

*The Relevance of Physical Library: A Case of Non- Resident Students in Universiti Teknologi Mara, Johor*  
(Kepentingan Perpustakaan Fizikal: Kajian Kes Pelajar Luar Kampus Universiti Teknologi Mara, Johor)

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*ABSTRACT*

*This study investigates Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor (UiTM CJ) non-resident (NR) students' attitude in utilising UiTM Johor's library resources in the year 2015. Questionnaires were distributed to a total of 100 NR students on the basis of availability to identify the frequency of their visit and the utilisation of library resources in terms of its usefulness and value. The result reveals that UiTM Johor's library is underutilized and amongst the top three reasons chosen by the respondents were reading and borrowing books, preparing for exam and spending free time. The implication of this study would enable UiTM Johor's library to better understand the perception of students towards them and what needs to be done to better serve the university's community. By improving its services, this would enhance the relevance and utilization of libraries to meet the changes in demand of the students as well as the changes in the library's function over time.*

*Keywords: Non-resident students, distance students, remote students, physical library, library services.*

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini menyiasat sikap pelajar luar kampus Universiti Teknologi Mara Cawangan Johor (UiTM CJ) dalam penggunaan perkhidmatan dan sumber dari perpustakaan universiti bagi tahun 2015. Sebanyak 100 soalselidik telah diedarkan kepada pelajar luar kampus bagi mengesan kekerapan kehadiran ke perpustakaan dan penggunaan sumber perpustakaan dari aspek kepentingan dan kepenggunaan. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan penggunaan perpustakaan UiTM CJ berada di tahap rendah, dan tiga penggunaan paling banyak dipilih ialah membaca dan meminjam buku, belajar untuk persediaan peperiksaan dan mengisi masa lapang. Implikasi dari kajian ini dapat meningkatkan kefahaman pihak perpustakaan UiTM CJ mengenai tanggapan pelajar terhadap perkhidmatan dan mengenalpasti cara memperbaiki perkhidmatan untuk komuniti universiti. Perkhidmatan yang lebih baik dapat mengalakkan kepenggunaan sumber perpustakaan seiring dengan keperluan pelajar dan fungsi perpustakaan dalam tempoh yang panjang.

Kata kunci: Pelajar luar kampus, pelajar jarak jauh, perpustakaan fizikal, perkhidmatan perpustakaan.

## INTRODUCTION

Existing evidence has clearly depicted that students' academic performance has positive correlation with library usage. One such study to support that statement was done by Goodall & Pattern (2011) when they identified that students who read more, measured in terms of borrowing books and assessing electronic resources obtained better grades. Kot & Jones (2014) further reported that University of Wollongong Library, Australia has developed a database called library cube from which provides data for their research. They found that there is a strong correlation between usage of resources and students' marks. These two studies thus highlight the important roles of libraries to support students' academic performance. Furthermore, some investigations have also been conducted to demonstrate the correlation between university libraries services to the academic success and satisfaction of students. Oakleaf (2010) argued that library use is an indicator of positive engagement with studies and contributes to the quality of assessed work. Cox & Jantti (2012) in reporting the work conducted by researchers in the University of Wollongong, found a strong correlation between library resource use and students' grades. Likewise, a study carried out by Huddersfield suggested a link between students' achievement and library use (Stone 2012). Adding to that, the Library Impact Data Project (LIDP), which looked at data from students' use of library services in a group of academic libraries in the UK, demonstrated a positive relationship between book borrowing and electronic resource access with degree result (LIDP blog, 2012). Stone & Ramsden (2012) further added that the more a book or e-resource is utilised, the more likely a student is to have attained a higher level degree result.

