
**Enhancing Academic Excellence:
Investigating the Impact of Human Capital
Investment on Library Academic Staff in
Sri Lankan Universities**

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Abstract

The study investigates the impact of human capital investment on the performance of academic libraries in Sri Lankan universities. It highlights the importance of human capital in fostering academic excellence. The research uses three theoretical dimensions: Human Capital Processes, Resource-Based View, and Social Capital Implications. Data was collected from 17 universities under the University Grants Commission. Results showed that 36% of respondents positively perceived human capital processes, while 64% recognized the strategic value of library resources. Social capital implications, such as internal networking and leadership-driven collaboration, were also positively perceived by 63.5% of participants. The study suggests the need for enhanced professional development, resource optimization, and external collaborations to improve library performance. The study concludes with recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to optimize human capital investment..

Keywords

State Central Library; Connemara Library; Sources of Information; Satisfaction

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1. Introduction

Academic libraries serve as foundational pillars within educational institutions, providing indispensable resources for students, faculty, and researchers. In the Sri Lankan context, these libraries play a pivotal role in fostering teaching, learning, and research activities across universities (Fernando, 2018). The effectiveness of academic libraries is intricately linked to the caliber and capacity of their workforce, underscoring the critical importance of human capital investment. Research highlights that investing in the development of academic staff not only enhances service delivery but also drives innovation in library practices (Smith & Abell, 2020). This concept is aptly reflected in the words of Woomann (2003), who cites Marshall's seminal work *Principles of Economics*: "The most valuable of all capital is that invested in human beings" (1890/1922, p. 564). Furthermore, Becker (1993) emphasized that human capital investment significantly impacts organizational performance, aligning with the broader objectives of higher education. This study explores the relationship between human capital investment and the performance of library academic staff, with a specific focus on its implications for the academic environment in Sri Lankan universities.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Academic libraries are vital for supporting teaching, learning, and research in Sri Lankan universities, yet their performance and effectiveness are often hindered by limited investments in human capital. Despite the acknowledged importance of professional development and capacity building for library academic staff, the relationship between human capital investment and library functionality remains underexplored in the Sri Lankan context. While studies in other countries highlight the transformative impact of such investments on service quality and innovation (Becker, 1993; Smith & Abell, 2020), a similar understanding is lacking locally.

This gap poses challenges for resource allocation and strategic planning in academic libraries, where disparities in funding and institutional priorities persist. Addressing this issue is critical to ensuring

that academic libraries contribute effectively to higher education objectives. This research aims to bridge this gap by examining the link between human capital investment and library performance, providing actionable insights to advance academic excellence in Sri Lankan universities.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of academic libraries in Sri Lanka has been marked by significant developments aimed at enhancing service quality and user satisfaction. A comparative study by Nawarathne and Ajay Pratap Singh (2013) assessed service quality across university libraries, highlighting the need for continuous improvement to meet user expectations. In response to the growing demand for digital resources, Sri Lankan academic libraries have adopted new service models to support e-learning environments. In a case study conducted by Perera and Suraweera(2023) through the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka it has implemented strategies to integrate digital resources and services, facilitating seamless access for the academic community.

The professional status and instructional roles of academic librarians in Sri Lanka have also been subjects of scholarly attention. A study by George, Nawarathne and Chandrashekara (2019) explored librarians' self-identity and perceptions regarding their academic roles, revealing a trend towards embracing instructional responsibilities alongside traditional duties. Human Capital Theory posits that investments in individuals' education, skills, and health enhance their productivity and economic value. In the context of libraries, particularly academic institutions, investing in human capital—through professional development, training, and continuous education of library staff—is crucial for improving service quality and organizational performance.

Becker(2007) emphasized that education and training are pivotal forms of human capital investment, significantly influencing productivity and earnings. Applying this to libraries, enhancing the competencies of library personnel can lead to more efficient information management and better user services. A study by Amoah and Akussah (2017) examined the relationship between human capital and job performance among librarians, revealing that while human capital is essential, its direct impact on

performance may vary based on other organizational factors.

Furthermore, research by Chiganze and Sağsan(2022) indicated that human capital enhances library professionals' planning procedures and decision-making abilities, leading to improved work performance in Academic Libraries in Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. While human capital theory has been widely explored in various fields, there is a lack of studies focusing specifically on Sri Lankan academic libraries. Most studies address broader educational or organizational contexts but do not account for the unique challenges faced by libraries in Sri Lanka, such as resource constraints and institutional priorities.

3. Research Objectives

- To assess the current status of human capital processes in academic libraries in Sri Lanka.
- To identify the Resource based views of the academic librarian's in Sri Lanka.
- To gauge the impact on Social Capital implications in the academic libraries in Sri Lanka.
- To provide recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders to optimize human capital investment in academic libraries.

