

Use of Journal Literature by Muslim Social Science Scholars in the United States

by Sajjad ur Rehman*

Introduction

Library and information services need to be attuned to the needs of the users. There has been tremendous research effort and writing on the front of user and use studies to articulate the user demands and develop a better understanding for the purpose of planning. Tobin reported 477 such studies indexed in the library literature from 1960-1973.¹ Despite this voluminous body of research, it is felt that needs of communities and specialized groups are not addressed in the literature.

Study of information needs is inherently complex, and an attempt of global formulation of user needs makes it so general that it becomes meaningless. Another important dimension of studying the information needs is the contextual perspective that totality of 'user's life world,' should be taken into account. Such a study centers upon the user's experience to meet his physiological, affective, and cognitive needs.² Information seeking behavior is patterned by various internal and external motivators which are embedded in the user's social situations, cultural settings, and many more factors surrounding the complex personality of the user. The socio-cultural and physical environment of the user is the foundation to understand the individual's knowledge structures rooted in cognitive and social psychology which stimulates information needs.³

The information acquiring activity of the user can be investigated through study of external and internal conditions. The external conditions pertain to material, environmental, personal, and social factors. Sovenyhazy states that these personal and surrounding

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¹Jayne Culver Tobin. "A Study of Library Use Studies," *Information Storage and Retrieval* 10 (March-April, 1974): 102.

²T.D. Wilson. "On User Studies and Information Needs," *Journal of Documentation* 37 (March 1981): 6-7.

³N. Ford. "Relating Information Needs to Learner Characteristics in Higher Education," *Journal of Documentation* 36 (June 1980): 100-101.

conditions deserve particular attention.⁴ The user needs can be identified by studying the compounding effects of numerous variables such as age, educational level, socio-economic status, occupation, language skills, ethnic background, exposure to the environmental and cultural milieu, housing location, and many more. Such an analysis is helpful in determining the information demands of the users and the deficiencies they perceive.

Study of information needs becomes more meaningful if it is confined to a specialized group of users as the homogeneity of the group ensures validity of generalizations and makes their application more logical. Determination of information needs, in an articulate way, becomes imperative when an agency is planning information services for its specialized clientele. However, the needs of special groups of users and researchers like ethnic and minority groups have been given little attention by the researchers so far. Realizing this deficiency, National Commission on Libraries and Information Science organized a Conference on the Needs of Occupational, Ethnic, and Other Groups in the United States with the objective of identifying the specific needs of individual groups to fulfill their information needs in a more precise and thorough way.⁵ The conference proceedings cover a few ethnic groups but again the discussions are directed to general needs of the masses. Bourne and colleagues conducted a study on the special needs of identifiable sub-groups in the setting of American Public Library.⁶ These disparate efforts indicate the professional emphasis on conducting a thorough and scientific analysis of information use patterns and behaviors of the clientele for whom the information services are to be developed.

Muslim Social Science Scholars in the United States

During the last two decades there has been a growing consciousness among the Muslim scholars of the North American continent to identify themselves as a community to enhance their academic and professional attainments with a recognition of their Islamic identity. This awareness is expressed in many manifestations. The establishment of professional associations, issuance of professional journals, and

⁴Csilla Sovenyhazy. "Investigation of Professional Information Demands and the User," *Research in Librarianship* 5 (Summer 1975): 192-204.

⁵*Library and Information Service Needs of the Nation*, Proceedings of a Conference on the Needs of Occupational, Ethnic, and Other Groups in the United States, organized by National Commission on Library and Information Services. Washington, D.C.: Supdt. of Documents, 1974, p. 266.

⁶Charles P. Bourne et al. *Preliminary Investigation of Present and Potential Library and Information Service Needs*, prepared for NCLIS. Berkeley, California: Institute of Library Research, University of California, 1973.

convening of some regular professional conferences have been some of the salient features of the recent developments. These efforts not only characterize their identity but also indicate the special interests of the Muslim scholars in their academic and professional pursuits. It can be anticipated that these institutions will solidify and thus enhance the academic and scholastic frontiers in addressing the unique problems and situations of the Muslim communities of North America and the Muslim world at large. Many such projects have been undertaken and there are prospects of more concerted efforts in different areas, and distinctly in the social sciences.

