Quality of Public Library Services as Predictors of BARMM Community's Information Needs Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT: *Public libraries have always been a source of essential information resources in the community. This descriptive-correlational research was conducted to examine the quality of library services and its influence on the information needs satisfaction of the BARMM community. Specifically, this research determined the library user's assessment of the quality of BARMM's public libraries in terms of; availability of resources; accessibility of resources; availability of technology; library staff competence and library atmosphere, and the extent of the library user's information needs satisfaction considering educational needs, professional needs, religious needs and community development needs. Data were collected using validated and pilot-tested questionnaires. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Based on the findings, the participants' information needs were generally satisfied. Moreover, the participant's assessment of the BARMM's public libraries significantly influenced their information needs satisfaction. The study points to giving special attention to the accessibility of resources and implementing advanced technology in BARMM public libraries to attract more users and promote lifelong learning within the community.*

KEYWORDS*:* Quality of library services, Community information needs satisfaction, public libraries, BARMM, Philippines.

INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are partners in the educational, cultural, and economic development of communities. (*Republic Act No. 7743, An Act Providing for the Establishment of Congressional, City and Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Centers Throughout the Municipal Libraries and Barangay Reading Center throughout the Philippines, 1994)*. Thus, it mandates the

establishment of public libraries in every city, municipality, and congressional district to advance literacy rates among Filipinos and to advance the nation's moral and intellectual well-being.

Accordingly, Public libraries in the Bangsamoro are at the forefront of efforts to preserve local knowledge and memory. It aims to promote a culture of research and critical thinking among its patrons. Likewise, it also provides a haven for the dissemination of ideas (Guevarra, 2022). Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) is a region in the southern part of the Philippines with a predominantly Muslim population. Due to the region's distinct cultural and historical heritage, its information demands and how the needs of patrons are met may also differ. Given this situation, it is significant to understand how public library services can effectively meet the information needs of the BARMM community as they are mandated to preserve and promote the local resources of the community that offer free library services to the general public. The National Library of the Philippines lists twenty-three (23) public libraries established in BARMM. However, only ten of those are active while others have closed and/or are inactive (The National Library of the Philippines [NLP], 2022).

Moreover, there is a lack of information on the specific difficulties that BARMM public libraries face in providing quality library services that satisfactorily meet the information needs of users. Although the unique culture and varied information needs of the BARMM community are recognized as demanding high-quality library services (Guevarra, 2022), there is no information available regarding the particular difficulties public libraries in the region face in fulfilling these needs. While the study focuses on the quality of public library services as a predictor of information needs satisfaction, it does not explore other factors that may contribute to information needs satisfaction, such as the availability of resources, accessibility of resources, availability of technology, library staff competence, and library atmosphere. In addition, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding public library services in the BARMM community and how libraries can effectively meet the information needs of their communities. While there are studies on community information needs and public library services in other parts of the Philippines, there is limited research that specifically focuses on the BARMM. The work of Macapodi (2020), focused on the quality of information resources, i.e., library materials and the assistance of librarians as predictors of information needs satisfaction in the BARMM Regional Library during pre-pandemic time. The COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new challenges in the provision of public library services and this warrants further review and investigation. In this study, the investigation centers on the post-pandemic library situation of three public libraries in BARMM.

To address the previously mentioned research gap, the study proposes a comprehensive investigation into the quality of library services in BARMM libraries and its significance to the user's information needs satisfaction. Thus, identifying the needs of the library and its users is one strategy that helps assess public libraries in improving their services. The accessibility of resources, availability of resources, staff competency, and the atmosphere of the library are all factors that

contribute to the quality of library services. Thus far, it is significant to determine the quality of services rendered by the BARMM public libraries among its respective library users to provide insights into the information needs and preferences of the BARMM community.

THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study assumes that the quality of library services in BARMM public libraries contributes to the users' extent of satisfaction with their information needs. This assumption is anchored in the SERVQUAL by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) and the Expectation-Disconfirmation theory by R.L. Oliver (1977, 1980, 2010).

