

Determining Users' Perceptions of Librarians' Emotional Intelligence at the MOI University and United States International University Libraries

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that the focus of librarians is on the library users, and thus the need for academic libraries to continue to develop as service institutions focusing on providing excellent service to library users. The study aimed to establish the users' perceptions of librarians' emotional intelligence at the Ultra-Modern and Information Center and Margaret Thatcher libraries, Kenya. The study employed correlation research design. The target population of the study was fifty seven thousand three hundred and fifty three (57, 353) respondents from the selected academic libraries. The sample size of the study was 92 and questionnaires were used for data collection from different categories of users in the selected academic libraries. Validity and reliability of the instruments was done through content and expert analysis and Cronbach alpha respectively. Descriptive statistics method was used to analyze data. The findings of the study established that emotional intelligence is an important aspect in gauging users' satisfaction and service delivery improvement in academic libraries. The study concluded that librarians should be astute in reading, analyzing and understanding people and situations in order to get headway on the best approach for adequate and effective influence. Therefore librarians should learn and apply emotional intelligence competencies in their service delivery. The study recommended that for the university libraries to influence the librarians' emotional intelligence, the top management should send the librarians to seminars, workshops, training sessions, assign them mentors and encourage them to help with policy formulation.

KEYWORDS: Perception, Emotional Intelligence, Emotions, Attitude, Social Skills, Communication Skills

1. INTRODUCTION

The term Emotional Intelligence (EI) means various things to different people and each definition comes from a different perspective. According to Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (1997), emotional intelligence is the mental ability to manage emotional information. It is different from other forms of intellect and individual qualities. Goleman (1995, 2005) defines emotional intelligence as the way that individuals perceive, facilitate, understand and regulate emotions. Yet, it affects their 'effectiveness in the development of interpersonal relationships. As such, Goleman (1998, 2000); MacCann, Matthews, Zeidner and Roberts (2003) found that emotional intelligence has been a common study area, as it is thought that a set of feeling associated capabilities can improve work performance, thus resulting in better firm incomes. This means that emotional intelligence is different from other types of intelligence such as Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and personality traits. The authors seem to believe that emotional intelligence helps people to relate with others and enhances their work performance.

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004), however, argue that in order to precisely address the concept of emotional intelligence, one must have an understanding of emotion and intelligence. Indeed, Charles Darwin, one of the main renowned theorists, acknowledged the importance of emotional impulses. According to Kothari (2010), emotions are natural and immediate human reaction to individuals and circumstances. Additionally, Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) defined emotion as mental preparedness as a result of mental assessments of events or views, usually physically articulated through, for instance, gestures, postures and facial reactions, thereby resulting in particular actions to confirm or manage with a feeling. Owing to personal judgments and evaluations, however, the trio opined, different individuals may have different emotive reactions to an event. The authors; therefore, believe that emotions are a natural non-verbal human reaction to the circumstances that people find themselves in.

Interestingly, Plutchik (2009) and Izard (1977) studied emotions through biological point of view and found that humans have basic and complex emotions for survival. For instance, Plutchik (2009), identified anxiety, happiness, rage, sorrow, acceptance, hope, aversion, and shock while Izard (1977), focusing on facial muscle responses, added guilt and shame or shyness while substituting acceptance with contempt. The duo echoes the views of Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) and Kothari (2010) that human beings respond differently to people and situations based on personal assessments.

Anyone can learn to recognize the different emotions in others by simply observing their actions. Some people, however, have mastered the art of being 'emotionless'; therefore, are termed 'poker face', as they are hard to 'read' (Ekman, 2008). Ekman (2008), however, pointed out the three basic characteristics of emotions that 'normal' people have. These include: signals, for example, embarrassment makes one blush. Secondly, response, a reaction can be triggered automatically in less than a second for unknown reasons. Finally, unawareness, for example, one may not realize that one is being emotional until one is informed by another person. The author's findings resonate with Bagozzi, Gopinath and Nyer (1999) and Izard (1977) whose studies revealed that one of the ways that human beings express their feelings is through facial reactions.

