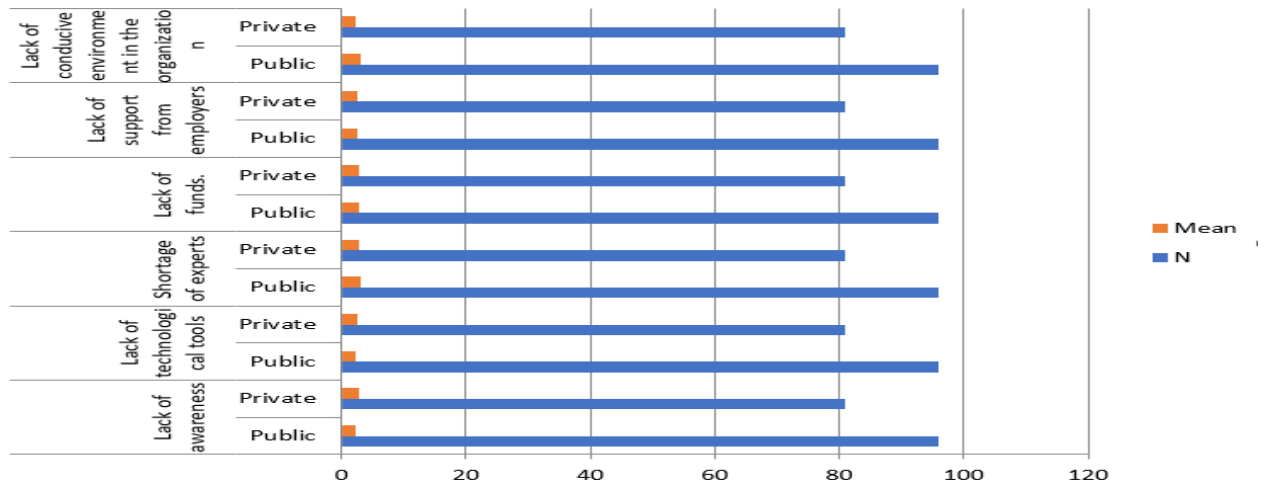


**Figure 21**



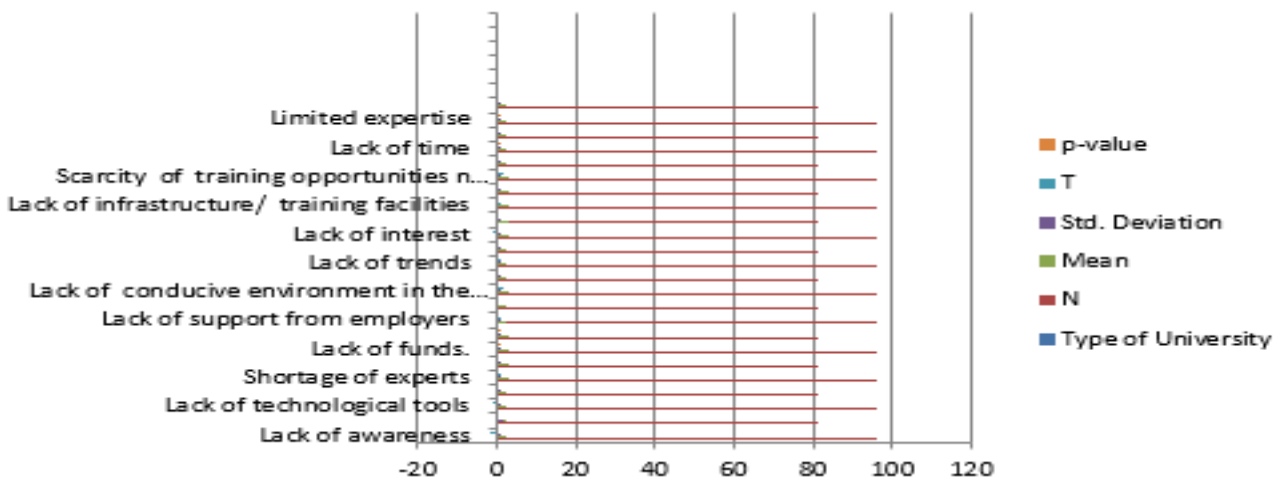
Respondents rated physical training courses as the most crucial CPD mode, followed by group discussions, hands-on training, and online courses. Preferences for 15 CPD modes were similar between public and private universities, indicating shared preferences.

**Figure 22**



Barriers to CPD were explored, with respondents uncertain about the extent of hindrance. Revealed no statistically significant differences in perceived barriers between public and private university respondents. Common barriers included lack of awareness, technological tools, funds, employer support, conducive environments, trends, interest, infrastructure, time constraints, scarcity of training opportunities, and limited expertise

**Figure 23**



#### 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study's findings unveiled that respondents perceived CPD opportunities to be moderately available across different categories. These categories encompassed in-house training sessions, training courses offered by the Higher Education Commission, online training courses from library organizations, library schools, and fellow LIS professionals. Workshops and seminars organized by library schools, as well as training courses from various libraries, national, and international library associations, were also reported to be available by the respondents. The study's result encompasses the availability of opportunities, professional perceptions, and similarity between public and private university libraries. These findings bear substantial implications for the enhancement of CPD endeavors in this field. To enrich CPD in university libraries, a series of recommendations are proposed. Firstly, a focus on elevating the quality and consistency of professional development offerings through comprehensive training programs tailored to address the evolving needs of LIS professionals is recommended. Collaborative partnerships with educational institutions, library associations, and industry experts can facilitate the exchange of knowledge and best practices. Additionally, technology can play a pivotal role in promoting CPD opportunities. Online courses, webinars, and virtual conferences can ensure broader access to resources, surmounting geographical constraints and providing flexible learning avenues for LIS professionals. Cultivating a culture of lifelong learning is also paramount. Encouraging active participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars will contribute to continuous growth and keep skills current in this ever-evolving field. Advocacy for the role of LIS professionals in upholding democratic principles and intellectual freedom is of prime importance. Stressing intellectual freedom, open access, and support for diverse viewpoints within the library profession is key. LIS professionals should engage proactively with users, offer effective services, and champion information literacy initiatives. To bolster CPD initiatives, regular assessments of user needs and impact evaluations are vital. These assessments can help identify gaps and refine CPD programs and services. Feedback from LIS professionals and users should be incorporated into future planning efforts.

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