



ISSN No: 2319-5886

International Journal of Medical Research &
Health Sciences, 2016, 5, 9S:115-120

Evaluating In-service Training Climate between Medical Libraries in Northern Iran

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ABSTRACT

In-service training has been used as a certain procedure for improving service quality and developing staff knowledge and awareness. This study aimed to evaluate the in-service training climate in libraries located in northern Iran medical universities from their staff viewpoints with ClimateQual survey tool. As a cross-sectional and analytical-survey, this study conducted among all staff of northern Iran medical libraries –including Babol, Mazandaran (Sari), Golestan (Gorgan) and Gilan (Rasht)- in 2012. The research instrument included ClimateQual Questionnaire developed by Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in 2009 and normalized by the researcher in his PhD dissertation in 2011. The rank of in-service component among all 9 components of ClimateQual was 8 (10.24 ± 3.17). As result, in-service training climate was not satisfactory from the staff viewpoints. ANOVA test results showed that in-service status was somewhat similar quantitatively and qualitatively in the studied universities (Sig.=591). There was a significant difference between staff in-service training mean scores according to their educational degrees (Sig.= 0.006). It is necessary to revise deeply in the quality and quantity of staff in-service training in the studied libraries.

Keywords: In-service Training, Library Staff, Medical University, Northern Iran, Sari, Babol, Gorgan, Gilan

INTRODUCTION

In-service training is done after employment of a member of staff in an organization and philosophically originated from adult education and life-long learning [1]. Due to its expansion in different countries, in-service training has been variously defined and described. May defined it as the continuous and systematic improvement of employees as to their knowledge, skills, technical-career experience, which aims at enabling them to be more productive in their current posts and achieving more opportunities to orient to other higher posts in their workplaces [2]. Mansouri argues that in-service training is needed for employees to be more effective in their career and discusses that this training cause them to be compatible with the work environment, to be more productive and to serve ideally [3]. Various studies in Iran showed that in-service training positively affects human resource development and promotion [4], job satisfaction [5], job performance [6], staff efficacy and effectiveness [7] and staff skill level [8].

Nowadays, what make in-service training be considered more important is vast and expansive changes in different science and technology branches. Library and information science [LIS] is a field that extensively changed as a

result of technological development and some librarians tend to concern about their position and existence in this technology-embedded situation [9]. However, their role is important despite technological developments and increasingly develops in national and international levels. This in some part originates from considering new skills in in-service training program aiming at increasing library and information specialists' skills, satisfaction, survival, organizational performance and service provision. Some researchers conceived library in-service program as a main role of library and information center management [10].

Human resource training was not considered in organizations before 19th century. However, with development of towns, enlargement of governmental units and complicatedness of public administration, staff in-service training has been seriously considered. The first signs of employee systematic training can be seen in scientific management school. By the end of World War II, there was not any comprehensive and sufficient training for staff in governmental organizations in countries such as UK. After then, some countries, including among others, USA, UK and France started to establish some programs and centers for employee training. For example, USA government passed a law in Congress in 1958 in order to plan training courses for staff working in governmental units [11].

Like other countries, in-service training existed in Iran as instructor-student mode. As a modern and institutional one, in-service training is not considered till 1930. In 1935, Iran Railway Institute established a center named Railway Technical School for staff training [12]. Political-social changes in Iran caused the government to focus on governmental human resource training and a separate chapter has been dedicated to staff training in Country Employment Regulation of 1956. This attempt was considered as a starting point for a comprehensive and systematic human resource program. The establishment of Governmental Training Center in 1969 and the start of its activity for developing in-service training in short-term and long-term term courses set the context for training governmental staff and open the way to re-enable them and regard the importance of such training [11].

The history of in-service training for library staff in Iran comes back to 1938 when The Ministry of Culture in Tehran held the first librarianship course in a structured and approved form. 60 teachers and librarians participated in this 120-hour course [13]. The National Library has been held short-term courses from 1971. With establishment of Library Higher Education Center in 1992, this program achieved a higher position. From 1993, specialized courses held and the curricula and syllabuses of this program approved by the Country Administrative and Employment Organization and holding librarian post for ones without any academic education in the field required them to participate in these courses [14].

