An Evaluation Study of Staff-User Interaction in Academic Libraries

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Abstract: The goal of this study is to determine the degree of interaction between librarians and those who utilize the resources provided by a university library from the perspective of the users themselves. Specifically, this investigation will focus on the patrons who use the library. More specifically, the study will concentrate on clients of libraries and how they see the interaction that occurs between librarians and themselves. By switching to a strategy that focuses on simultaneous explanations, it demonstrates the characteristics of both qualitative and quantitative research. It indicates that in order to put the proposal into practice, library administrators should pay close attention to the significance of offering staff training sessions on how to communicate with patrons who have impairments. These sessions should focus on how to communicate with customers who have hearing, vision, or other types of impairments. The purpose of these workshops need to be to teach participants how to interact effectively with clients who have hearing, visual, or other types of impairments. The study has also found crucial traits that are relevant to the difficulties in communication that emerge from external sources. These characteristics include: According to the definitions of gaps that are provided by the SERVQUAL model, the most likely reasons for a communications gap are caused when there is a discrepancy between the aims of service delivery and what is conveyed. This discrepancy can occur when there is a disconnect between what is intended to be communicated and what is actually communicated. This disparity may arise if there is a gap between the message that was meant to be sent and the one that was actually communicated.

Keywords: Library Services, Communication, University Library, Librarians, Academic Library.

1.   INTRODUCTION

Students have used digital resources to improve their capacity to interact, foster their creativity, and share their ideas because academic libraries have worked hard to convince them that they comprehend and can satisfy their needs (Trembach & Deng, 2018). "Books and even information are no longer the primary focus of libraries. Instead, libraries are acting as a

facilitator, encouraging people to participate, communicate, collaborate, and create by giving them the resources to do so. This is a reflection of the complex, dynamic, and ever-changing character of the area of libraries, which is dependent on the professional and personal capabilities of staff members (Li & Shang, 2020). In underdeveloped countries, where there is a lack of information services, skilled people, assistive technology, and hazardous, inadequate, and unpleasant facilities at a time when the globe is going through a knowledge revolution (Kavishe & Isibika, 2018; Brunskill, 2021). (Hossain, 2019).

Human resources are essential to providing information services to every user and enhancing the knowledge and abilities of academic staff and college students (Ayoung et al., 2021; Zongozzi, 2022). This is due to the fact that choosing competent and trained staff members who must possess the requisite knowledge and awareness of how to connect with people is essential to the quality of services (Kaunda, 2019). This is due to the fact that the effectiveness of services This is because paying skilled and well-paid people depends on the quality of the services they provide (Williams, 2020). It is possible to improve the interpersonal and communication abilities of library staff members who provide services to patrons by using a range of strategies, such as seminars, training sessions, and employee development. Once it is "mixed with equivalent qualities such as listening, advocating, being articulate, collegiality, and building connections," it will be highly valued (Ashiq et al., 2021). Librarians must learn about the expectations of users about access to and retrieval of material from libraries, databases, and data warehouses. This is a crucial need for the field (Kaunda, 2019). The interaction between employees and users, their communication, and the delivery of information services to users are all included in this.

Objectives of the Study
The main goal of this study is to look at how well staff members and patrons at a university library are communicating with one another. The following are some of the goals that the research aims to accomplish:
1. to find out how well people and librarians are communicating at the library.
2. to assess the staff members' communication abilities in delivering information services.
3. to provide ideas and proposals for improving the information services offered to customers to librarians, academics, and researchers.

Significance of the Study
The increased demand for knowledge from users, including college students, supports the need for libraries to provide increasingly powerful and transformative learning resources. This study looks at a subject that might need further research effort. Despite the fact that the study's findings will be helpful to society as a whole, it acknowledges that academic libraries have, in less than a century, switched from an information management approach to a user-centered/content management approach. This has allowed libraries to radically alter the core of their operations by defining their mission as the creation of theories, human resource skills, information resources, techniques, and personal competencies to facilitate. The study's findings will be valuable to librarians, administrators, and library managers. They will be given guidelines on what to take into account while communicating when providing information services in the library. The research uses a hotly contested topic to demonstrate how librarianship and academics may work together