There has been a noticeable coincidence between the emergence of these professional associations of the Muslim scientists and plans for establishing information agencies that would serve the specialized clientele with adequate facilities and resources. Development of Islamic Center Library at Plainfield, Indiana can be considered a commitment of some of these organizations to the need of more effective information transmission. However, such information agencies should be the products of felt needs and deliberate planning. The first step of any planning effort would be a scientific analysis of community needs and aspirations. A systematic analysis of the needs of this community would encompass numerous variables including educational and scholastic attainments of the group, their occupational and professional commitments, language proficiencies and priorities, exposure to the socio-cultural setting, familiarity with the infrastructure of information organization and dissemination, subject specializations, and other relevant variables. This scientific analysis should precede the efforts of establishment of any systems and facilities to cater to the needs of that particular group. It is clear that the tremendous research resources and facilities of the North American libraries do not need an arbitrary duplication that would be wasteful. Hence there is a need to identify the inadequacies and gaps in the presently available services and resources and the patterns, behaviors, and perceived deficiencies of the scholars. The unmet information needs and the extent and nature of the deficiencies experienced by the scholars should be explored. At a broader level it seems imperative to look into the information seeking behaviors and patterns to attune the information services to these behaviors. This indeed requires a holistic examination with quite a significant commitment of resources. Any generalistic and all-encompassing pronouncement that is not based on systematic analysis might be too simple and misleading to provide useful guidelines or insights for the planning of information services.

One important segment of information needs is related with the journal literature. Journals are considered the most expedient but costly vehicle of scholarly communication. Research libraries commit a sizeable portion of their resources on selection, acquisition, and management of their periodical collections. The stringent funding

situation, ever-increasing number of scholarly journals, and ever-growing expectations of the users have been some of the factors that prompted studies in the areas of use of journal literature and their management. Citation studies have proliferated in library literature to find out the cumulative relationships in literature at intradisciplinary and interdisciplinary levels. Within the domain of social sciences, many journal studies have been conducted with identical objectives and methodology and similar results.⁷⁻¹²

Purpose of the Study

Because of the limitations of this researcher, it was decided to confine this study to the use of journal literature by Muslim social science scholars. The perceived deficiencies in the use of journal literature as related with a variety of languages and exposure of the scholars to the situational factors over a length of time were considered significant variables to elicit useful insights about the use patterns of the Muslim social science scholars. This study is intended to provide a framework about the overall composition of this community in terms of education, status of stay in this country, and native languages. In the second place, it focuses on the description of extent of use of journal literature, use in different languages, modes of identification of the needed journals, and perceived deficiencies and barriers of the Muslim social science scholars in this area. Besides this description, the following hypotheses were also tested to find out the significance of some important variables as related with the perceived deficiencies of these scholars:

1. Muslim social science scholars in the United States perceive more deficiency in having available their needed oriental language journals than the western language journals.
2. The perception of Muslim social science scholars about the deficient availability of their needed journals decreases across their length of stay in the United States.

⁷Ann de Klerk and Roger Flynn. "A Comparative Periodical Use Study," in *Proceedings of the American Society for Information Science* 18 (1981): 15-18.

⁸Roger R. Flynn. "The University of Pittsburgh Study of Periodical Usage: a summary report," *The Serials Librarian* 4 (Fall 1979): 25-33.

⁹Ruth B. McBride and Patricia Stenstrom. "Psychology Journals Usage," *Behavioral and Social Sciences Librarian* 2 (Fall 1980/81): 1-2.

¹⁰Patricia Stenstrom and Ruth B. McBride. "Serial Use by Social Science Faculty: a Survey," *College and Research Libraries* 40 (Sept. 1979): 426-431.

¹¹Perk J. Lawrence and Noelle Van Pulis. "Periodical Usage in an Education-Psychology Library," *College and Research Libraries* 38 (July 1977): 304-308.

¹²W.A. Satariano. "Journal Use in Sociology: Citation Analysis Versus Readership Patterns," *Library Quarterly* 48 (July 1978L): 293-300.

