

Understanding end-users' perspectives on koha usage in selected university libraries of Dhaka, Bangladesh

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Abstract

Purpose: The research aims to figure out the present state of Koha usage and application in Bangladesh.

Methodology: The Survey method was employed with the help of a structured questionnaire. A total of 60 (Sixty) respondents were randomly selected who were getting services through Koha from the libraries. We gathered data from the participants of BRAC University Library; BUET Central Library; Eastern University Library; EWU Library; IUB Library; DIU Library; SAU Library; and Green University of Bangladesh Library. Collected data were analyzed using SPSS (20.0 version) and general statistics.

Findings: Findings indicated that most of the respondents (65%) reported Koha was easy to use, while 35% of them had a negative impression. The study explored that users expressed their highest satisfaction level with the statement 'notifications of new arrival materials (M=3.88), Self-renewal' (M=3.83), while the lowest M=3.40 with the statement 'understanding user interface' regarding day-to-day usage of Koha.

Research limitations: The study covered the perspectives of students as users only for some selected university libraries of Dhaka City. It would be better to include the university libraries of other cities in Bangladesh as well as the perspectives of faculty users.

Practical implications: The results will be helpful to the university libraries of Bangladesh which are planning to adopt Koha in near future.

Originality/value: This is original research that empirically assesses the use and application of Koha at selected university libraries.

Keywords: Koha, university libraries, user's perceptions, Dhaka city, integrated library management system.

1. Introduction

In this contemporary age, a vast amount of information is produced every single second. Libraries and information centers are considered the most suitable places to manage and store this information. For managing, preserving, and distributing knowledge, libraries have been using computers and newly emerged technologies for the last few decades. Academic libraries need to process resources fast to meet the desires of the users compared to other libraries. In this regard, Integrated Library Management Software (ILMS) plays a significant role in providing the best services to clients in developed countries as well as many developing countries like Bangladesh. As Muller (2011) said, "ILSs are multifunctional, adaptable software applications that allow libraries to manage, catalog, and circulate their materials to patrons". Among various integrated systems, Koha has gained immense popularity and acceptance among both large and smaller libraries due to its user-friendliness and flexibility all over the world. Koha is the first ILMS which is developed by Katipo Communications for the Horowhenua Library Trust and released in 2000. According to Nasiruddin (2014), "Now the Koha project has grown as one of the popular open-source library management systems by a large group of volunteers from various parts of the world. More than ten open-source library management systems are available, but very few of them are popular in the library automation market. The project started as a non-profit initiative, and it strictly follows the principles of Open Source philosophy". In Bangladesh, mainly university libraries are taking initiatives to adopt Koha to provide quick and accurate services to users. Hence, this study aims to highlight the features and potential usage of Koha by the users and its practical importance to university libraries in Dhaka city.

2. Literature review

2.1 Conceptual issues of Koha

Stiwell (2012) described Koha as a cost-benefit system by which library management practices can be automated and integrated. For the transformation and change in an information institution, Koha is obvious as an open-source solution compared to other commercial solutions. In addition, OPAC interface of Koha merges sophisticated web 2.0 features like Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds which are used for alerting users about newly arrived materials in their interested areas, comment boxes for search results, and tagging (Pruett and Choi, 2013). As open-source software, Koha makes the original source code free for the clients so that users can customize content based on their choices to make a better management of library functions. It also allows the right to redistribution (Boss, 2008). To focus on the user's experience with Koha, Cohn, Kelsey, and Fiels (2001) argued Koha can respond quickly even if it comes to complex queries across a vast number of databases, allowing users 24/7 access to library resources from remote locations through the graphical interface, and ensure maximum "self-service" opportunity for them.

2.2 Use and Application of Koha in libraries around the world

Koha has created a worldwide community with its unique features like easy and understandable interface for the users, union catalog, customized search, and RSS feed and tagging etc. that makes it worthy as a living software with the continuous upgrade quickly (Shafi-Ullah and Qutab, 2012). Kumar and Jasimuddin (2012) captured users' perceptions and the satisfaction levels of library professionals in the Indian library scenario in a short frame. While they listed out various Indian library automation projects using Koha from 2007 onwards. They also discovered that ILMS like Koha is widely accepted in the southern parts of India and the adoption of Koha among libraries in India is increasing. Niranjana, Desta & Kumar (2021) conducted a case study at Wollega University library, Ethiopia on implementing Koha and discussed the Koha installation, data migration, and the whole customization process based on the library needs.