Reviewing related literature in the field showed that some researches were conducted in this context in Iran and other countries. In 1994, Ardalan emphasized the importance of library in-service courses in university central libraries [15]. Asadi-kia studied the state of library in-service courses in Tehran in 1994-1995 [16]. Mazinani surveyed skill needs of 915 academic librarians working in 424 academic libraries and information centers [17]. There is not any other research in this context in Iran from 1397 up to now. In the case of other countries, Sanchez studied the state of library continuous education in Philippine [18]. Raymond described and analyzed the history of library education, and its states, including that of in-service training in Soviet [19]. Blandy studied the state of reference librarians' in-service training in Albany [20]. Aleksandra Horvat evaluated the in-service training state of librarians in Croatia [21]. The most recent study by Lyn and colleagues in 2010 considered medical librarians' continuous education and affecting factors [22]. All of these studies highlighted the importance and necessity of such training course for librarians in general and special levels.

Considering the importance of in-service training in libraries from one hand and the main role of librarians in service provision for end-users in our information age from the other hand, these are main questions that whether or not there is sufficient job education courses for librarians at work and whether or not librarians inform themselves of other issues other than that one's relate to their job and whether or not the training is provided in acceptable manner accorded with their organizational posts. This study aimed at investigating in-service training climate in medical academic libraries of medical universities located in northern Iran.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The survey was cross-sectional conducted in 2012. Research population included all 105 employees working in various academic libraries in northern Iran medical universities (Babol Universities of Medical Sciences, Mazandaran Universities of Medical Sciences, Golestan Universities of Medical Sciences and Gilan University of

Medical Sciences). The ClimateQual questionnaire was used as research instrument. This instrument was designed by the Association of Research Libraries for measuring library organizational climate and normalized by the corresponding author in his PhD dissertation in 2011. This questionnaire includes nine components in library context including justice climate, leadership climate, demographic climate, group working climate, creativity and innovation climate, in-service training climate, custom service climate, mental health climate and deep diversity climate. In this study, data related to in-service training climate was analyzed. The highest and lowest scores of this component are 7 and 28, respectively. Alpha Cronbach’s coefficient for internal consistency amounted to acceptable range, .728. Some descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used for data analysis.

RESULTS

Out of 105 distributed questionnaires, 102 ones were completed. Demographic information showed that 42 (41.2%) and 60 (58.8%) of subjects were male and female, respectively. The average age and working backgrounds of the subjects were 37 years old and 11 years, respectively. The frequencies and percentages of the subjects by their working universities is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of librarians by their working universities

No.	University	Frequency(%)
1	Babol Univ. of Med. Science	25(24.5%)
2	Mazandaran Univ. of Med. Science	33(33.4%)
3	Gilan Univ. of Med. Science	31(30.4%)
4	Golestan Univ. of Med. Science	13(12.1%)
5	Total	102(100%)

39 (38/2%) and 63 (61/8%) librarians worked in hospital and educational libraries, respectively. Of them, 21 (20.6%) and 81 (79.4%) ones had library and information science (LIS) and non-LIS education, respectively. The educational level of 11.8%, 44.1% and 44.1% of them were Diploma, BD, and MD or PhD, respectively. The employment states of the subjects are shown in Figure 1.