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) argue that in order to understand the concept of emotional intelligence, it is imperative to differentiate between emotion and intelligence since the two are intertwined. Various authors have offered their definitions of intelligence but, this study will focus on a few relevant examples.

For instance, Salovey and Caruso (2004) define intelligence as the capacity to carry out abstract thoughts, as well as the general ability to learn and adapt to the environment. Mayer and Geher (1996), on the other hand, propose that general intellect is the degree of a person's general level of intelligence and skill whereas Matarrazzo (1972); Ree and Earles (1992), say that it is often used to predict a person's academic and occupational achievement. On his part, Thorndike (1920), whose study is viewed as the first on intelligence, classified intelligence into three groups. The analytic, verbal intelligences and abstract constitutes the first group. While synthetic intelligence, performance, visual-spatial and mechanical comprises the second group. The last group consists of practical and social intelligence. These, therefore, mean that knowledge and skill are crucial assets for an individual to possess.

Gardner (1983); Mayer and Salovey (1990, 1997) extend the research of Thorndike (1920) and suggest six multiple types of intelligence; namely: kinesthetic, spatial, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, mathematical or logical, and verbal intelligence. Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) suggest that people can distinguish intelligence based on the information that they utilize. For instance, the trio says, verbal propositional intelligence relates to the understanding of text passages, vocabulary, and sentences while perceptual organizational intellect is the capacity to distinguish patterns and identify the missing portions of pictures. The authors seem to view emotional intelligence as the management of information for the purpose of improving social skills.

Studies show that EI is as significant as conventional intelligence since it could help change the thinking and business models of individuals and organizations, respectively. Cartwright and Pappas (2008) laud emotional intelligence primarily in the approach towards career success and organizational effectiveness while Sojka and Deeter-Schmeiz (2002); Barlow and Maul (2000); Bowen, Siehl and Schneider (1989) insist that emotional intelligence is a critical skill for enhancing service delivery, as it guides the behaviour of service providers. Kim (2010) concludes that emotional intelligence fosters good relationships between service providers and customers. The scholars imply that organizations' successes depend on their input into the services that they offer to the people. Thus, the greater the service, the greater the relationship.

Aside from recognizing emotions and reasoning with emotion and emotion-related information, Mayer and Geher (1996) point out that emotional intelligence is about processing emotional information, partially for problem solving. Kim (2010) belabours this point by saying that employees that interact with customers need to possess great levels of EI. Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) expound on this by including marketing literature in their study that the service employees' emotions that they display affect clients' quality service perceptions, repurchase intentions and reporting through word of mouth.

2. Emotional Intelligence Perceptions

Akers and Porter (2015) argue throughout the world, globalization is prompting organizations to seek to understand, negotiate and empathize with others in order to improve their service delivery and achieve success. This focus on quality service has generated much interest into the concept of emotional intelligence (EI). EI skills are being considered more significant and influential than IQ skills on work relationships to ensure that individuals react accordingly and appropriately (Akers & Porter, 2003). This; therefore, suggests that for organizations, the results and the ways to achieve these are equally important and dependent on EI skills.

The function of EI in the workplace cannot be emphasized enough. Fatt (2002); Ashforth and Humphrey (1995) held the view that EI influences the lives of employees within organizations. Indeed Fineman (2000) cite EI has motivated researchers to embark on a journey to investigate organizational behaviour and culture in order to understand workplace social psychology based on EI. Jorfi, Jorfi and Moghadam (2010) note EI should inform policy formulation and practices by the Human Resources Departments to achieve organizational goals because as Fineman (2000) notes, organizations can be driven by employees' hidden personal agendas, which may differ from the organizations' aims and visions. Jorfi, Jorfi and Moghadam (2010) state further that emotions can play a significant part in how employees behave and perform within the workplace as when situations are handled well or badly, this can produce both positive and negative-perceived emotions within employees and can have a fundamental effect on employee behaviour. While EI is often viewed as something negative, the above studies reveal that it is important to consider its effects on organizations and individuals, as well as on their unity and stability.