2.3 Use and Application of Koha in academic libraries

Ogbenege & Adetimirin (2013) studied the challenges of Koha selection criteria as well as the crucial factors that affect the field of using Koha in two private university libraries in Nigeria and also determined the level and length of system usage. They suggested that maximum benefit should be ensured by growing enough awareness among the library end users on the proper utilization of the system. Chauhan (2018) evaluated the experience of Koha usage in OPJindal Global University Library, Haryana and recommended that orientation about maximum utilization of the software should be made both for library professionals and users. Alikoba, Kiwelu & Lwanga (2019) indicated that free and open-source characteristics, user-friendliness, accessibility of resources, etc. affect most in the selection of Koha. They further investigated various influential factors of Koha usage and acceptance in four Ugandan academic libraries.

2.4 Use and application of Koha in university libraries in Bangladesh

Ahammad (2014) encouraged all university libraries to adopt and implement Koha by explaining that the implementation process of Koha in a library is easy. He discovered after implementing the system at the Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) Library, the library staff is getting more functionality and features which saves time. As a result, they can focus on other services and spend more time providing. Rahman, Islam & Islam (2017) surveyed ten (10) university libraries to find out the state of automation with Koha in Bangladesh. The study explored different Koha modules mainly used in these libraries, Koha users, etc.

3. Objectives of the study

The study aims to explore the present state of Koha usage and application in Bangladesh. The more specific objectives are:

- To discover the perceptions of users regarding different features of Koha.
- To find out the problems and prospects of using Koha in university libraries in Dhaka city.
- To offer some suitable recommendations for the solutions to the existing problems.

4. Research questions

This paper has designed one major research question (MRQ) and three subsidiary research questions (SRQs):

MRQ: What is likely to be the present state of Koha usage and application in university libraries?

SRQ1: What are likely to be the perceptions of users regarding different features of Koha?

SRQ2: What kind of problems the users are facing while using Koha?

SRQ3: How can libraries overcome the existing problems?

5. Methodology of the study

The study employed a survey method with the help of a structured questionnaire. Eight (8) prominent public and private university libraries that had adopted Koha and provided services by using it were chosen for the study. Researchers randomly selected sixty (60) users from these universities. The sample size is small as Koha concepts and functions were new to most of the students. Data were collected by distributing questionnaires and gathering responses from these sixty (60) users from Ayesha Abed Library, BRAC University; Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) Central Library, Eastern University Library, EastWest University (EWU) Library, Independent University Bangladesh (IUB) Library, Daffodil International University (DIU) Library, Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University (SAU) Library, and Green University of Bangladesh (GUB) Library. Responses particularly to close-ended questions on 5-point Likert scales were analyzed using SPSS (20.0 Version) and other feedback was evaluated using general statistics.

6. Analysis and findings of the study

6.1 Educational qualifications of the respondents

The data were analyzed based on the educational qualification of the respondents. Table 1 indicates that 71.7 per cent of respondents were undergraduate, and 28.3 per cent were post-graduate.

Table 1: Educational qualifications of the respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
Undergraduate	43	71.7
Postgraduate	17	28.3
Total	60	100

6.2. Experience of participants with Koha

The responses were received from the participating students about their experience with Koha. Table 2 demonstrates that 18 (30%) respondents are using Koha for less than 6 months, while 9 (15%) respondents are using it for 6 months to less than 1 year, followed by 18 (30%) respondents are using it for less than 2 years, 9 (15%) respondents are using for less than 3 years, and 6 (10%) participants are using Koha for 3 or more years in the library.

Table 2: Experience of participating using Koha

Experience	Frequency	Percentage
1 month – 6months	18	30
6 months – 1 year	9	15
1 year – Less than 2 years	18	30
2 years – Less than 3 years	9	15
3 years or more	6	10
Total	60	100

6.3 LMS software used by the participants before Koha

The users were asked to indicate what type of software they used before Koha. Figure 1 shows that only 1 participant (1.7%) indicates that he/she used open-source software before Koha, while 5 participants (8.3%) indicate that they used in-house software before Koha, and the majority (54, 90%) of them had no comments.