2. METHODOLOGY

The present research demonstrates how qualitative and quantitative research methods, as outlined by Collins and Stockton (2018), Berger (2018), and Ishtiaq, are reflected in their respective research approaches (2019). The Sequential Explanatory technique has been used. This approach is distinguished by the process of first collecting and analyzing quantitative data, then moving on to the process of collecting and evaluating qualitative data. The distribution of the benchmark questionnaire, which is based on the SERVQUAL model, and the method of conducting interviews are both included in the processes for collecting data. The individuals who take the questionnaire have been carefully chosen. The interviewing procedure that was used was referred to as the snowball technique (Ishtiaq, 2019). Data analysis Procedures for analyzing the data include descriptive statistical analysis carried out with the use of tables and visuals, as well as qualitative evaluation of response patterns. All of the information obtained via the use of the questionnaire is then entered into SPSS 20 and evaluated (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Through the use of data triangulation (Noble & Heale, 2019), peer review (Berger, 2018), content analysis of open-ended questions, a pilot test, and the outcome of Cronbach's alpha, the validity and reliability of the study (Collins & Stockton, 2018) are addressed (.819).

Population and Sampling
Users of a university library made up the study's population. The library was located on a college campus. A representative sample of the research included 180 patrons of the library who came from a variety of backgrounds. The participants' genders are shown in Figure 1, which matches to the sample. The vast majority of responses are females (81.8%) and (18.2%) are men.
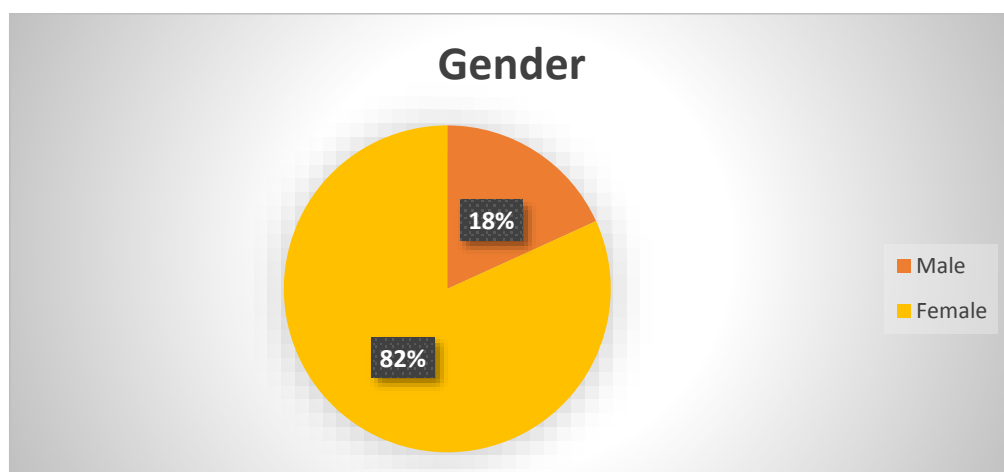

Figure 1. Participants' genders, as reported by library patrons at a university

The respondents' levels of educational attainment are shown in Figure 2. The group with a Master's Degree had the lowest average percentage, coming in at 11%. 15% of participants possess a diploma, with 74% having a bachelor's degree being the most common level of education among participants.
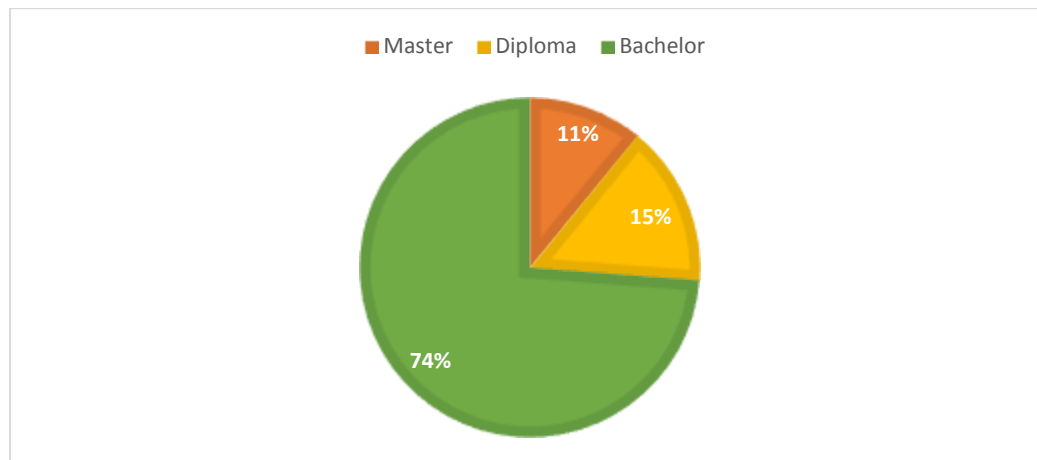
Figure 2. Participants from universities who meet the necessary qualifications

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results are presented in a manner that is structured around the achievement of the study's three goals. Measures of central tendency in descriptive statistics, such as the mean, median, and mode, as well as measures of variability, such as the standard deviation and range, are utilized in the process of calculating the means and the response average percent. There is a provision for a distance matrix that correlates with the values. The values that were obtained were compared with one another, as well as with the average value of the "Agree" or "Disagree" rating on the Likert Scale. The following table provides an overview of the research results about the state of staff-user interaction and communication in a university library. The status was determined by listening to the feedback from users.