Other than studies focusing on library usage and its positive relationship on students' performance, there are also some studies done indicating the trend of library usage in relation to off-campus students. This type of students is categorised in the literature as distance or remote students, where most students have limited access to visit the physical university library and where study and assessment patterns may differ from those of traditional, on-campus students. The fact that off-campus students are not frequent users of libraries is proven by Toner (2008) when he revealed that 21% low or non library users obtained in his study was represented largely by students in part-time and distance learning courses. In similar vein, evidence from Ritterbush (2009) showed that the use of university library only improved when off-campus students moved into the university housing where they

seek research assistance more often and they utilise library resources more frequently. Both results suggest that the students who previously live distance from the university are not active library users.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

As the main resource centre in the provision of information necessary for their patrons, university libraries have great roles to play. They collect a variety of materials either in print or electronic format that include not only hardcopies or traditional print-on-paper media like books, journals and newspapers, but also resources in electronic formats or digital resources such as online databases, Internet, electronic books, e-journals, CD-ROMs, audio visual materials and other media. This shows that the role of physical library is still in place despite today's modern and technological advances via electronic books and journals. Having that in mind, the decline in the use of library resources over online materials and references is indeed very worrying. With the presence of digital collection that can be easily accessed through the library website, there is an underutilization of hardcopy resources in the library such as subscribed journals, magazines and text-book. The university has made large amount of investment to subscribe the resources, and hence will go into waste if they are not fully utilised. Thus, a lot of research has to be carried out in order to comprehend this situation as to enhance the use of physical library to its optimum level so that students will utilise its resources throughout their studies.

At present many studies have been undertaken on the relationship between library usage and students' performance. Nevertheless, studies examining non-resident university students who are library patrons are still lacking. As the majority of earlier studies have mainly excluded the distance or remote students, thus, the aim of this study is to add to the body of knowledge on this type of students' attitude with regards to library usage pattern. As Universiti Teknologi MARA Johor (UiTM Johor) consists of students who reside out of its main campus, who are better known as non-resident students (NR students), this study investigates the attitude of the NR students on utilising UiTM Johor's library resources. Implications of the findings of this study could be used by the UiTM Johor library to improve the library services and provisions of the relevant and best service to meet the needs of the communities and to reflect the changes of the library's function over time.

This study seeks to investigate the usage of

physical library by NR students, the perceptions of NR students towards the library resources and to identify the students' needs to escalate visit to the library.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the growth in the use of online resources by tertiary students, numerous studies have proven that the existence of physical library is still relevant and undeniable. One such argument is put forward by the President of American Association of School Librarian, Gail K. Dickinson, who emphasised that libraries have become physical foundations of learning communities, and hence will not be overtaken by the digital resources. This is particularly acceptable as university libraries are often considered as the most important resource centre to support teaching, learning, and researching as librarians are also playing their roles in teaching students to inquire, draw conclusions and share knowledge (Dickinson 2013). In fact, a number of researches have showed the impact of university libraries on students' learning to support their intellectual, cultural, and technical development. Not only that, due to technological evolution today, library provides digital collection services so that students can access and retrieve information from the comfort of their home; provided that they have an internet access. As a result, the physical library receives fewer visitors, and some literature argues that physical library becomes less important.

Cummings (2014) reported a research race between a library team and an internet team conducted by University of Dayton. The purpose of the race was to identify which resources are more helpful and faster for researchers to retrieve information. The two teams were required to answer 10 questions; obviously the internet team searched the answer from the internet while the library team used any library resources such as reference desk personnel, electronic card catalogues and computer linked to other library databases. The findings shows that the internet team was faster but their answers were incorrect with some answers left unattended due to time constraint. The answers obtained by the library team however, were more accurate. They concluded that internet does provide up to date information but physical library has better design to lead researchers to the information needed, information is credible, easier and faster to flip through pages of book, more focus on the targeted information and sources such as newspaper which provides information that may not be found in the internet. Though it seems that internet is easier and faster in giving information,

not all information is relevant to the specific needs of the researchers or students to complete their tasks. Sometimes, the users need to seek resources from the library.

Underutilization of library resources has become an epidemic in today's era. Jamil et al. (2013) found that the school library has been underutilized by students and teachers, and lack of human and material resources were blamed to be the reason. The major reason given by the teachers for visiting library is to enhance knowledge by reading newspaper, non-academic books and on-line information. However, 13% of the respondents who were teachers did not visit the library at all because they collected information from the internet, their personal library and books provided by the institution they worked in. They stated that there was a lack of course materials related to the teaching course i.e. Degree in Education including non-availability of basic reading texts. Beard (2012) surveyed post-graduate students to seek their perception on the value of physical library and digital resources and spaces. The study found that the research students find library has less value in terms of physical space because the students have their own space at home. Additionally, the students prefer the e-version journals that can be obtained online. It implies that it is a worrying phenomenon that physical library becomes less popular for the students. Pointing on other aspect however, physical library may become an important place for study as majority favoured the workspaces allocated to them. This finding implies that facilities in the physical library become equivalently important if not more than providing books.