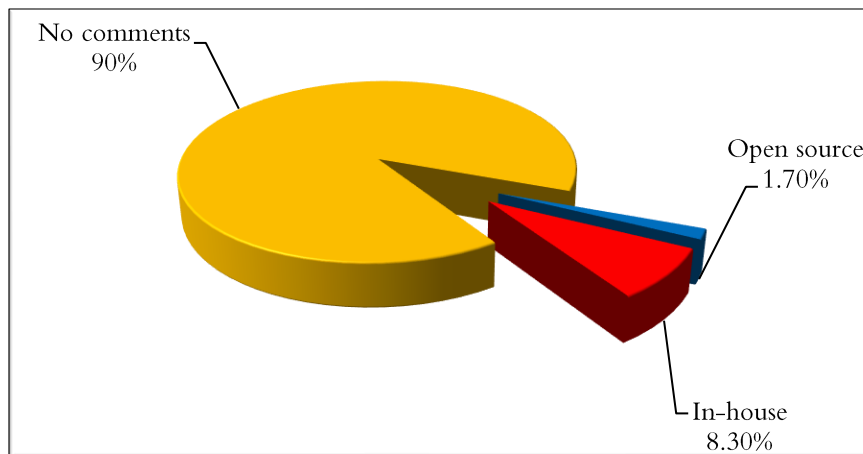


Figure 1: Software used by the participants before Koha

6.4 Measurement on the ease of using Koha

The respondents were examined whether Koha is easy to use or not. It has been found that the majority of the respondents (39, 65%) reveal that Koha is easy to use, while other respondents (21, 35%) report that Koha is not easy to use (Figure 2).

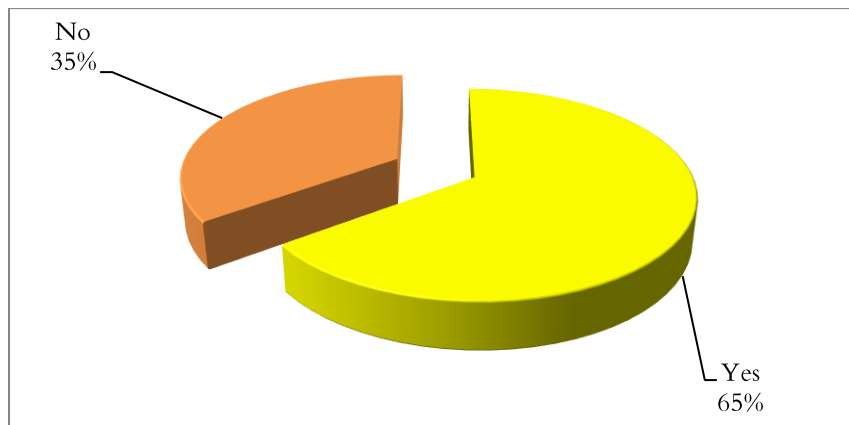


Figure 2: Measurement of the ease of using Koha

6.5 The reasons for the easiness of using Koha

The students were requested to point out the reasons for the easiness of using Koha in the library. The data summarized regarding the reasons for the easiness of using Koha was gathered from the participants. **Table 3** shows that “Easy to search” is in the highest position with 33.3%, while “User friendly” with 26.7% is in the second position, followed by “All levels of users can understand the system” (20%), “Sufficient features” (18.3%), “Online renewal and reservation services are excellent” (16.7%),

“Different search options” (10%), as well as “Display and layouts are easy to understand” (8.3%).

Table 3: The reasons for the easiness of using Koha

Reasons	Total Participants	Frequency	Percentage
User friendly	60	16	26.7
Easy to search	60	20	33.3
Different search options	60	6	10.0
Sufficient features	60	11	18.3
Display and layouts are easy to understand	60	5	8.3
Online renewal and reservation services are excellent	60	10	16.7
All levels of users can understand the system	60	12	20.0

6.6 The services received by the participants from Koha

Participants were asked to specify the services they are receiving from the system. The data was surveyed regarding the services received from the system. Table 4 reveals that the highest percentage is 60% and concerned with "Online renewal of materials", while "Online reservation of materials" is in the second position with 41.7%, followed by "Notifications about new arrival books" with 33.3%, "Current awareness service (CAS)" with 20%, and "Selective dissemination of information (SDI)" with 18.3%.

Table 4: The services received by the participants from Koha

Services	Total Participants	Frequency	Percentage
Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	60	11	18.3
Current awareness service (CAS)	60	12	20.0
Online reservation of materials	60	25	41.7
Online renewal of materials	60	36	60.0
Notifications about new arrival books	60	20	33.3

6.7 Level of agreement on interaction with Koha

The respondents were queried about their level of agreement with the interaction with Koha in their libraries.