Writers in the popular press and library professionals frequently use the terms "service quality" and "satisfaction" interchangeably. Researchers have made an effort to be more explicit about the definitions and measurements of the two concepts. The evaluation of a product or service's experience by its users, indicating how good, bad, pleasant, or unpleasant it is, is called service quality (Moses et.al, 2016). On the other hand, satisfaction is the degree to which a customer is happy with a product, service, or experience (Sarmah and Sing, 2021). In the context of libraries, satisfaction refers to how satisfied patrons are with the services offered, whereas service quality refers to the quality of the services offered (Sarmah and Sing, 2021; Moses et.al, 2016).

SERVQUAL was created to gauge service quality, a key concept in SERVQUAL research is "service quality. SERVQUAL, first introduced by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry in 1985 is a research instrument designed to measure service quality by capturing respondents' expectations and perceptions along five dimensions of service quality: reliability, responsiveness, assurance, tangibles, and empathy (Parasuraman, et. al, 1985). The model is built on the expectancy-disconfirmation paradigm, which means that service quality is understood as the extent to which consumers' pre-consumption expectations of quality are confirmed or disconfirmed by their actual perceptions of the service experience (Parasurman, et. Al, 1988). The SERVQUAL model helps bridge the gap in perception between what the company believes it is delivering to customers and what those customers expect, want, or need during customer service (Cuofano, 2023). The model is widely used within its modified forms or in combination with other forms of service quality measurement (Business Bliss Consultants Fze, 2018).

The SERVQUAL is applied to understand how the Bangsamoro community evaluates their experiences with the quality of public libraries according to the following constructs: availability of resources, accessibility of resources, availability of technology, library staff competence, and library atmosphere. These constructs are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

The *availability of resources* is related to the SERVQUAL dimension of "reliability" which refers to the ability to provide services dependably and accurately. In the context of library services, reliability means having a sufficient quantity and quality of information resources available to

users when they need them. One important determinant of user satisfaction with library services is the accessibility of resources.

The *accessibility of resources* is a critical factor in determining user satisfaction with library services. The Accessibility of resources is related to the SERVQUAL dimension of "accessibility, " which refers to the ease of use and availability of services. In the context of library services, accessibility means providing users with easy access to information resources, such as through online catalogs and online services.

Availability of technology is related to the SERVQUAL dimension of "tangibles, " which refers to the physical facilities, equipment, and appearance of service providers. In the context of library services, tangibles mean providing users with up-to-date technology, such as computers, printers, and wi-fi. The availability of technology is a critical factor in determining user satisfaction with library services.

Library staff competence is related to the SERVQUAL dimension of "responsiveness, " which refers to the willingness and ability of service providers to help users. In the context of library services, responsiveness means having knowledgeable and helpful library staff who can assist users with their information needs. The competence of library staff is a critical factor in determining user satisfaction with library services.

Library atmosphere This variable is related to the SERVQUAL dimension of "empathy, " which refers to the caring and individualized attention provided to users. In the context of library services, empathy means providing users with a comfortable and welcoming physical and social environment that is conducive to studying and research. The library atmosphere is a critical factor in determining user satisfaction with library services.

Thus, the variables of availability of resources, accessibility of resources, availability of technology, library staff competence, and library atmosphere are related to the SERVQUAL model's dimensions of reliability, accessibility, tangibles, responsiveness, and empathy. These variables are critical factors in determining user satisfaction with library services and should be considered when assessing and improving library service quality.

The Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory (EDT) is a model used to explain how individuals evaluate the perceived performance of a particular product or service. The nature concept of this theory according to Oliver (1977, 1980, 2010) is that individuals develop certain expectations about the performance of a product or service based on their prior experiences, word-of-mouth communication, advertising, and other sources of information. When the actual performance of the product or service exceeds their expectations, individuals experience satisfaction and positive disconfirmation. Conversely, when the actual performance falls short of their expectations, (or other previously conceptualized standards), it has an adverse disconfirming effect and individuals experience negative disconfirmation (Cristobal, 2018). Oliver countered that disconfirmation was

both the primary factor that predisposes people to satisfaction and a key mediator between triggers and customer satisfaction. Initial product expectations are formed by consumers and are influenced by prior usage, recommendations from friends and family, information, as well as claims made by marketers and rivals. Thus, they begin with expectations of what goods or services will provide. Oliver further argued that the probability of an event occurring, and an assessment of its content serve as the two main building blocks of expectation. The perceived performance, which is emotional cognition produced from experience, is formed when consumers come into contact with a product. Consumer satisfaction develops later after consumers compare their prepurchase expectations and the perceived performance. In the context of this study, the expectation-disconfirmation

The expectation-disconfirmation theory is applied to understand how the satisfaction of information needs of the BARMM community are being met in terms of educational needs, professional needs, community development needs, and religious needs.

Educational needs relate to the information and skills that individuals require to achieve their personal and professional goals. These needs can vary depending on the individual's background, interests, and career aspirations. Within the context of this study, these needs include Islamic educational resources, such as books, online courses, and videos that teach Islamic principles, history, and culture. In addition, they must also provide access to technology and other tools that facilitate learning and support academic and vocational pursuits.

Professional needs relate to Information on job opportunities, job roles, career development, and networking opportunities. This study includes networking events for Muslim professionals and specialized tools and resources relevant to their field. In addition, Muslim professionals also require access to mentorship programs and training opportunities to enhance their skills and stay up to date with industry trends.

Community development needs refer to the specific needs and challenges faced by the community in terms of education, access to information, and personal development. This also includes providing resources and programs that address the specific needs of underserved populations within the community. Additionally, this involves creating programs and initiatives that address the unique needs of different age groups, such as children, teenagers, adults, and senior citizens.

Religious needs refer to the diverse ways in which people seek knowledge and understanding about various religions, whether for personal or academic purposes. These needs may also encompass exploring the similarities and differences between different faiths, as well as examining the role of religion in shaping cultural values and worldviews. In the context of this study, this includes Islamic resources such as Hadith, Qur'an, and other resources relevant to Islam.

Thus, the Expectation-Disconfirmation Theory provides a useful framework showing the information needs satisfaction of a community that meets the educational, professional,

community development, and religious needs of users. By doing so, the library can increase user satisfaction and enhance its reputation as a valuable resource for the community.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

This study aims to assess the quality of public library services and their significance to the information needs satisfaction of the BARMM community.

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

This research study used a descriptive correlational research design in which the researcher aimed to examine the relationship between two variables. This research design involves collecting data on both variables and analyzing them to determine if there is a relationship between the two variables. Descriptive correlational design is used in research studies that aim to provide static pictures of situations as well as establish the relationship between different variables (McBurney & White, 2009). Thus, the said design is deemed relevant as this study aimed to collect data based on the quality of BARMM public library services and the satisfaction of information needs.

Participants and Sampling Procedure

The participants of the study were the two hundred fifty-two (252) users of the three selected public libraries in BARMM. The participants include BARMM employees, students (high school-college level), and professionals in the region. An accessible population was employed which considered those individuals coming to the three selected libraries were considered as participants within two weeks.

Instrument

The researcher used a validated and pilot-tested researcher-made questionnaire based from the concept developed by Pajara (2019). The first part of the questionnaire is for the library users to assess the quality of the BARMM public libraries in terms of the availability of resources, accessibility of resources, availability of technology, library staff competence, and library atmosphere. The second part determined the extent of the participants' information needs satisfaction such as educational, professional, religious, and community development needs.