Empirical studies have shown that library users visit library for various reasons. Ritterbush (2009) and Oyewusi & Oyeboade (2009) reported that, self-reading and studying are the two frequent reasons why students visit the library as compared to very few who visit the place for socializing purposes or for leisure. For the purpose of studying in the library, Ritterbush (2009) stated that 46.7% agreed that they study in group while 56% responded that individual study was preferred at the residence room. Oyewusi & Oyeboade (2009) found that the majority of the students look through books and journals available in the library to search for information. Surprisingly, very few seek information through online journal and databases. The findings of Jamil et al. (2013) indicated that students complaints on library resources among others are non-availability of research related resources, insufficient space or inadequate environment and lack of trained librarians to support them. The majority of the students are even disappointed as basic reading texts are not available.

Tang & Tseng (2014) investigated two types of off-campus students; near campus group (NC) and far campus group (FC) of which were differentiated based on 30-mile radius of the campus. Among similarities shared by the two groups in term of library usage is, 29% of the respondents from both groups did not use the online library at all. Not far different, half of the respondents in each group did not seek reference service, but they argued they might have used it if they were informed about it. Among services provided by the library are Library tutorials, Libguides, webinars and face-to-face consultations; most FC students used the Libguides while NC students used face-to-face consultations.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Sampling and Data Collection

This study adopts simple random sampling in which every NR student has an equal chance to be selected. The questionnaires were randomly distributed to 100 non-resident students of UiTM Johor Segamat Campus. A total respond was 94% inclusive of 17 males and 77 females. The respondents were non-resident students from three faculties; Business (80), Accountancy (4)

and Information Management (9). Missing responses were excluded from the analysis.

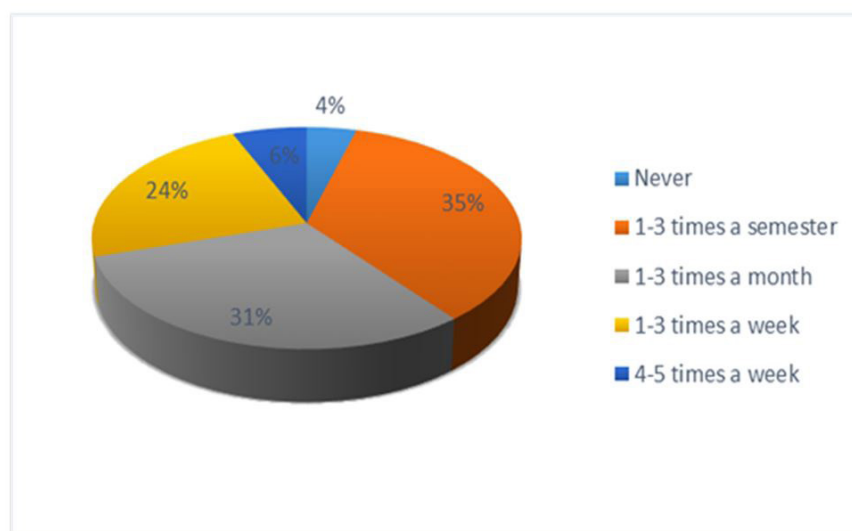
### Research Instrument

The instrument used for the study was questionnaire and it was divided into two parts. Part one dealt with demographic information of the students including the age, sex, level of study and the respondents' faculty. Part two consisted of items eliciting information on library resources and questions on the usage of both digital library and physical library in the campus. The questions were in a form of checklist where respondents were required to tick their answers according to the questions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As depicted in Figure 1, we find that 35% of the respondents visited the library 1-3 times a semester, 31% of them visited the place 1-3 times a month while 24% of them visited it 1-3 times a week. The findings seem to suggest that the library is not a favorite place for the students. In addition to that, out of all the respondents, 4% of them had never visited the library.