According to Goleman (1998), individuals with high levels of EI tend to experience and exhibit positive moods and emotions compared to those with lower overall EI. These affect the quality of service that they render to the customer and Wong and Law (2002) organizational commitment. In the health care sector, [Guleryuz, AydIn, Güney](#) and [Asan](#) (2008) examined the effect of EI on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of nurses working in seven university hospitals in Turkey. Their findings demonstrated that EI and job satisfaction are strongly intertwined. The link between EI and organizational commitment has been examined in the relevant literature and mostly found to be significantly and positively related with it (Petrides, Furnham & Mavroveli, 2007; Mayer & Geher, 1996; Zeidner, Matthews & Roberts, 2004; Lopes, Salovey & Straus, 2003; Goleman, 1998; Mayer & Salovey, 1997). In many workplaces, employees' service delivery is linked to job satisfaction (Lopes, Salovey & Straus, 2003). Satisfaction here refers to the fulfilment of wishes or expectations. Thus, this implies that employee performance is dependent on their emotions.

A study on the way that EI is important for organization is highlighted in the health care sector (Larson & Yao, 2005). Emotion research in health care is categorized into two major areas: research related to emotional labour (Larson & Yao, 2005) and research related to EI (Goleman, 1998). The latter recognizes the importance of EI among the nursing staff (Larson & Yao, 2005; Kooker, Codier & Shultz, 2007). The health and banking sectors are almost similar since both are demanding and staffs interact with people daily, which worsen the organization climate. Due Kooker, Shultz and Codier (2007); Gheysari, Rasli, Jamshidi, Roghanian and Haghkhah (2012) the importance that we attach to money, bankers need high EI to effectively deal with emotive events such as opening accounts, granting or refusing loans and balancing accounts. Looming job loss and any other stressor usually moderates staff's job satisfaction and creates turnover intentions. This is indeed not only a commonly accepted rational theory but, has been proved by researchers, especially in the last decade (Beigi & Shirmohammadi, 2011; Naeem, Saif, & Khalil, 2011). In light of this, the previous argument becomes of greater importance, under the consideration that banking departments try to prevent staff's intentions of quitting because the results are higher costs and poor customer services.

Customer service has long been accepted as a source of competitive advantage for service providers and the reality often sinks and it must work whenever things go awry. If a company cannot manage a customer during a crisis they will rarely, if ever, return and will talk about it (Kernbach & Shutte, 2005). According to Kernbach and Shutte (2005), higher EI displayed by the service provider led to greater reported satisfaction with the service transaction.

Further, there is an interaction between the EI of the service provider and transaction difficulty (Kernbach & Shutte, 2005). In the low transaction difficulty condition, the duo realized more satisfaction at each higher level of EI of the service provider. The reverse was true in the high transaction difficulty condition but, insignificant difference in satisfaction between the high and medium levels of service provider EI (Kernbach & Shutte, 2005). They note individuals defining customer service often mainly view it in economic terms. The notion; therefore, assumes the non-economic facet that relates to the wellbeing of the employees, which, if taken into consideration, would show great disparities.

Organizations use EI as an indicator to divide employees in areas such as the selection of personnel and the development of employees, teams and the organization in order to achieve results. Therefore Bar-On (2006) as noted by Brunetto, Teo, Shacklock and Farr-Wharton (2012), argue that companies must train personnel in order to develop their social skills and boost job performance. Besides, Lopes, Grewal, Kadis, Gall and Salovey (2006) concludes that on top of technical skills, employees need to increase their EI skills to boost job productivity, which will advance the interpersonal skills of the team members, thereby inform organizational success. Kim (2010) agrees that EI and social intelligence are more important than IQ for success. EI incorporates various dimensions in relation to effectiveness. These; therefore, help the individual to solve problems in their life, which are emotion-filled.