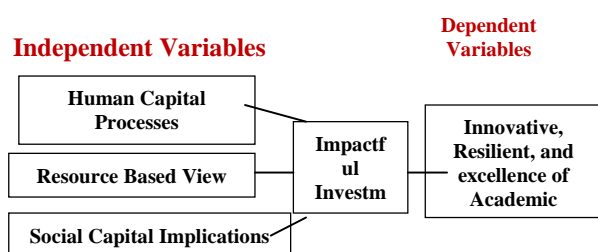
4. Conceptual Framework

This section integrates three interrelated theories to build a comprehensive understanding of human capital investment in academic libraries: Human Capital Processes, the Resource-Based View, and the Social Capital Implications. These perspectives collectively illuminate the strategic importance of human resources and social networks in fostering academic excellence within the library context.

The integration of Human Capital Processes, Resource-Based View, and Social Capital Implications provides a multidimensional framework for understanding the strategic importance of human resources in academic libraries. Human Capital investment highlights the necessity of skill development, Resource-Based view frames human capital as a strategic asset, and Social Capital implications underscore the value of networks and collaborations. Together, these investments illuminate how enhancements in human and social

capital can transform academic libraries into innovative, resilient, and impactful institutions.

By applying this Conceptual framework, this study aimed to analyze how human capital investments influence the performance and sustainability of academic libraries in Sri Lanka, ultimately contributing to the broader goal of academic excellence.



5. Research Site

The Academic Libraries of Sri Lankan Universities which come under the University Grants Commission were used as the research site. The research objective was to assess the current status of human capital investment in academic libraries in Sri Lanka, and since all seventeen universities in Sri Lanka fall under the University Grants Commission(UGC),the Census Sampling technique was applied, as the total population of academic libraries 129was manageable.

6. Data Collection Method

For this research, the data collection method employed was a “**Survey-based approach**”, utilizing “**questionnaires**” designed specifically for library academic staff across 17 universities in Sri Lanka. This method was chosen to gather comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data regarding human capital processes, resource-based views, and social capital implications within academic libraries.

The key steps involved in the data collection process were:

- a. **Survey Design:** A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of multiple-choice questions, Likert-scale items, and open-ended questions. The questions focused on the perceptions and practices of library staff

concerning human capital investment, resource utilization, and social capital within their respective academic libraries. The following questions were included in the questionnaire for independent variables.

i. Human Capital Processes

- Q1:** The university provides sufficient professional development opportunities for library staff.
- Q2:** Library staff receives adequate training to adapt to emerging technologies.
- Q3:** Library staff are encouraged to pursue higher education or further specialization.
- Q4:** There is clear communication about career advancement opportunities for library staff.
- Q5:** Library staff are adequately compensated for their work and responsibilities.

ii. Resource-Based View

- Q6:** Human Capital as a Strategic Resource
- Q7:** Expertise as a Competitive Advantage.
- Q8:** Management Recognizes Investment.
- Q9:** Contribution to Innovation.
- Q10:** Contribution to University Mission.

iii. Social Capital Implications

- Q11:** Strong Networking Among Staff.
- Q12:** Collaboration with External Partners.
- Q13:** Knowledge Sharing Culture.
- Q14:** Leadership Encourages Collaboration.
- Q15:** Library Staff Connected to University Community

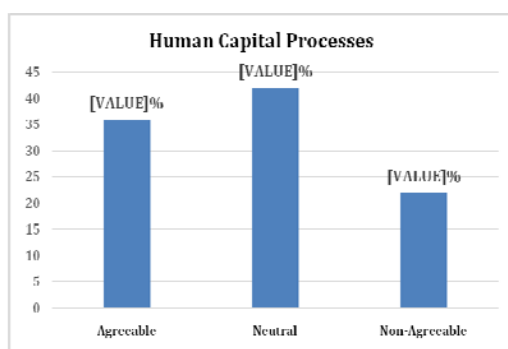
- b. **Data Analysis:** Once collected, the data was analyzed using **descriptive statistics** (mean, median, and frequency distributions) to identify trends and patterns in the responses. **SPSS** (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) software was employed to perform statistical analysis.

7. Data Presentation and Analysis

7.1 :Human Capital processes

Aggregate Responses for "Human Capital Processes"

Response Category	Total Count (All Questions Combined)	Percentages
Agreeable	363	36%
Neutral	421	42%
Non-Agreeable	216	22%



Agreeable Responses (36%): Approximately one-third of the respondents across all 17 universities view the human capital processes positively, indicating agreement with statements regarding professional development, resource availability, performance feedback, career advancement opportunities, and recognition systems.

Neutral Responses (42%): A significant portion of the respondents expressed neutrality, suggesting uncertainty or a balanced view on the effectiveness and adequacy of the human capital processes in their respective institutions.

Non-Agreeable Responses (22%): Nearly one-quarter of the respondents disagreed with the statements, highlighting areas where human capital processes might be lacking or require improvement.

Implications Based on Findings:

The high percentage of Neutral responses (42%) indicates a need for clarity and tangible improvements in human capital processes to convert neutrality into agreement.