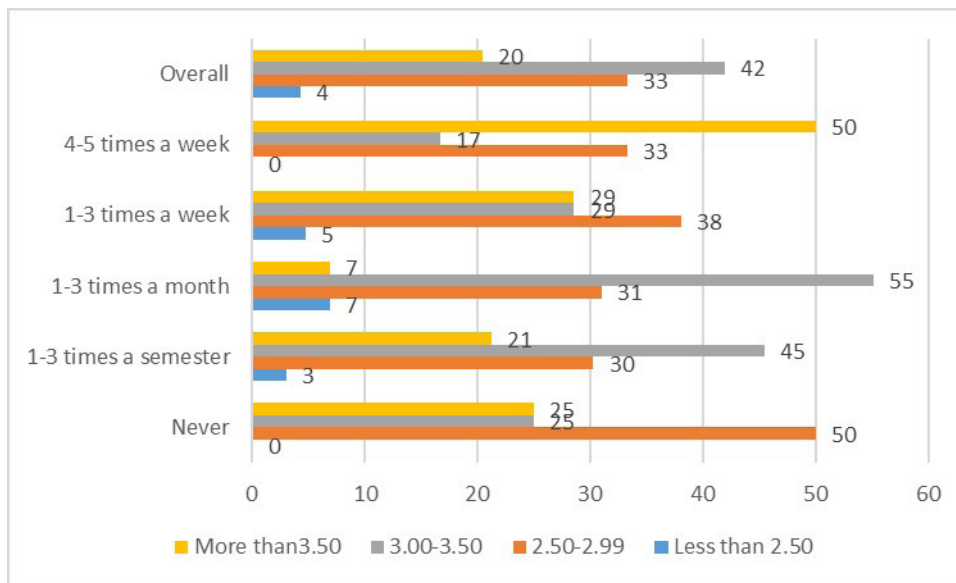
FIGURE 1. Frequency of library visits



Further analysis on the frequency of visit based on academic performance is shown in Figure 2. Based on CGPA, most students who have CGPA 3.50 visited the library most often (4-5 times a week); majority of students with CGPA 3.00-3.50 visited the library 1-3 times per month while majority of those with CGPA of 2.50 – 2.99 had never visited the library. These finding support claimed by Oakleaf (2010) and Stone & Ramsden (2012) that library usage is more likely contributed to better academic performance. Nevertheless, we find that there are students with CGPA

above 3.50 and between 3.00 – 3.50 never visited the library. Upsetting finding shows that the lowest group visited the library in any frequency were those students who have CGPA less than 2.50. the overall results show that students with CGPA 3.00-3.50 were the majority visitor among the sample. These finding suggest that frequency of visit to the library may partly contribute to the student's grades, and empirical research comparing the groups of visitor according to their grades will assist to confirm it.

FIGURE 2. Frequency Of visits based on academic achievement



The respondents were asked to choose top three reasons for visiting the library. Table 1 presents the reasons for the library visits classified based on frequency of visit. Overall findings show that the top three reasons are varieties. There were respondents who chose 'sleeping and socializing' in the top three but it was the least reason chosen. Reason like 'To use computers' was the most favored reason, followed by 'to perform course work' and 'to collect materials'. Nevertheless, amongst the top three reasons chosen by the respondents were reading and borrowing books, preparing for exam and spending free time. Reading and studying is also the top two reason chosen in (Ritterbush 2009). Viewing from the number of visit frequency, 'read books' was the most cited reason by students who visited the library most frequently (4-5 times per week) and very few of this group visited the library to borrow books. This result suggests that

students prefer to use the library as a place to study similar to the finding of Oyewusi & Oyeboade (2009). In addition to that, computers in the library were mostly used by students who visited the library 1-3 times per month and 1-3 times per semester. However, the range of usage from other groups based on frequency was not much different, implying that computers are important facilities in the library. Consistent to the above findings, students who visited the library less often (1-3 times per month and 1-3 times per semester) were the smallest group who came to the library to read books. This group of students merely came to the library to use its facilities rather than for studying purposes. In order to remain relevant, the library need to provide a comfortable study space and to be fully effective, it need to be equipped with excellent IT facilities (Beard 2012).