Dulewicz and Higgs (1999) point out that EI is intelligence and awareness of managing personal and others' feelings. They highlighted that it is also about sensitivity and influencing others, motivating and balancing motivation and monitoring to achieve self-intuition, conscientiousness and ethical behavior. According to Mayer, Salovey, Caruso (2004) (2005), EI can be defined as the ability to identify emotional and physical state of one's mind and other's emotions. Victoroff and Boyatzis (2012); Chopra and Kanji (2010) stated that the capacities, ability and skills of emotional intelligence have become important and it is almost unavoidable in all works of life. These include the effectiveness of leadership, team building, the worlds that cover network communications, human potential development and performance, social skills, in economic and political life (Raad, 2005). For some, however, these are unimportant because they feel that EI is less important than IQ (Schneider, Lyons & Williams, 2005). These studies, however, show that EI is important in relation to employee wellness. By using EI as an indicator, organizations assert that success is more than economic progress.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed correlation research design and the questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. The research instrument was piloted at St. Paul's University, Kenya not selected for the study. The respondents were chosen randomly to participate in the piloting of the questionnaire. The population for this study was 57,353 respondents comprising of students, administrative staff and academic staff from the selected academic universities. Simple random sampling was considered suitable for this study because the researcher wanted to collect information from library users of respective academic libraries. The determination of the sample size was based on Efron and Tibshirani (1993) resampling/bootstrap sample method. This study used questionnaires to collect quantitative data from the 92 library users'. To achieve validity, the study ensured that the data collection instrument covered the areas under study. The Cronbach alpha reliability estimate was used to measure the internal consistency of data collected. Data analysis in this study involved organizing and interpreting data that were collected from all the respondents.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Users' Perceptions of Emotional Intelligence

The second objective of the study sought to determine users' perceptions of librarians' emotional intelligence in the selected academic libraries. Emotional intelligence was defined by: librarians' emotions, librarians' attitude while tackling users' problems, librarians' social skills and librarians' communication skills. Rating librarians' emotional intelligence is crucial to providing quality service to library users.

4.1 Librarians' Emotions

To determine the users' perceptions of librarians' emotions in the selected academic libraries, librarians' emotions were defined by: considerate, helpful, humble, understandable, and kind. Respondents were asked to rate librarians' emotions by indicating either Yes or No. The findings reveal that in terms of librarians' emotions, respondents perceived that the librarians were considerate 50(62.5%), helpful 47(58.75%), understanding 41(51.25%) and kind 49(61.25%). But they were not humble 39(48.75%) in the provision of their respective mandates as revealed by Table 1. Thus, these findings show that the librarians are attentive to the needs of their users as they were highly rated as considerate. The users, however, ranked the librarians low as humble, which indicates that they are proud and probably cause the users to feel unimportant whenever they (users) approach them for help. This could mean that the librarians may have difficulty changing their habits.

Table 4.1 Librarians' Emotions

Librarians' Emotions	Rating			Total
	Yes	No	Missing	
Considerate	50(62.5%)	29(36.25%)	1	80
Helpful	47(58.75%)	32(40%)	1	80
Humble	39(48.75%)	40(50%)	1	80
Understandable	41(51.25%)	39(48.75%)	0	80
kind	49(61.25%)	31(38.75%)	0	80

Source: Research Data (2019)