Validity and Reliability

The instrument used in this study was presented to professionals in the field and panel members for content validation to guarantee the validity of the instrument. After considering the advice and comments of the experts, the instrument was revised. Moreover, the instruments were pilot-tested

for the library visitors. Cronbach alpha coefficients were used to statistically determine the reliability of the instruments. The following values were obtained: availability of resources 0.891, Accessibility of resources 0.795, availability of technology 0.845, library staff competence 0.934, and library atmosphere 0 .883. For the satisfaction of information needs: educational needs 0.953, professional needs 0.946, religious needs 0 .880 and community needs 0.924. The results indicate that the items are internally consistent within the construct. According to Pallant (2007), a survey must have a Cronbach's Alpha of equal to or greater than 0.70 or higher to be considered reliable for research purposes. Therefore, all items in the research instrument used in this study are reliable.

Data Gathering Procedure and Ethical Consideration

Having received a certificate from the Lourdes College Research Ethics Committee, the researcher asked permission from the head librarians of the selected public libraries in BARMM. The approval letter included the details of the study such as the objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes to ensure that the head librarian fully understands the nature and purpose of the research. Upon obtaining the approval, the researcher with the help of the librarian/s administered the distribution of the questionnaires with the attached consent seeking the participants' cooperation and honest responses. In addition, the researcher also ensured the confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents were maintained to protect their privacy. Moreover, the Participants were given the option to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any time without fear of retaliation. The participants were also informed of any potential risks associated with their participation in the study and they were also informed of the potential benefits of the study, such as contributing to the improvement of public library services in their community. The distribution of the questionnaire was done onsite. After three weeks, the researcher retrieved the accomplished questionnaires and started tabulating, analyzing, and interpreting the data gathered.

Statistical Treatment of Data

The study used descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) to determine the quality of BARMM public libraries and satisfaction of information needs particularly in problems 1 and 2. Moreover, Inferential statistics specifically regression analysis was used in problem 3 to test the significant influence of the quality of BARMM's public libraries on the participants' information needs satisfaction.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 1 shows the summary table of participants' assessment of the quality of BARMM's public libraries in terms of availability of resources, accessibility of resources, availability of technology, library staff competence, and library atmosphere. As a whole, the data reveal that the participants rated the quality of BARMM's public libraries as very good. This finding is supported by the study of Curayag (2019) who found a significant correlation between library participation and service

quality. It suggests library management should explore promotional strategies to improve access to multimedia facilities and online databases and develop programs to encourage user awareness.

As to the specific indicators, the availability of resources, accessibility of resources, and library staff competence were rated as very good. This indicates that the library staff in BARMM public libraries were highly competent in assisting users and providing them with the necessary support and guidance. Furthermore, the BARMM public libraries are well equipped with a variety of library resources needed by the library users. As mentioned by Abubakar (2020), it is imperative to offer a significant number of information resources to its clients. Additionally, the participants found it easy to access these resources, and are properly arranged and organized on the shelves and it is easy for the library user to locate these resources whether physically or through online platforms. Gurappa, et.al (2019) stated that well-organized collections allow users to locate and borrow the materials easily, which enhances the overall quality of the library's holdings.

The availability of technology and library atmosphere on the other hand were generally rated as good. This indicates that the BARMM public libraries have made significant efforts to provide adequate and up-to-date technology resources for their users. However, there may be room for improvement in terms of expanding the range of technology available, particularly in rural areas of BARMM where access may be limited. Moreover, the findings show that participants generally have a good perception of the library atmosphere in BARMM's public libraries and that the libraries provide a conducive environment for their library users. This is supported by a study by Ejovwokoghene (2022) who reckoned that the library environment of the local library has an impact on the library users.