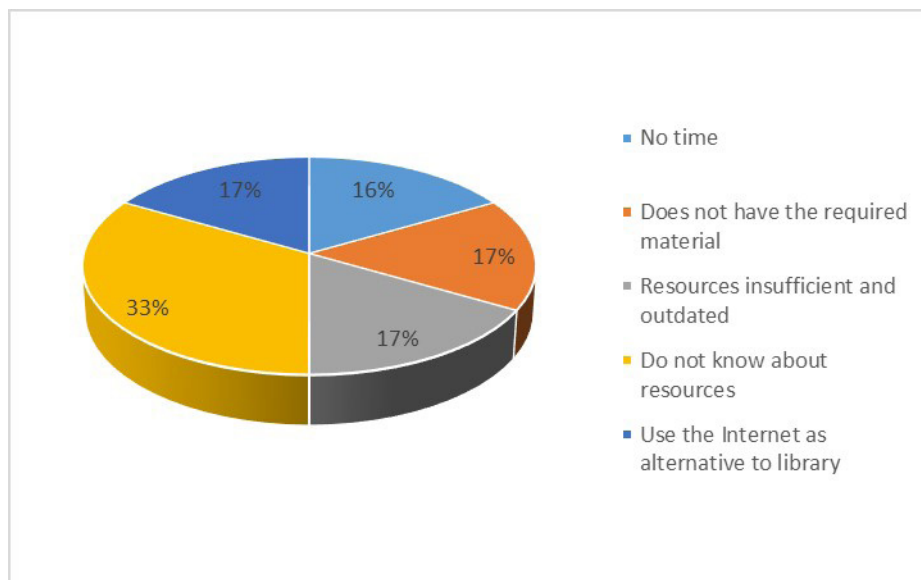
TABLE 1. Reasons for visiting the library based on frequency of visits to the library

Reasons for visits	Frequency of visits				
	Overall	4-5 times a week	1-3 times a week	1-3 times a month	1-3 times a semester
	%	%	%	%	%
Reading books	10	20	13	8	9
Using computers	19	15	15	18	23
Perform course work	15	15	15	17	14
Preparing for exam	11	15	11	12	7
Collect materials	14	10	15	12	15
Borrow books	13	5	11	17	13
Spending free time	12	15	13	12	12
Sleeping and socialising	6	5	6	4	7
	100	100	100	100	100

The respondents who answered never for visiting the library (4%) were asked to provide reasons for not doing so. As shown in Figure 3, the main reason chosen was they did not know about the resources available in the library. As highlighted by Toner (2008), more marketing and promoting library services regularly will made the student aware. Surprisingly, there were respondents who stated that they had no time to visit

the library. About fairly the same number of students stated that the resources in the library were insufficient and outdated and thus used the internet as an alternative to library. Insufficient material in the library seem to be a common problem as the same was reported by Jamil et al. (2013). Considering the speed of information in this modernization era, providing outdated information in old reference book is not relevant to the users.

FIGURE 3. Reasons for not visiting the library



The respondents were required to response to questions on utilisation of library resources and digital library resources. The questions were multiple response questions and they can choose more than one answer. Table 2 tabulates the resources utilised in the library by

the students. Results show that reference book (24%) as the most used resource in the library. This result is consistent with group with frequency of visits 1-3 times a week, 1-3 times a month and 1-3 times a semester. The next favored resource was the Internet. All the groups

chose this as one of the favorite resources in the library. Among the less favored by the students were story books, printing and DataStream. Most students did not print in the library as the cost of printing in the library

is quite high as compared to printing services provided in the campus. As not all students were required to use DataStream software, this resulted in this resource being less chosen.