4.2 Librarians' Attitude when Handling Users Problems

To determine the users' perceptions of librarians' attitude while handling users' problems in the selected academic libraries, librarians' attitude while handling users problems was defined by: impatient, abusive, arrogant, inconsiderate and proud. Respondents were asked to rate librarians' attitude while handling users' problems by indicating either 'Yes' or 'No'. The findings show that respondents perceived that the librarians were impatient 53(66.25%), abusive 44(55%), arrogant 41(51.25%) and inconsiderate 41(51.25%). However, they were rated as not proud in exercising their mandate 45(56.25%). These findings; therefore, affirm the earlier study that the librarians are proud, as the users ranked them impatient while attending to their needs. This could mean that users easily provoke the librarians whenever they seek their help. The findings are illustrated in table 2 below:

Table 4.2 Librarians' Attitude when Handling Users' Problems

Attitude when Handling Users' Problems	Rating			Total
	Yes	No	Missing	
Impatient	53(66.25%)	27(33.75%)	0	80
Abusive	44(55%)	36(45%)	0	80
Arrogant	41(51.25%)	38(47.5%)	1	80
Inconsiderate	41(51.25%)	39(48.75%)	0	80
Proud	35(43.75%)	45(56.25%)	0	80

Source: Research Data (2019)

4.3 Librarians' Social Skills

To determine the users' perceptions of librarians' social skills in the selected academic libraries, librarians' social skills were characterized by: problem solver, critical thinker, supportive, respectful and cooperative. Respondents were asked to rate the librarians' emotions by indicating either 'Yes' or 'No'. The findings indicate that in terms of their social skills, most of the respondents agreed that the librarians had problem solving skills 53(66.25%), were critical thinkers 49(61.25%), supportive 41(51.25%) and cooperative 40(50%). Despite these social skills, they were disrespectful 42(52.5%) to the users. These findings assert that the librarians lack social skills as the users ranked them low in respect though they were found to be problem solvers. McPheat (2010) stated that people must be effective listeners. Tread way et al (2013) adds that one must be astute in reading, analyzing and understanding people and situations in order to get headway on the best approach for adequate and effective influence. The findings are indicated in table 3 below:

Table 4.3 Librarians' Social Skills

Librarians' Social skills	Rating			Total
	Yes	No	Missing	
Problem solver	53(66.25%)	27(33.75%)	0	80
Critical thinker	49(61.25%)	31(38.75%)	0	80
Supportive	41(51.25%)	37(46.25%)	1	80
Respectful	37(46.25%)	42(52.5%)	1	80
Cooperative	40(50%)	39(48.75%)	1	80

Source: Research Data (2019)

4.4 Librarians' Communication Skills

To determine the users' perceptions of librarians' communication skills in the selected academic libraries, the librarians' communication skills were defined as: active listener, empathetic, curious (asks questions), polite and friendly. Respondents were asked to rate librarians' communication skills by indicating either 'Yes' or 'No'. The findings reveal that, with respect to the librarians' communication skills, most respondents agreed that the librarians were active listeners 49(61.25%), empathetic 48(60%), seek clarifications 40(50%). Respondents, however, described the librarians as impolite 47(58.75%) and friendly 46(57.5%). The findings indicate that the librarians are impolite since the users ranked them low in the area of politeness. Hence, the study's findings depict that the librarians have low EI. The findings are illustrated in table 4 below:

Table 4.4 Librarians' Communication Skills

Librarians' communication skills	Rating			Total
	Yes	No	Missing	
Active listener	49(61.25%)	31(38.75%)	0	80
Emphatic	48(60%)	32(40%)	0	80
Ask questions	40(50%)	40(50%)	0	80
Polite	33(41.25%)	47(58.75%)	0	80
Friendly	34(42.5%)	46(57.5%)	0	80

Source: Research Data (2019)

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In evaluating the users' perceptions of the librarians' emotional intelligence, the librarians were found to have low emotional intelligence. Hence the study concluded that one must be astute in reading, analyzing and understanding people and situations in order to get headway on the best approach for adequate and effective influence. In order to improve the users' perceptions of the librarians' emotional intelligence on quality service, the top management should shift their focus to the users by moving from standardization to a more service-oriented librarianship because service is at the core of librarianship.

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