These hypotheses were considered significant to elicit patterns of deficiencies for the needed journals among this community. First, a large majority of these scholars would be interested in journals of their native languages. Secondly, endeavors of research about Islam or the Muslim world require use of primary sources of information including the journals. It is desirable to ascertain the nature and extent of the deficiencies these scholars have in getting access to their needed journals. The other assumption of the study is that exposure to the available resources and their retrieval mechanism improves over a period of time across these variables: education, training, and other relevant skills. Length of stay in the United States is directly related with most of these factors. This study attempts to determine if length of stay has a bearing on the perception of deficiency. This understanding can be helpful in developing appropriate information services to enhance the exposure to effectively utilize the available resources.

Methodology

No exhaustive directory of Muslim social science scholars in the United States was available that could be used to draw a sample for this study. The researcher used the membership directory of the Association of the Muslim Social Scientists of the United States and Canada. The membership of the Association covers a variety of disciplines including administration, anthropology, economics, geography, education, history, law, political science, psychology and sociology. The members might be students or working social science scholars. The membership is spread over many countries in North America as well as Asia and Africa.

Keeping in view the limitations of the researcher in terms of time and other resources, it was decided to confine the study to the non-student membership of the Association of Muslim Social Scientists in the United States. Members who were employed in full-time jobs were treated as population of this study. This defined group was considered to be homogenous enough for valid and useful generalizations.

A survey instrument was designed to be administered to this population. The questionnaire was pretested on some Muslim student scholars who were not part of the actual population. It was further discussed with some library researchers before its finalization. The instrument was mailed in self-addressed and postage-paid envelopes along with a cover letter during spring, 1982. The subjects of the survey were requested to respond in three weeks. Thirty-one questionnaires were returned to the researcher undelivered because of the change of address of the addressees. Thirty responses were received (42.9%) in 3 weeks' time. A follow-up letter attracted 15 more replies, raising the response rate to 64.3%. It is, however, uncertain if all the rest of the 70 questionnaires had been delivered or some of them were lost without having reached the subjects. Data thus collected were subjected to statistical computation and analysis.

Limitations

The scope of the study is limited to some selected aspects of the usage of journal literature by the Muslim social science scholars in the United States. The findings of this study are indicative of use patterns and perceived deficiencies for the periodical literature and cannot be treated as information needs or information seeking behaviors of this community. This study does not deal with the periodical publications in the Islamic sciences and it does not identify a list of core journals or core literature. The study specifically focuses on the variables of language and exposure to the environment across length of time, in relation to the perception of environment, and across length of time in relation to the perception of deficiency.

Lack of availability of a comprehensive directory of the Muslim social science scholars in the United States inhibited a representative sample of the whole group that is estimated to run in the thousands. The membership of the Association of the Muslim Social Scientists may have some inherent biases that could not be controlled in this study and thus results cannot be fairly extrapolated to the whole population of the Muslim social science scholars in the United States. However, the findings would be valid for the relatively homogenous membership of the Association. This Association is active, along with its parent and sister bodies, in contributing to the efforts of development of more effective information services for the community. These findings will be quite relevant in that context and could be applicable in these efforts. The outdated mailing list, and use of a closed questionnaire are the additional constraints that make the generalizations to be applied with a note of caution. Closed questionnaire was used as the researcher could not avail other options. Conducting interviews with a representative sample required tremendous financial resources that were not available. The other option of open-ended questionnaire was abandoned considering the problems of low response rate and its difficulties for interpretation and analysis.

Analysis

Tables 1-3 give frequencies of Muslim social science scholars for their native languages, educational background, and status of stay in the United States. The results indicated that native language of 45.5% of these scholars is Arabic while the percentages of those having Urdu, English, and Persian native languages are respectively 34.1, 15.9, and 4.5. Sixty percent of the respondents had earned their Ph.D. degree, 35.6% held master's degree whereas 4.4% had B.A. degree. Status of the respondents in terms of stay and length of stay might have definite bearing on their exposure to the environmental and situational factors and may be vital in shaping their information needs and the ways in which they try to satisfy them. It was found that 20% of the subjects were

U.S. citizens by birth, 48% had acquired citizenship by naturalization, 6.7% were permanent residents, and 24.4% had student or tourist visas. Length of stay of the respondents is shown in Table 9.