Table 1. Statistics on the interaction between librarians and students at a university, including the mean, median, mode, and standard deviation

Dimension	people's awareness of users	Communication: recognizing and responding to users	Reliability: a trustworthy and accurate approach	Security: Feel secure and free from risk or danger	Competency: Knowledge and Skills	Response: Provide rapid, efficient service to the user.	Accessibility: flexible working hours	Knowing the user to provide them with services	Credibility: racial equality	Credibility: religious differences don't matter	Courtesy: deference and kindness
Mean	4.09	3.79	3.92	3.59	3.90	4.21	4.05	4.05	4.02	4.0	3.93
Median	4.020	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.2	4.01
Mode	4.10	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.01	4.2	4.01
Std. deviation	.5821	.691	.803	1.09	.651	.675	.986	.835	.639	.57	.573
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Valid	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180	180

Table 1 displays the outcomes of librarian and library user interactions at the university library. Means and standard deviations, in order of increasing paragraph length: There are several types of response, including personalization (mean=4.0954, SD=.58215), understanding the user (mean=4.0569, SD=.83557), accessibility (mean=4.0569, SD=.98610), credibility (mean=4.0292, SD=.63940), and courtesy (mean=3.9223, SD=.57340). The group with the lowest average and standard deviation was "Security: feel free of danger or risk" (mean=3.5954, SD=1.09743). Competence (mean=3.9031, SD=.65118), communication (mean=3.7938, SD=.69138), and dependability (mean=availability of a dependable staff member to deal with) are the three key components of customer service. Each query is broken down into its component parts in this "Librarian-User Communication" subsection:

Personalized service for users
Only 3.7% of respondents are against the idea that customers at the library get customized attention, while 19.3% are firmly in agreement with this statement and 77% are in agreement with it although to a lesser level. These findings are based on the typical proportion of respondents' opinions on whether or not the library individualizes its attention to its patrons. As a consequence of this, from the perspectives of the respondents, reliability, accuracy, courtesy, and dependence in the provision of information services in a university library do exist and are depicted in a positive way.

Recognizing and paying attention to users
The average percentage of respondents' opinions are offered in relation to the presence of librarians communicating with patrons to comprehend and pay attention to their needs at the library. In order for staff members to get familiar with clients and comprehend their demands for information services, the average proportion of respondents who feel that there should be connections between librarians and clients at the library has visibly increased: Only 15.3% of those surveyed completely agree with this assertion, while 63.4% do not. Only 3.7% of respondents strongly disagreed that librarians and patrons often communicate to better understand each other's informational and other library service requirements, while 17.2% were undecided. Participants' thoughts on statistics indicate that communication occurs and is portrayed positively in the context of delivering information services, recognizing and accommodating consumers, and inside the walls of a university library.

Reliability
The dependability of respondents' perceptions on librarians' interactions with library patrons is shown in the table below as an average percentage. The availability of a staff person to interact with people in a trustworthy way is what reliability is all about. According to the poll, users believe the following about reliability: There is a staff member who is qualified to provide consumers with trustworthy services, according to 17.2% of respondents who strongly agree, 71.1% of respondents who agree somewhat, and 11.6% of respondents who disagree. As a result, from the viewpoints of the respondents, statistics, dependability, manners, correctness, and reliance in delivering information services in a university library exist and are portrayed in a favorable light.

Security: experience zero risk

The research then calculated the typical response rate for respondents' thoughts on service provider security, measuring how risk-free customers felt both physically and online. As a result, the majority of respondents believe that the library offers patrons a secure environment: of the 290 responses, 23.2% strongly disagree, 38.4% somewhat agree, 23.2% strongly disagree, and 15.3% are unsure. Therefore, a university library's standing as a safe place for delivering information services only exists at a modest level, according to the viewpoints of the respondents' statistics.