Table 5: Level of agreement on interaction with Koha

Statements	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
Understanding of user interface of Koha	60	1.00	5.00	3.40	1.092
Ease of different catalog search	60	1.00	5.00	3.67	1.115
Issuance of books is satisfactory	60	1.00	5.00	3.65	1.022
Self-renewal	60	2.00	5.00	3.83	1.011
Online reservation	60	1.00	5.00	3.45	1.016
Creation of my user account	60	1.00	5.00	3.45	1.141
Ease of using online public access catalog (OPAC)	60	1.00	5.00	3.48	.983
Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	60	2.00	5.00	3.42	.696
Alert received from the library about the due date of issued books	60	2.00	5.00	3.68	.965
Receiving overdue and fine notices	60	1.00	5.00	3.78	.976
Notifications about new arrival books and services	60	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.223
Valid N (list-wise)	60				

6.7.1 Understanding the interface

Makori & Osebe (2016) found out that the web interface of Koha includes Web 2.0 features to improve the user experience which is clear for the users as well as library employees. Users can customize their interface by adding additional features, and different content. The users agree with the statement (mean score of 3.40) that the interface of Koha is easily understandable.

6.7.2 Ease of catalog search

Uzomba, Oyebola & Izuchukwu (2015) described that Koha has different search options such as search by title, author, subjects, and keywords along with an advanced search facility. It has been shown that the participating students agree with the statement (mean score of 3.67) that they can easily search the catalog by author, title, subject, etc.

6.7.3 Ease of book issuance

Egunjobi and Awoyemi (2012) stated that Koha is a completely web-based system that allows simple book issuance from a branch and returns to a different branch. The respondent students agree with the statement (mean score of 3.65) that the issuance of books through Koha is done quickly.

6.7.4 Self-renewal

Egunjobi and Awoyemi (2012) indicated that to reduce the workload of circulation staff at the circulation desk, Koha facilitates the users to renew and reserve materials by themselves. The concerned students agree with the statement (mean score of 3.83) that self-renewal is one of the good services received from the system.

6.7.5 Online reservation

It has been found that the patrons agree with the statement (mean score of 3.45) that online reservation is also a good service for users.

6.7.6 Creation of user account

Ahammad (2014) specified users can create and view dynamic content and their account within the web presence of a library. The participants agree with the statement (mean score of 3.45) that the user account can easily be created by them.

6.7.7 Ease of using OPAC

Ahammad (2014) also stated after searching through Koha's OPAC, library users can notice the present status of any materials that can be organized as author, title, call number, series, date, and so on. The respondents agree with the statement (mean score of 3.48) that the OPAC interface is easy to understand and use for the users.

6.7.8 Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI)

The users undoubtedly agree with the statement (mean score of 3.42) that they get SDI service from the library according to their preferred frequency (daily, weekly, monthly).

6.7.9 Alert received about the due date of issued books

The patrons agree with the statement (mean score of 3.68) that they receive alerts from the library for the due date of issued books through e-mail or message.

6.7.10 Receiving of overdue and fine notices

Uzomba, Oyebola & Izuchukwu (2015) said library professionals can easily deal with overdue and fine notices in the system by sending mail to the clients. The participants also agree with the statement (mean score of 3.78) that they obtain overdue and fine notices from the library regularly.

6.7.11 Notifications

It has been demonstrated in this paper that the users agree with the statement (mean

score of 3.88) that different notifications about new arrival books and newly added services are frequently sent from the system through e-mail.

7. Problems of using Koha

The problems of using Koha were identified and measured using the descriptive analysis techniques of SPSS. The participating users were requested to point out their level of agreement encountered with the problems of using Koha.

Table 6: Level of agreement with the problems of using Koha

Statements	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	Std. Dev.
User interface is difficult to figure out	60	1.00	5.00	1.67	1.124
Irrelevancy of full-text searching	60	1.00	5.00	1.77	1.040
OPAC is not flexible	60	1.00	5.00	1.97	1.584
Advanced search is not satisfactory	60	1.00	5.00	2.27	1.358
Unavailability of enough content	60	1.00	5.00	1.80	1.064
Network problem	60	1.00	5.00	2.30	1.208
False notices are sent	60	1.00	5.00	2.20	1.340
Lack of orientation program, workshop, and library tour about LMS	60	1.00	5.00	1.87	1.263
Lack of promotions	60	1.00	5.00	2.17	1.040
Inadequacy of training and retraining of users	60	1.00	5.00	1.77	1.006

Results of table 6 revealed that overall the users mainly disagreed with all the statements under 'problems of using Koha' ("Network problem" [mean=2.30], "Advance search is not satisfactory" [mean=2.27], "False notices are sent" [mean=2.20], "Unavailability of enough contents" [mean=2.20], "Lack of promotions" [mean=2.17], "OPAC is not flexible" [mean=1.97], "Lack of orientation program, workshop, library tour about LMS" [mean=1.87], "Irrelevancy of full-text searching" and "Inadequacy of training and retraining of users" [mean=1.77] "User interface is difficult to figure out" [mean=1.67] which indicate they were satisfied with the overall performance of Koha.