TABLE 1
NATIVE LANGUAGES

N = 44

Language	Frequency	Percentage
Arabic	20	45.5
Urdu	15	34.1
English	7	15.9
Persian	2	4.5

TABLE 2
EDUCATION

N = 45

Degree	Frequency	Percentage
Ph.D.	27	60.0
Master's	16	35.6
B.A.	2	4.4

TABLE 3
STATUS OF STAY IN THE UNITED STATES

N = 45

Status	Frequency	Percentage
Born citizen	9	20.0
Adopted citizenship	22	48.9
Student/Tourist visa	11	24.4
Permanent resident	3	6.7

The respondents were asked to specify their areas of specialization and these specializations were categorized into twelve fields or disciplines. Nine of the respondents were in the field of education, 5 in anthropology and history, 4 in economics, and 3 in each of the following areas: administration/management, political science, sociology, linguistics, philosophy, geography, and religion. Two respondents were found in each of the following categories: law, psychology, and journalism.

The respondents were asked to name the principal languages in which

they needed journals. Table 4 illustrates the breakdown of the languages in which the Muslim social science scholars needed journals corresponding to frequency of each language's use.

TABLE 4
USE OF JOURNAL LITERATURE LANGUAGE-WISE

N = 45

Language	Frequency	Language	Frequency
English	45	Persian	3
Arabic	23	Malyalam	1
French	10	Russian	1
Urdu	9	Sindhi	1
German	3	Tamil	1
Spanish	3		

Table 5 gives frequency of each language in which scholars needed journals according to their prioritization in 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th priority ranks.

TABLE 5
PRIORITY RANKS OF PERIODICAL LITERATURE LANGUAGE-WISE

N = 45

Language	1st priority	2nd priority	3rd priority	4th priority
English	39	6	--	--
Arabic	5	13	5	--
Urdu	1	7	1	--
French	--	3	4	3
German	--	--	2	--
Others	--	2	3	2

The results show that all the scholars needed English language journals and 39 of them gave English journals first priority rank. Twenty-three scholars needed Arabic language journals, 5 of them giving it the first priority rank, thirteen of them attaching second priority while five giving it third priority ranking. Though ten scholars needed French language journals but priorities attached to them were relatively less significant; none gave it first priority, 3 mentioned second priority, 4 gave third priority, and three attached fourth priority. Urdu language journals priorities were ranked by nine scholars, one giving it top priority, seven attaching second priority while one giving third

priority. None of the other languages was given first priority rank, and relative importance given to them was much too low. Arabic and Urdu languages emerge as two major languages other than English in which these scholars needed journals. The western languages were mentioned 62 times in total as compared to 38 times' mention of lthe oriental languages.

Table 6 gives a language breakdown of the approximate number of journals mentioned by these scholars that they needed during the month prior to filling out the questionnaire. The respondents were asked to give approximate number of the journals and not the exact titles so the element of overlap was not accounted for in this counting. If the famous 80/20 rule of librarianship is the norm, this overlap would be considerable and the actual number of titles will be far less than the numbers given in the table.

TABLE 6

JOURNALS NEEDED IN ONE MONTH LANGUAGE-WISE

N = 43

Language	No. of journal titles	Number of users	Mean
English	261	43	5.9
Arabic	99	23	4.3
French	24	7	3.4
Urdu	20	7	2.9
Persian	9	1	9.0
Spanish	4	1	4.0
German	2	1	2.0

English has the maximum number of users as well as titles and the mean score per user is 5.9. Arabic ranks second with a mean score of 4.3, and French ranks third with a mean score of 3.4. Urdu's mean score was 2.9 having the fourth relative place. The mean scores of other languages are high but the negligible number of users should also be taken into consideration.

Another related question asked was how many times each of the respondents needed to consult journals averagely in a month. Their responses, shown in table 7, indicate that 45.5% needed journals one to five times, 22.7% needed six to ten times, 13.6% needed eleven to fifteen times; 11.4% needed sixteen times or above, and 6.8% did not need them at all. These responses show that more than fifty percent of the scholars are active users of the journal literature.

TABLE 7
NEED TO CONSULT JOURNALS IN A MONTH
N = 44

Times	Frequency	Percentage
1-5 times	20	45.5
6-10 times	10	22.7
11-15 times	6	13.6
16 times or more	5	11.4
No need perceived	3	6.8

Table 8 conveys the degree of success perceived by scholars in getting their needed journals in the languages of their choice.