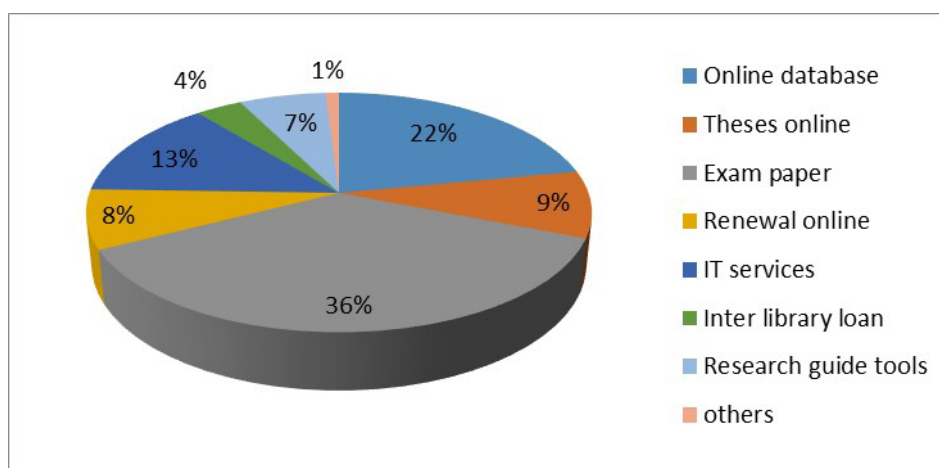
TABLE 2. Utilisation of library resources based on frequency of visits to the library

Resources utilised	Overall	Frequency of visits			
		4-5 times a week	1-3 times a week	1-3 times a month	1-3 times a semester
Story books	8	4	9	10	7
Reference books	24	13	24	26	27
Journals	12	13	13	13	10
Magazines	5	17	4	3	5
Newspaper	11	13	6	13	15
Email	5	9	4	6	5
Online books	4	4	9	1	0
Photocopying	1	0	1	0	3
Internet	18	17	16	19	18
Printing	6	4	7	6	7
Datastream	5	4	7	3	3
	100	100	100	100	100

Figure 4 indicates the utilisation of digital library resources by the students. The most utilised material in digital library was past semesters' examination papers (36%). Past semester examination papers are required in the tutorial class and used as revision material by the students. Digital library is the easiest way to find the examination papers. Online database (22%) was the

second choice of resource that they used. This is due to degree students researching for journals in the online database to find materials for their coursework. The least favoured service in digital library was inter library loan (4%) probably due to the fact that they were not aware of such service existed in the digital library.

FIGURE 4. Utilisation of digital library resources



The respondents were also asked about problems they faced in using the library. The question was a multiple response question and they could choose more than one problem from the choices given. Figure 5 shows that 44% of the respondents chose non-availability of course materials as the main problem they faced with the library facility. In addition, 31% stated that the library did not have sufficient research material. Similarly finding was reported by (Jamil et al. 2013) plausibly due to the outdated resources and limited number of resources as compared to the

growing numbers of students. Other than that, they also felt uncomfortable with the library environment (12%) with a few of them stated the prayer room as one of the facilities needed in the library. We further investigated the type of services provided by the library. Consistent with feedback on problems encountered by the students, Figure 6 shows that 32% of the students suggested increasing the course related books in the library. They also suggested providing the Internet services. This suggestion could be due to the poor internet line that has been currently provided by the campus.