8. Recommendations

Based on the perceptions of the respondents, the following recommendations should be adopted to overcome the existing problems:

8.1 Inform students about Library Management Software (LMS)

The libraries should take responsibility to inform students about the LMS, its functions, interfaces, and services.

8.2 Organize library orientation program

Library orientation programs should be organized for students at least twice a year.

8.3 Tour, campaign, and workshop

Library tours, campaigns, and workshops must be carried out based on the requirement and necessities of the library.

8.4 Create awareness among the professionals and users

Creating awareness among the information professionals and the users of the library might be useful for them to understand the current development in their respective fields of interest and curiosity.

8.5 Make familiarity with the software

Students should also be familiar with their library as well as the software they are using for borrowing and renewing books and the functions as well as services of the software. In this regard, the university authority should arrange training programs continuously for the students to ensure maximum usage of the library.

8.6 More dynamic to embrace new technology and encourage users to use LMS

Library administration should be more dynamic to embrace new technology at their library to encourage users to use and learn about LMS.

8.7 Developing promotional activities

Promotional activities such as blogs, podcasts, posters, brochures, etc. should be arranged frequently by the library authorities.

9. Discussion and conclusion

A maximum number of students at these university libraries are using Koha only for searching catalogs, using OPAC, and borrowing books. Alam and Islam (2020) reveal in their findings that overall forty-eight percent of the functional modules of Koha were not used, and the respondents were also not aware of more than six percent of the services of Koha. But they are satisfied with the service of Koha which is supported by Tella et al. (2017). They show that Koha has customizable and easy-to-search options with user-friendly characteristics. In developing countries like Bangladesh, the library authority has little intention to admire widely accepted ILS like Koha. As a result, they are indifferent to providing training and retraining library users about the software. Although many university libraries are now offering continuous training programs, workshops, seminars, and library tours for students; these are not

sufficient. Most of the libraries provide training programs only once or twice a year. The purpose of this research was to understand users' perspectives regarding Koha usage and application in university libraries in Dhaka city. Findings reveal that 65% of the respondents reported that Koha is easy to use, while 35% of them said that Koha is not easy to use. The study exposes the opinions of the users about the reasons for easiness of using Koha, such as "User friendly" with 26.7%, "Easy to search" with 33.3%, "Different search options" (10%), "Sufficient features" (18.3%), "Display and layouts are easy to understand" (8.3%), "Online renewal and reservation services are excellent" (16.7%), "All levels of users can understand the system" (20%). It shows that users can easily understand the interface of Koha (mean score of 3.40). They mostly use the system for "catalog search" (mean score 3.67), "books issuance" (mean score 3.65), "self-renewal" (mean score 3.83), "online reservation" (mean score 3.45), "creation of account" (mean score 3.45), "OPAC" (mean score 3.48). The findings indicate that users are quite satisfied with the feature and performance of Koha. Yet, to popularize the system among users, this study recommends organizing library orientation programs, library tours, training programs, and different promotional activities. Koha is an ideal ILS that fulfills the current and future needs of the users. Many smaller libraries cannot afford the expenses of implementation and maintenance of an ILS, for them, Koha is a perfect alternative. Though it is popular for low budget and user-friendly interface, the adaptation of this system is still slow. Thus, this paper has attempted to discover user interaction with Koha and find out problems and recommendations which may encourage academic libraries to implement the ILS for serving the end-users.

10. Practical implications

The quantitative analysis of using Koha and their interaction with it make clear concepts about Koha, its functions, and services among students as users in libraries. The users have indicated both negative and positive aspects of using Koha that can be considered in delivering services through Koha in academic libraries. The research contributes to filling the gap between libraries that use Koha and those that do not. Furthermore, researchers and LIS professionals may find this study beneficial for them once they intend to do research relating to Koha usage in the library.

11. Limitations of the study

This paper has covered only a few public and private university libraries mainly in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. This study covered only student users of Koha, further research may include faculty users as well. The scope of the study might be limited due to the small sample size. Researchers could have provided better results with more accurate information with the help of a large sample size. Unavailability and inaccessibility of related literature was major issue while reviewing the literature where time and cost were limited as well.

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