TABLE 8
DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN GETTING
JOURNALS LANGUAGEWISE

N = 45

Language	Frequency for degree of success					
	Respondents	Always	Frequently	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
English	45	21	21	3	x	x
Arabic	23	3	11	8	1	x
Urdu	9	x	x	5	2	2
French	8	6	2	x	x	x
Spanish	2	x	2	x	x	x
Persian	2	2	x	x	x	x
German	1	1	x	x	x	x

To test the hypothesis that scholars perceive more deficiency in having available their needed oriental language journals than the western language journals, the following statistical null hypothesis was formulated:

$$H_0: \bar{X}_o - \bar{X}_w = 0$$

English, French, Spanish, and German were grouped in the category of western languages, and Arabic, Urdu, Persian were grouped in oriental languages. The degree of success conveyed by the respondents was weighted on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 showing a complete success rate, and 1 giving a total failure rate. These observations were used as ordinal data to compute means for conducting t test. H_0 was tested on one directional

t test at $\alpha = .05$ level of significance. The following results were computed:

$$t_{.05, 86} = 1.67 < t_{.01, 86} = 2.37 < \text{observed } t = 4.75$$

The null hypothesis was thus rejected with a much higher confidence as the observed t value was even greater than .01 level of confidence. It can be thus concluded that scholars perceive more deficiency in having available journals in oriental languages than western language journals. The coefficient correlation of degree of success in having journals in two languages, English and Arabic, was computed on the same set of users. The Pearson correlation coefficient between the two languages was found as .24, though the correlation was found positive but insignificant. The same correlation was computed on another set of scholars who need English and Urdu language journals that was observed as -.51. This correlation is not only negative but also that was observed as -.51. This correlation is not only negative but also significant. It reveals that the scholars needing Arabic and English language journals find a slightly positive correlation whereas scholars who need English and Urdu journals find a significantly negative correlation. It implies that these scholars have a far better access to the English language journals but their access to have Urdu language journals is quite the opposite. Any efforts to supplement the existing information resources should specifically address the felt deficiencies in this area.

Length of Stay in the United States

Table 9 reveals length of stay of the respondents in the United States.

TABLE 9
LENGTH OF STAY
N = 45

Length	Frequency	Percentage
Less than 2 years	0	0
2-5 years	8	17.8
6-9 years	6	13.3
10 years or more	31	68.9

These scholars had revealed their degree of success in getting their needed journals without any consideration of language or subject of their interest. Their responses are expressed in table 10.

TABLE 10

DEGREE OF SUCCESS IN GETTING NEEDED JOURNALS

N = 43

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Always	10	23.3
Frequently	30	69.8
Sometimes	2	4.6
Rarely	1	2.3
Never	0	0.0

These findings indicate that a small proportion of the journal needs is unmet in general. More than ninety-two percent of the respondents revealed that either they always get their needed journals or their degree of success is quite frequent.

Pearson correlation coefficient was computed between the length of stay in the United States and expressed degree of success in getting needed journals. A positive correlation of .22 was found that it is insignificant to have some generalization. The perception of success was categorized into two groups; the first group having a stay in the United States for ten years or more, and the second group of having stayed in this country for less than ten years.

One directional t test was computed for the following null hypothesis:

$$H_0 = \bar{X}_a - \bar{X}_b = 0$$

The hypothesis was tested at .05 level of confidence. The following result was derived:

$$a_1 .01t_{43} = 2.47 < \text{observed } p = 1.82 < .05t_{43} = 1.68$$

The null hypothesis was rejected at .05 confidence level though it could not be rejected at .01 level of significance. It also supports our hypotheses that deficiency in having available the needed journals decreases across the length of stay. The marginal acceptance of the hypothesis warrants that the results ought to be verified with a larger set of population.

Patterns of Use of Journal Literature

Identification of the sources that contain the needed information is considered a crucial step in information use. It is revealing to observe the factors that contribute to the identification process. The respondents were asked to pinpoint the factors that directed them to the use of particular journals. Their responses are displayed in table 11.

TABLE 11**Contributing Factors for Identification of Needed Journals****N = 43**

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Use of bibliographic indexes/abstracts/reference services	38	88.2
Browsing in libraries	20	46.5
Friend's advice	10	23.3
Other	5	11.6

The results show that the scholars tended to use the bibliographic sources quite heavily for identification of their needed materials. Browsing in libraries was another significant factor that directed their attention to these sources.