Table 1. *Summary Table of Participants' Assessment of the Quality of BARMM's Public Libraries*

Components of BARMM's Public Libraries	M	Interpretation	SD
Availability of Resources	3.73	Very Good	0.72
Accessibility of Resources	3.76	Very Good	0.70
Availability of Technology	3.50	Good	0.92
Library Staff Competence	4.05	Very Good	0.80
Library Atmosphere	3.40	Good	0.77
Overall	**3.69**	**Very Good**	**0.78**

Table 2 shows the summary table of participants' extent of information needs satisfaction in terms of educational needs, professional needs, religious needs, and professional needs. The data show

that the extent of information needs satisfaction of the participants considering educational needs, professional needs, religious needs, and community development-related needs were generally rated as satisfied. The findings indicate that that the participants' information needs in these areas were generally satisfied. The result also denotes that public libraries are successfully fulfilling their role in supporting the educational, professional, religious, and community development-related needs of the BARMM community. This is supported by the study of Pajara (2019) who found a significant association between the service quality of public libraries and the satisfaction of users' information needs.

Table 2. *Summary Table of Participants' Extent of Information Needs Satisfaction*

Information Needs	M	Interpretation	SD
Educational Needs	4.10	Satisfied	0.68
Professional Needs	3.96	Satisfied	0.71
Religious Needs	3.93	Satisfied	0.78
Community Development-Related Needs	3.94	Satisfied	0.65
Overall	**3.98**	**Satisfied**	**0.71**

Table 3 presents the regression analysis of the influence of the participant's assessment of the quality of BARMM's public libraries on their information needs satisfaction. Data reveal that the whole model is significant ($F = 58.92$, $p = .000$) with 54.50% of the variability in their information needs satisfaction as being accounted for by the combination of all the dimensions of their assessment of the quality of the public libraries in BARMM. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that participants' assessment of the quality of the BARMM's public libraries significantly influences their information needs satisfaction. The findings suggest that the quality of public libraries in BARMM can positively contribute to the participant's satisfaction with their information needs.

Table 3. Regression Analysis of the Influence of the Participants' Assessment of the Quality of BARMM's Public Libraries on Their Information Needs Satisfaction

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.103	.180		6.12	.000
Availability of Resources	.232	.057	.257	4.06**	.000
Accessibility of Resources	-.019	.063	-.021	-.305	.761
Availability of Technology	.158	.043	.222	3.66**	.000
Library Staff Competence	.161	.051	.198	3.16**	.002
Library Atmosphere	.209	.048	.249	4.39**	.000

Model Summary

R = .738 R^2 = .545   Adjusted R^2 = .536   F = 58.92**   p = .000

As to the specific indicators, their rating on the library atmosphere came out as having the highest influence on their information needs satisfaction, indicating that for every unit increase in their rating on the atmosphere of the library, there is a corresponding .209 increase in their information needs satisfaction (B=.209, t=4.39, p = .000). This finding implies that creating a positive and welcoming environment can significantly enhance users' satisfaction with their information needs. Thus, focusing on improving the library atmosphere such as adding seats and tables, and specific areas for group study and individual learning could be an effective strategy for the diverse information needs of library users. Amusa and Iyoro (2013) exclaimed that the environment of the library is one of the most important factors that could affect a patron's decision. The atmosphere of a building significantly impacts the perceived value of library services. A study conducted by Ejowokoghene (2022) found that the undergraduate use of public university libraries in Delta States was influenced by the conditions of the local library environment. It was therefore suggested that the library management implement the necessary measures to create and uphold a serene and welcoming library environment.

Moreover, the findings also point to the influence of the availability of resources which shows that for every unit increase in their rating on the availability of resources, there is a corresponding .232

increase in their information needs satisfaction (B=.232, t=4.06, p=.000). This finding shows that availability of resources plays a significant role in satisfying the information needs of the participants. This highlights the importance of ensuring that public libraries have a wide range of resources, such as updated books, various subject areas, electronic resources, and databases, to meet the diverse needs of their library users. As far as a standard library is concerned, it is imperative to offer a significant number of information resources to its clients (Abubakar, 2020).