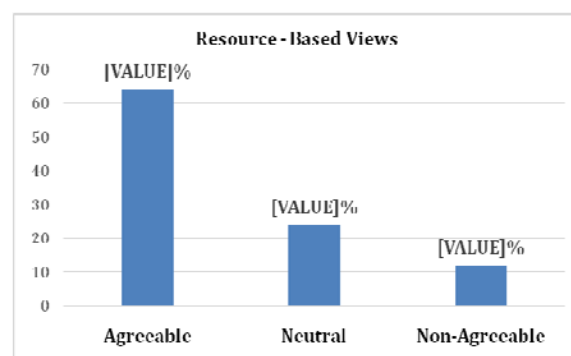
Universities should prioritize investment in professional development, structured feedback mechanisms, and reward systems to increase the positive perception of human capital processes.

The presence of 22% Non-Agreeable responses reflects underlying gaps that must be addressed to improve satisfaction and engagement among library academic staff.

7.2 Resource - Based Views

Aggregate Responses for "Resource – Based Views"

Response Category	Total Count (All Questions Combined)	Percentages
Agreeable	320	64%
Neutral	121	24%
Non-Agreeable	57	12%



Agreeable Responses (64%): A significant majority of the respondents across all 17 universities agree that human capital and resources in academic libraries are strategic and contribute meaningfully to competitive advantage, innovation, and achieving university missions. This strong agreement highlights the recognized importance of RBV across institutions.

Neutral Responses (24%): A quarter of the respondents were neutral, suggesting a mixed or unclear perception of the RBV in some aspects. This neutrality points to areas where further communication or initiatives may be needed to enhance understanding and agreement.

Non-Agreeable Responses (12%): A minority of respondents disagree with the RBV statements, reflecting areas of concern or underperformance. These universities may need focused strategies to

improve the strategic management of their library human and resource capital.

Implications Based on Findings:

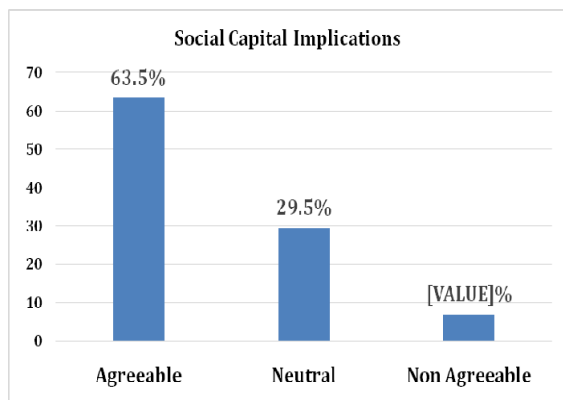
Recognition of Strategic Importance: The majority of universities perceive human capital and library resources as central to competitive advantage, innovation, and alignment with the university's mission.

Opportunities for Strengthening: The relatively smaller percentage of neutral and non-agreeable responses suggests scope for better communication, investment, and resource optimization in specific institutions.

7.3 Social capital Implications

Aggregate Responses for "Social Capital Implications"

Response Category	Total Count (All Questions Combined)	Percentages
Agreeable	54	63.5%
Neutral	25	29.5%
Non-Agreeable	6	7%



Agreeable Responses :63.5%

The majority of respondents view "Social Capital Implications" positively, highlighting strong internal networking, leadership that fosters collaboration, and a well-connected library staff within the university community. Knowledge sharing is also widely recognized as a critical cultural aspect.

Neutral Responses :29.5%

Some responses fall in the neutral range, indicating areas where perceptions about external collaboration or the implementation of social capital practices may be less consistent.

Non-Agreeable Responses: 7%

A small proportion of responses reflect disagreement, pointing to challenges or limitations in areas like external collaboration or support systems in specific universities.

Implications Based on Findings:

Networking Among Staff: Recognized as a strong attribute across most universities, emphasizing a collaborative internal environment.

Knowledge Sharing Culture: A prominent feature in academic libraries, reflecting its vital role in fostering innovation and learning.

Leadership Encourages Collaboration: Leadership is broadly seen as supportive of collaboration, playing a pivotal role in promoting teamwork and joint efforts.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Collaboration with External Partners: Shows slightly lower scores compared to other aspects, indicating room for enhancing partnerships with external entities.

8. Recommendations

Based on the above findings, the following actions are recommended to enhance library effectiveness:

Strengthen Human Capital Processes :

- Increase management awareness and investment in staff development initiatives.
- Implement structured mentorship and training programs to harness the potential of human capital.

Optimize Resource-Based Strategies :

- Encourage strategic investments in expertise and technological innovations.
- Promote libraries as centers of competitive advantage by leveraging state-of-the-art resources and fostering a culture of innovation.

Enhance Social Capital Utilization

- Foster greater collaboration with external partners to enrich knowledge sharing and innovation.
- Develop leadership programs that encourage stronger internal and external networks, enhancing the library's integration within and beyond the university community.

9. Conclusion

Academic libraries in Sri Lanka demonstrate promising alignment with best practices in human capital, resource-based strategies, and social capital utilization. Focused improvements in leadership support, external collaboration, and strategic investments can further elevate their role as pivotal contributors to the university ecosystem. These enhancements will ensure libraries remain resilient and adaptive in an evolving academic landscape.

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