Competency: Knowledge and Skills

The study emphasizes a number of crucial elements, such as the average percentage of respondents' perceptions of librarians' competence, as well as their knowledge, communication skills, and experience in delivering information services to users. According to the respondents' perspectives on the staff members' competence, knowledge and ability are advantageous: 15.3% of them agree with this statement to a great degree; 63.4% agree with it to a lower degree; 19.3% of them have no decision; and 1.9% of them disagree. As a consequence of this, according to the data provided by respondents' viewpoints, the state of librarians' competence, as well as their abilities and expertise in giving information services at a university library, are at a satisfactory level.

Response: Provide consumers with rapid, efficient services.

In this context, the study demonstrates that the vast majority of respondents are in agreement that there is a rapid and timely answer to questions asked by library patrons: 32.8% of them are in agreement with this statement in a strong way, 62.1% of the participants are in agreement with it but to a lower degree, 3.7% out of 290 disagree, and 1.9% have not made up their minds. As a consequence of this, according to the data provided by respondents' viewpoints, The university library's librarians are now responding to user information requests in an acceptable manner.

Accessibility to the staff and reasonable hours

The research focuses on the following data on respondents' perceptions of whether or not librarians' working hours are enough and convenient for delivering services to users: A total of 40.5% of respondents said they firmly believe the statement to be true, 38.4% said they strongly agree, 11.6% said they disagree, and 9.7% said they had no opinion. Consequently, according to the opinions of the respondents, the degree of users' accessibility or approachability to librarians with appropriate and adequate working hours is at a reasonable level.

Understanding consumers to provide them with services

The survey finds that the majority of respondents had a favorable view of librarians' ability to make users happy with the information services they offer, with a particular focus on the importance of keeping users happy by anticipating their needs. Only 5.9% of the sample disagrees with the statement, while 32.8% of respondents chose "strongly agree" as their response, 48.2% agreed but to a lesser extent, and 13.4% said they were unsure. According to the data derived from the responses, a university library's standing in terms of user satisfaction with the information services it offers is at a very good level.

Credibility: racial equality

Another inquiry focused on the average percentages of respondents' views on treating customers fairly regardless their race while offering information services at a university library. Participants in the research had good opinions about the fact that librarians treat clients equally regardless of race while delivering information services. 1.9% of the survey participants disagree with the statement, which was chosen as the answer by 19.3% of respondents, 65.5% of participants agree although to a lesser extent, and 13.4% chose "No choice." Therefore, the status of librarians treating customers equally, regardless of race, while offering information services in a university library is at a high level, according to respondents' opinions data.

Credibility: religious differences don't matter

Regarding this matter, the study notes that there is support for the idea that information services are provided by librarians who treat customers equally regardless of their religious beliefs: Only 1.9% of the sample disagreed with the statement, while 21.1% of respondents chose "strongly agree" as their response, 73.3% of participants agreed although to a lesser extent, and 3.7% chose "No choice." According to survey data, the status of librarians treating all patrons equally and independently of their religious beliefs when providing information services in a university library is thus positive and at a high level.

Courtesy: deference and kindness

The next question sought to ascertain how respondents, on average, viewed treating customers with respect and courtesy when providing information services in a university library. According to the responses, 13.4% of participants disagree with the assertion that they treat consumers with respect and friendliness; 11.6% of respondents strongly agree with it; 73.3% of respondents agree to a lesser extent; and 1.9% chose "no choice" as their answer to the issue. Therefore, politeness: treating customers with respect and civility is favorable and at a good level, according to respondents' viewpoints data. The following graph shows the overall average percentages of the people who agree with the signs of staff-user interaction. As shown in Figure 3, the research aimed to portray staff-user contact at a university library.
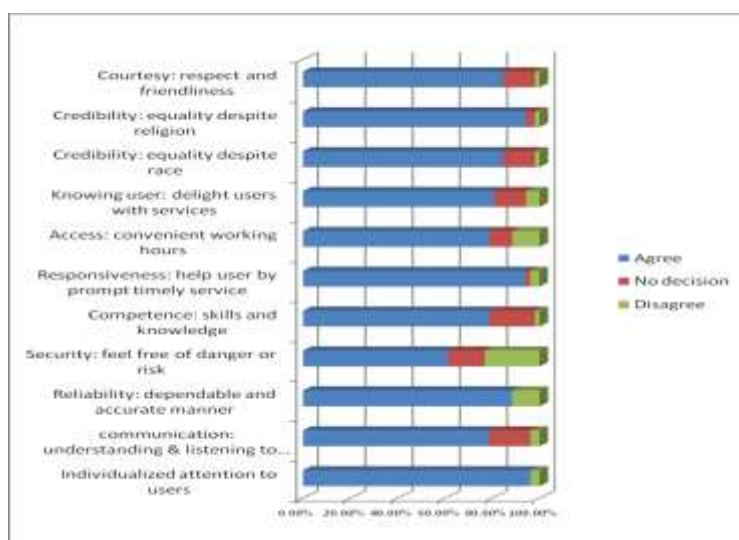