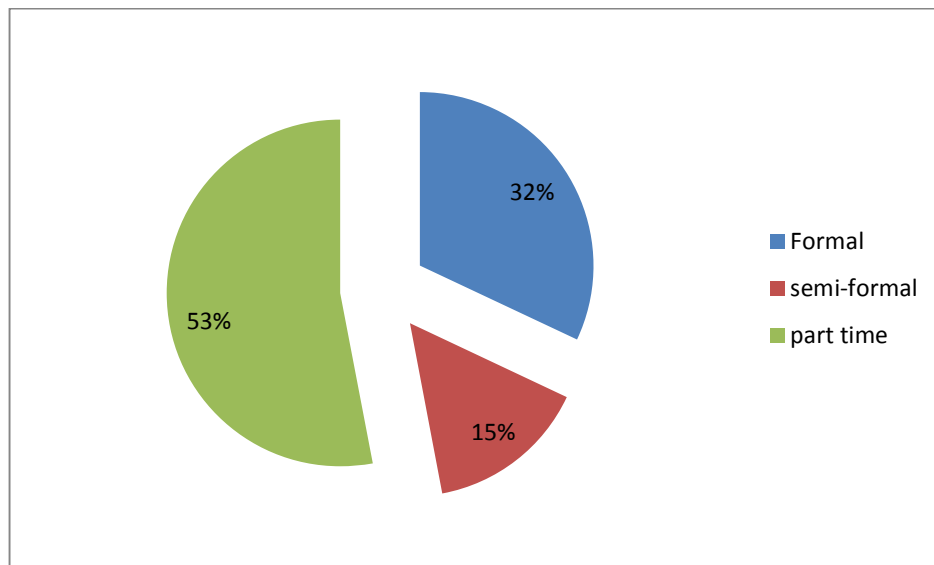


Figure 1. Frequencies and percentages of librarians by their employment state

The analysis of data extracted from completed questionnaires showed that the average score of in-service training was 10.24 ± 3.17 , out of 28. Considering the score, in-service training climate ranked eighth among the nine components of ClimateQual. Figure 2 depicts the scores of in-service training climate among the studied medical universities. As shown, Gorgan University of Medical Science and Babol University of Medical Science had better in-service training climate than those of Mazandaran University of Medical Science and Gilan University of Medical Science.

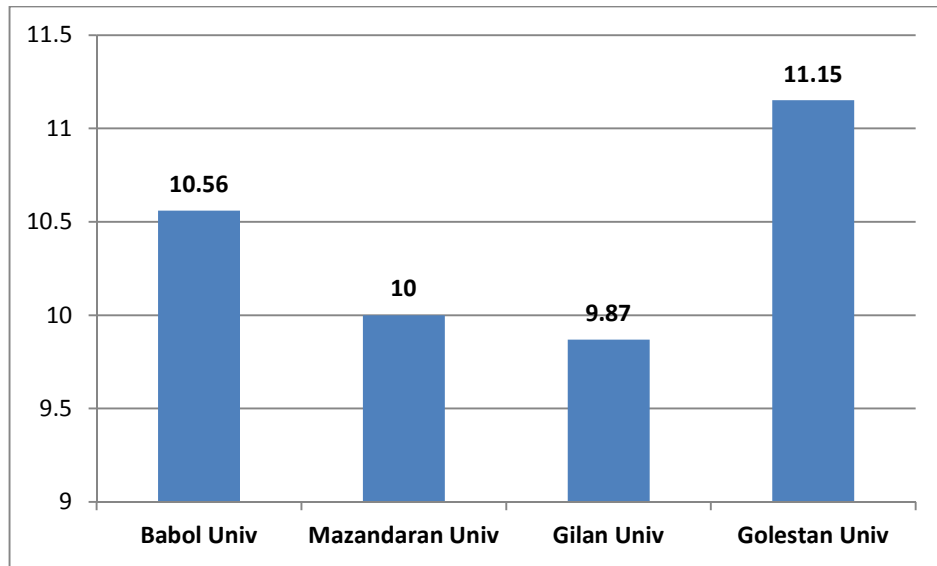


Figure 2. Average scores of in-service training by holding university

Based on Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the distribution was not normal and non-parametric tests were used for testing hypotheses (Table 2).

Table 2. KS test for testing distribution normality

Main variable	Mean±SD	KOS	Sig
Organizational climate	3.17± 10.25	1.79	0.003

Non-parametric multivariate Kruskal-Wallis test (table 3) showed that the average score of in-service training climate was significantly different as to librarians’ employment states (p=.020), educational degrees (p=.005), but not so as to the working universities (p=.729) and library work units (p=.925). Non-parametric bivariate Mann-Whitney test showed that gender, library type, librarians’ educational field (LIS vs. non-LIS) were effective in individuals’ views on in-service training climate in their WORKING organizations (Table 4).