Barriers in the Use of Journals

The respondents were requested to describe the barriers in the availability of their needed journals. Table 12 illustrates their responses.

TABLE 12**Barriers in the Availability of Needed Journals****N = 40**

Factor	Frequency	Percentage
Non-availability in local libraries	23	57.5
Lack of facilities for bibliographic searching	15	37.5
Lack of skills to use Bibliographic service	8	20.0
Other	4	10.0

Non-availability of journals at local level was perceived as a barrier by a majority of the respondents. Approximately every third respondent pointed out that lack of facilities for identifying the journals was a barrier while every fifth subject attributed the non-availability to the lack of skills for using the bibliographic services.

Training for the Use of Libraries and Information Services

The respondents were asked if they had received any formal training in the use of libraries and information services. Eighteen respondents (41.7%) replied that they had received some sort of training while twenty-nine (58.3%) answered they had no such training. Those who received training had participated either in special orientation programs or they had taken some courses that were partly or totally dedicated to the use of information services and sources.

Conclusions

Keeping in view the constraints of the study, the observations of this study are confined to the non-student population of the Muslim social science scholars. A typical scholar in this survey emerged as an immigrant who has settled down in this country for quite a reasonable time. This scholar attained the highest academic degree and is well exposed to the information sources and techniques available. This scholar is actively engaged in academic and scholastic pursuits as envisaged by the extent of use of journal literature. Two specific hypotheses formulated for the study about the relationship of the variables of language and stay in this country with the perceived deficiency of the journal literature have established that:

1. More deficiency is perceived by Muslim social science scholars in having available their needed oriental language journals than the weatern language journals.
2. Their perception of deficiency decreases across their length of stay in this country.

Length of stay was assumed to have a relationship with exposure to the available information sources and the skills to utilize them more effectively. This variable should have contributed to a gradual educational, professional, and developmental maturation of the scholars in their adjustment in the sociocultural set-up of this society from their alien perspectives. This study has tested the relationship between length of stay and the perceived deficiency of the Muslim social science scholars. Many related variables to this length of stay were not accounted for in this investigation. However, the results may implicate that better orientation and facilities of exposure may affect the perceptions of deficiency. This fact should be observed while organizing the information services for this community.

The acceptance of these hypotheses and the relevant correlation results, however, do not imply that these variables necessarily have a distinct causal relationship with the scholar's perception of deficiency. There are other innumerable factors of educational background. Exposure to library and information services, and cultural, social, and

psychological make-up of the scholars that have compounding influence on their perceptions. It was beyond the scope of this study to have a more comprehensive examination of various variables possibly using regression analysis or other parametric analysis techniques.

This study indicates that as a whole Muslim social science scholars have reasonably high access to their needed journals. However, their needs for oriental language journals are not satisfied with the same degree as for the western language journals. This finding indicates that any attempts for complementing the existing sources should be carefully designed after identifying those resources that are not presently available to these scholars. Some of the scholars have expressed their dissatisfaction with the measures to identify the journals that contain their needed information. Another study conducted by this researcher and his collaborator concluded that the existing indexing services have a depressingly poor coverage for the materials published in the Muslim world.¹³ It can be postulated that the scholars who need information about the contemporary sources from the Muslim world may not be satisfied with the available resources and facilities. It is recommended that some serious efforts should be made to complement the available resources by filling the deficient gaps in the oriental languages. It would not be out of place to mention that this task would be formidable as identification and procurement of such journals would involve immense commitment of expertise and other resources.

Development of adequate bibliographic services for the literature of the Muslim world is another area that needs attention of those who are planning for information sources and services for this community. Further research can bring forth the effect of other pertinent factors to give a holistic and realistic picture of the information seeking patterns and deficiencies. The development of libraries and information facilities should correspond to these trends, observed behaviors, and the unmet demands.

¹³Abdus Sattar and Sajjad ur Rehman. "Coverage of Islamic Literature in Selected Indexing Services," paper presented at the First Conference of Muslim Librarians and Information Scientists, West Lafayette, Indiana, Sept. 2-5, 1982. Unpublished manuscript.