Furthermore, the participants' rating on the availability of technology came out as the third component that can influence their information needs satisfaction. This indicates that for every unit increase, there is a corresponding -.158 increase in their information needs satisfaction (B=.158, t=3.66, p = .000). This finding implies that technology is an important factor in meeting the participants' information needs satisfaction. This suggests that as technology becomes accessible and advanced, individuals are more satisfied with their ability to fulfill their information needs. Thus, it is important for public libraries to continuously invest in technological advancements to keep updated with the increasing demands and expectations of users in fulfilling their information needs. Pierce (2023) extrapolated that one of the greatest takeaways from the pandemic is the sheer number of people whose needs are not being met by traditional library programs. Thus, technological tools and resources are essential for ensuring access to important information, goods, and services as libraries work to increase opportunities for their community's users.

Among the qualities of BARMM public libraries, the accessibility of resources came out as the lowest influence. This indicates that for every unit increase, there is a corresponding .019 increase in their information needs satisfaction (B= .019, t= -3.05 p=.761). The finding indicates that the accessibility of resources in BARMM public libraries may not be meeting the information needs of the participants. This suggests that efforts should be made to enhance the availability and ease of access to various resources within these libraries, such as accessible online public access catalogs, library websites, and the library's ease of access outside. The need to keep information resources updated and continue to give a high level of librarians' assistance can therefore help ensure the maximum satisfaction of the academic and non-academic needs of library users (Macapodi, 2022). This is also true for Nwachukwu et.al (2014) who posited that the utilization of information is based on the information sources that are accessible to users offered in the library. The requirement implies that to achieve utilization, availability, and accessibility must be met first and foremost.

CONCLUSION

The researcher's assumption that the quality of library services in BARMM public libraries contributes to the users' extent of satisfaction with their information needs was confirmed. Thus, it can be assumed that the BARMM public libraries provide quality library services. This is validated by the participants' assessment and their satisfaction with their information needs. It can be concluded that the BARMM public libraries are providing quality library services as they are

successfully fulfilling the various information needs of their users including educational, professional, religious, and community development needs. The wide range of resources and services offered by the BARMM public libraries reflects their commitment to meet the diverse interests and information needs of the community. Moreover, particular consideration is given to the accessibility of resources and implementing advanced technology in BARMM public libraries to attract more users and promote lifelong learning within the community.

The Expectation-Disconfirmation theory by Oliver is confirmed in this study, specifying that when an individual's expectations are met or exceeded, customers are likely to continue using the offered services or resources. Similarly, this can also be confirmed in the SERVQUAL by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1985) which states that when there is a positive disconfirmation, where the perceived service quality exceeds expectations, customers are more likely to have a higher level of satisfaction and loyalty towards the service provider. Thus, by improving the services and addressing the information needs of the community, libraries ensure that the information needs of the community are effectively met. The improvement of the quality of the library services requires the attention of the respective library administrators, local government units, and other concerned government bodies to collaborate and allocate sufficient funds and resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusion, the following recommendations are suggested:
1. **Local Government Officials.** They may help support the development and expansion of public libraries by allocating funds for infrastructure, upgrades, expansions, staff training, and collection development.
2. **BARMM Parliament.** They may consider creating the Library Committee to assess the current state of public libraries in BARMM and identify areas for improvement and development.
3. **Head Librarians**. They may need to continue to acquire relevant and up-to-date information resources anchored to the information needs of the community particularly on electronic resources such as online databases and e-books to ensure a wide range of accessibility among the community. Considering the limited budget, head librarians may offer library users open-access resources and open educational resources. In addition, these librarians may consider investing in online services and web OPAC to enhance the convenience and accessibility of library users especially those who may not have easy access to physical library locations. Additionally, they may also acquire advanced technology to satisfactorily meet the information needs of the library users within the community.
4. **Library Staff**. Library staff may update their technological skills to meet the changing needs of library users and effectively manage the digital collections. In addition, they have to maintain a strong knowledge of emerging technologies and trends in the library to ensure that the library remains competent and relevant in the digital age.

5. **BARMM community**. The community may take advantage of the valuable resources and services available in the public libraries and thereby contribute to the intellectual progress of the community.
6. **Future researchers.** These researchers may look into other variables of BARMM public library services including assessment of the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage among BARMM public libraries.

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