Table 3. Kruskal-Walis test for comparing librarians’ views on in-service training climate by their employment state, educational degree, working university and working library unit

variables	Frequency	Rank mean	df	Test amount	P value	
Employment state	formal	23	51.39	2	7.86	0.020
	Semi-formal	15	32.77			
	Part Time	54	56.77			
Educational level	Diploma	12	42.42	2	10.51	0.005
	BD	45	43.33			
	MD & PhD	45	62.09			
University	Gilan	31	49.10	3	1.31	0.762
	Babol	25	55.26			
	Mazandaran	33	48.83			
	Golestan	13	56.77			
Library unit	Public service	64	51.28	2	0.155	0.925
	Technical service	17	49.85			
	Administration	21	53.50			

Table 4. Mann-Whitney test for comparing librarians' views on in-service training climate by gender, library type and educational field

Variables		Frequency	Rank mean	Test amount	Z	P value
Gender	Male	42	42	1232.50	-0.189	0.850
	Female	60	60			
Library type	Educational	63	52.57	1161	-0.469	0.639
	Hospital	39	49.77			
Educational field	LIS	81	51.18	824/50	-0.217	0.828
	Non-LIS	21	52.74			

DISCUSSION

The state of library staff working in northern Iran medical universities in perspective of average age (37 years old), working background (11 years), educational level and degree showed that they are young, skillful ones. However, the scores of in-service training climate in studied universities (10.24 of 28) reveals that the studied universities have not considered in-service training in their libraries. Gorgan University of Medical Science and Babol University of Medical Science had relatively better in-service training climate than that of Mazandaran University of Medical Science and Gilan University of Medical Science (Figure 2). In-service training courses held in these libraries were not enough and compatible with their organizational posts. They argued that they had not equal opportunities for participation in these courses. 66.7% of librarians had weak or very weak self-instruction (Table 2). This finding is not in accordance with that of Teymour-khani in which 41%, 54% and 5% of National Library staff conceived the quality of held courses in the library very high, high and moderate (14). Regarding the importance of in-service training courses in organizations in our information age, organizations need to equip their managers and staff with a means of adapting advanced world by applying appropriate in-service training. As Behrangi (23) believed, in addition to organizational commitment and individual and social skills, managers and staff should equip themselves with up-dated information and knowledge by help of in-service training. As some researches showed that there is a significant relation between in-service training and staff performance, efficacy, job satisfaction and so on (24 and 25), it is necessary that in-service training and continuous education are revised in the studied libraries. As an effective in-service training necessitates the active participation of the student (26) and the self-instruction rate of the subjects is low, in-service training should not be considered as an inactive manner in which the instructor has a mere role (11). Student's independence is an important element in this education (27) in which the instructor is a facilitator and the student has the main role.

As 60% of subjects said that the held courses were not suitable for their jobs and official posts, it can be argued that the principle of proportion was not considered in the held in-service training courses studied here. As students have different work and life related experience, it is necessary that the courses are in accordance with their knowledge and experience (28). As a result, in-service training designers should include staff experience, background knowledge, job requirements and so on when designing to held a new course. It can be proposed that libraries should consider the following features for better implementation of organizational in-service training programs (29):

1. Continuous lifelong learning for staff;
2. Designing various training programs as to staff levels and needs;
3. Concentration on the future and fulfillment of newly-emerged needs;
4. Designing organizationally goal-based curricula, syllabus and resources.

CONCLUSION

Considering the findings, major revision in in-service training is needed in the studied libraries. In addition, because of librarians and information specialists' new roles in the age of knowledge and information, it is necessary that universities hold their in-service courses for preparing their librarians to better service provision, with applying Porto and Parker's principles in in-service program.

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