FIGURE 5. Problems faced when using library

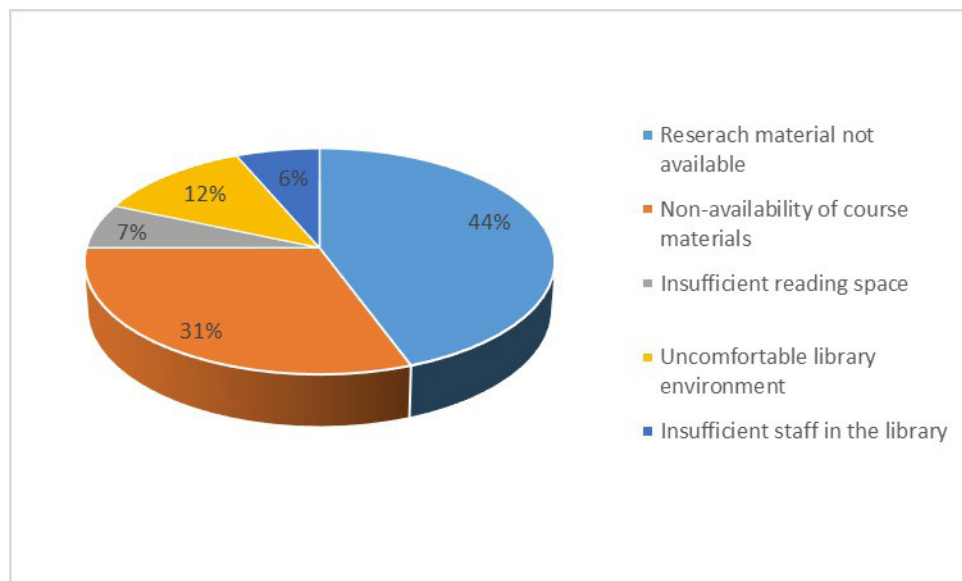
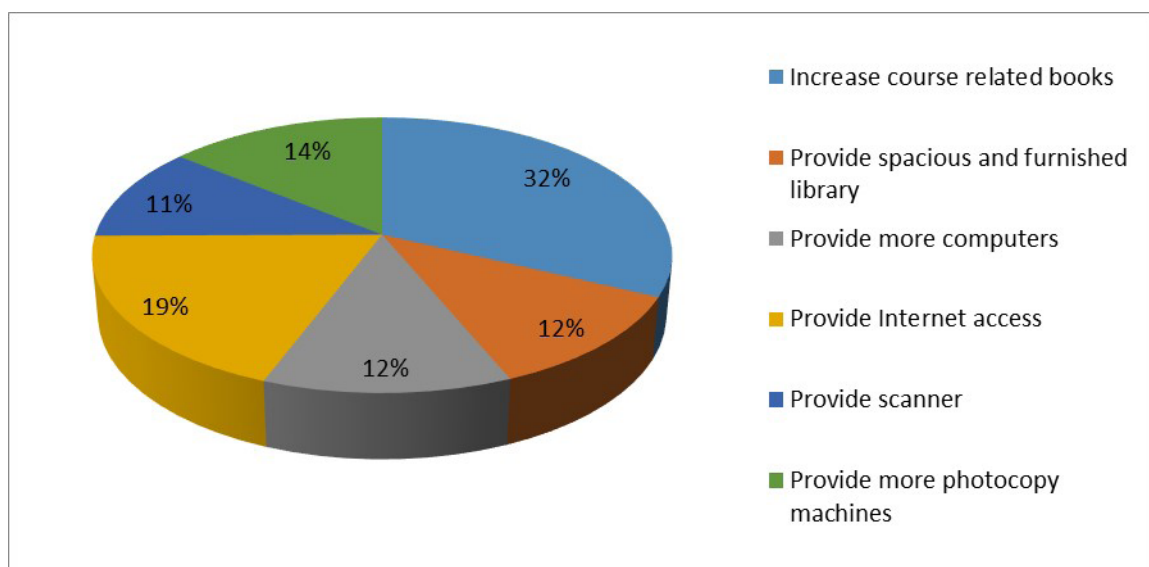


FIGURE 6. Suggestion to improve library services





## CONCLUSION

To put it in a nutshell, this study attempts to further clarify the trend of library usage particularly among UiTM Johor non-resident students. Based on the illustrated findings, it can be concluded that the library has been underutilised for numerous reasons. Consequently, it is vital for the university to provide a contented atmosphere and unconventional facilities as students have to be made conscious of what the library has to offer. Since most students come to the library to study or read books, the emphasis should now be on enhancing a comfy place by making available large tables and comfortable chairs for them to hold group discussions or even individual study. In addition to that, the colours of the wall and furniture should be taken into consideration as appropriate choices of colours can have an outstanding effect on students' mood to study. It is also an exceptional step to consider playing a background music which may be helping students who are sleepy to keep awake.

Other than that, a library should be made a place students feel at home because it can be a sense of attraction for students to make a visit. Having a small cafe lounge near the library entrance can be a good idea for students who want to have a quick bite after a day studying in the library. A prayer room can also be another good idea for students who have to stay the whole day researching or revising because they may find it convenient not to leave the library to pray. Though currently the library is offering photocopying services for the students, locating external photocopying services near the library may encourage the students to visit the library as well. Finally, collaborating with teaching lecturers on the most relevant reference books to be added in the library may also be a good way to encourage students in using the library resources.

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