Figure 3: A university library's typical staff-user communication rate

The findings shown in figure 3 indicate that 93.9% of the public feels that consumers get personalised care, and 77.8% of the population has a positive opinion of working hours. There is an average proportion of 93.9% for responsiveness with swift timely services, and there is an average percentage of 79.9% for agreement with understanding the wants of the consumers. While the average percentage of opinions regarding civility, which means treating users with respect and friendliness, equates to 84.4%, the average percentage of opinions regarding equality regardless of race equates to 84.4%, and the average percentage of opinions regarding equality regardless of religion equates to 94.2%. The benchmarks for staff competence and dependability both have high values of 88.3% and 77.8%, respectively, while the benchmark for security has a low value of 62.1%. The standard for security is the perception of being risk- and doubt-free with relation to information, physical safety, and confidentiality. The third criteria, which has a high value of 7, asks respondents whether or not they agree with the statement that librarians pay close attention to their clients' requirements. In point of fact, research demonstrates that engagement and communication between staff members and patrons of university libraries is at a very high level.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The percentages of participants' replies to the benchmarks that adhere to the SERVQUAL model are shown in this research using the "Likert scale." According to the study, 93.9% of the public feels that consumers get personalized care, and 77.8% of people have favorable opinions about working hours. The average value for responsiveness with fast, timely services is 93.9%, while the average value for understanding people's needs is 79.9%. The number of respondents who believe that services should be provided equally regardless of race is 84.4%, while the percentage who think that consumers should be treated equally regardless of their religion is 94.2%. The average proportion of the sample's opinions about civility, treating customers with respect, and friendliness is 84.4%. The question about safety, which is connected to the criteria of feeling free from danger and uncertainty and includes information, physical safety, and secrecy, received the lowest value in the graph, at 62.1%. The average proportion of respondents who agree that a librarian is always or almost always available to answer questions and resolve problems for library patrons is 88.3 percent, while the number of respondents who agree that librarians are generally competent in their fields is 73.8 percent. The last benchmark asks respondents to rate how much they agree with the statement that librarians understand users' requirements and pay attention to them. This rating increased to 77.8%, indicating that they are satisfied with the level of communication in the university library.

The most important role of staff awareness in academic libraries, according to Ayoung et al. (2021), is to include patrons in information literacy activities and/or training (Giray & Oare, 2018; Williams, 2020). Additionally, Giray and Oare (2018) noted how crucial it is for institutions to succeed in transitioning from their conventional roles to information commons that librarians get training in communication skills. Library collections, staff, information services, and patrons all interact in important ways, as shown by the research of Baidoo and Boateng (2018), Wang et al. (2020), and Rohmer and Louvet (2018). That they are intertwined, mutually influential, and inseparable is shown. Kavishe and Isibika (2018), Alzoubi and Inairat (2020), and Balaji et al. (2019) all point out that the information services provided in the sampled libraries are not integrated and that more collections, more assistive technology

devices, and more training programs for librarians are needed to improve these services. Zongozzi (2022) found that considering interior design will enhance the library experience easier and safer for patrons.

The researcher recommends that library administrators give special emphasis to the need of providing training for employees on how to interact with users who have impairments in light of participant assessments of communication statistics between staff and customers. According to SERVQUAL's explanations of communication gaps, the reasons for the gaps were found to originate from both internal and external factors. The author of this study stresses the need of teaching library employees on how to interact with patrons who have impairments. These are the likely causes: 1. insufficient horizontal communication; 2. inadequate dialogue with the marketing sector; 3. poor departmental communications; 4. variances in branch-specific rules and processes, and ultimately, a tendency to overpromise (Li & Shang, 2020).

The study's primary focus is on the importance of modern libraries' ability to adapt Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to meet the needs of their communities' patrons in light of the exponential growth of information technology (Brunskill, 2021). This is especially important because modern libraries are known for their commitment to ensuring that everyone has access to information, regardless of background or means. Additionally, it is advised that training sessions be arranged to increase staff members' awareness of the difficulties users may have while using the library and to provide them additional information and skills on how to engage these users in the environment. Additionally, in order to increase librarians' awareness of the relevance of marketing and distributing library services to their interests and/or jobs, academic library directors may think it is important to organize training sessions on these topics.

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