



Original Article

The Relationship Between Emotional Intelligence of Librarians and Satisfaction of Library Users in the libraries of the University of Guilan, Iran

Sara Jafari^{1*}, Soodabeh Shapouri²¹ Central Library, Guilan University, Rasht, Iran² Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon, Iran

*Corresponding author: Sara Jafari

Email: jafarisara54@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Background: Despite large body of evidence regarding the association of emotional intelligence (EI) of employees and their communication skills, no previous study examined the relationship between employees' EI and client satisfaction. The present study aimed to examine the relationship between librarians' EI and satisfaction of library users in the libraries of the University of Guilan, Iran.

Methods: This was a descriptive-correlational study. The study population comprised the librarians and members of the libraries of the University of Guilan. Librarians' EI components and library user satisfaction were measured using psychometric and reliable questionnaires. One-sample t-test, multivariate linear regression, and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used to test the research hypotheses.

Results: The findings showed that librarians' EI components of self-management (mean=3.86), self-awareness (mean=3.72) social-awareness (mean = 3.42) and relationship-management (mean = 3.82) were significantly higher than the average. User satisfaction had moderate to low positive correlation with EI components of self-management (r=0.65), self-awareness (r=0.47), and relationship-management (r=0.41). Self-management component was the strongest predictor of user satisfaction (standardized β coefficient = 0.556) followed by relationship-management, social-awareness, and self-awareness.

Conclusion: Our results showed that the higher EI of librarians is associated with the higher satisfaction of library users in the libraries of the University of Guilan.

Keywords: Emotional intelligence, Librarians, Satisfaction, University

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Introduction

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the ability to understand, describe, receive and control emotions, that can be learned (1,2). People with high EI have inner awareness and insight about their own and others' emotional tendencies, and show

the best performance in different conditions (3). Today, manpower is the main capital of organizations and a leverage for their competitive advantage. The co-operation and empathy of this valuable resource is the key factor to the success of all organizations. EI greatly affects relationships

within the organization and is a prerequisite for the success of the organization (4). Librarianship is an influential profession in the community and is among the most important professions in terms of providing services. Academic libraries are considered to be the most effective and useful sections of the university. Furthermore, user satisfaction in academic libraries is one of the main indicators of efficiency and development of a library. The mission of academic libraries and their librarians is to support scientific and research activities. Therefore, they must be able to address the needs of their clients in an efficient manner. In various studies, EI has been identified as one of the factors influencing the communication and social abilities of employees in different fields and job satisfaction (4-11). Previous studies on librarians have reported a direct relationship between EI of librarian and their communication skills, which leads to the generation of professional information and the improvement of perception of the environment and provision of better services to the users (6,8,12).

A review of the literature shows that no previous research has to date been conducted on the effect of librarians' EI on users' satisfaction and providing better services in academic libraries. Client satisfaction is one of the most important indicators of efficiency and effectiveness of organizations. In addition, the arrival of information systems in libraries and the competitive environment has increased user satisfaction in libraries more than ever. In this regard, the main purpose of this study is to assess the relationship between the components of EI including self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, and relationship-management of librarians with library users' satisfaction in the University of Guilan.

Methods

Study population

The statistical population of this descriptive-correlational study consisted of two groups. The first group was all 35 librarians working at the University of Guilan in 2015. The second group was library users of the University of Guilan (11 libraries, 16000 students). Based on the Cochran formula, 375 students were selected from all the educational groups by convenience sampling method to answer the questions about user satisfaction. To evaluate the satisfaction of library users about the librarian, a total of 11 library users, i.e. the ratio of 375 users to 35 librarian were considered for each librarian. Then, the mean of the 11 scores of satisfaction questionnaire completed by the users was calculated and recorded for the relevant librarian.

Variables

EI was defined and measured in terms of the following components:

Self-awareness defined as understanding one's emotions was measured with the components of familiarity with emotions based on experience, evaluation of major and minor events due to some accidents, meaningfulness of emotions and feelings in life, willingness to share emotions with colleagues, and recognition of emotions through personal experience.

Self-management defined as managing one's emotions was measured with the components of talking to others about problems, overcoming problems if faced with them, expecting to do things at best, the ability to control feelings, awareness of changes in feelings, using mental states to manage the emerged situations, achievement of desirable outcomes for personal motivation.

Social-awareness defined as managing others' emotions was measured with the components of recognition and understanding of nonverbal messages of others, recognition of emotions of others by looking at their faces, awareness of the transmission of nonverbal messages of others, understanding others' emotions through listening to their tone of speaking, encouraging colleagues for doing a good job, and recognizing the feelings of others by looking at them.

Relationship-management defined as implementing emotion was measured with the components of good influence on others with regard to showing work functions, stabilizing positive feelings in oneself, doing things for others' pleasure and happiness, awareness of others' non-verbal cues, helping others in the event of their anxiety, and tendency to express new ideas in the event of a change of feelings.

User satisfaction was measured with the components of the librarian's listening to talks, the librarian's readiness to answer, the librarian's empathy, the librarian's asking about a subject, sharing personal issues with the librarian, the extent of librarian's support, the librarian's perseverance to meet the information needs, the librarian's attention when referred to, the librarian's guidance, access to the librarian when needed, the librarian's trust, the librarian valuing time, the librarian introducing non-familiar resources, the librarian listening eagerly, the librarian's face-to-face and friendly communication, the librarian's cooperation to clarify information needs, expressing confidential things to the librarian without fear, the librarian's permanent willingness to cooperate, the librarian working with patience, the pursuit of information needs eagerly and seriously by the librarian, the librarian's sufficient knowledge of the library's resources, the librarian's training for better use of resources, the establishment of convenient communication with the librarian, and retrieve of requested documents carefully and without making a mistake by the librarian. These components were measured in the form of a 24-item questionnaire.

Questionnaire

EI was measured using a questionnaire developed by Lord and Hogan in 2001, and the psychometric properties of the questionnaire were confirmed through content validity assessment by librarianship experts. The reliability of the questionnaire was approved by calculation of Cronbach's alpha coefficient which was 0.75 for self-management, 0.74 for self-awareness, 0.76 for social-awareness, 0.77 for relationship-management, and 0.77 for the entire EI questionnaire. User satisfaction was assessed by a researcher-made questionnaire of user satisfaction in a study by Zeinivandi (13). The reliability of this questionnaire confirmed by Cronbach's alpha (0.78). In order to collect the necessary data, the researcher visited the libraries and provided the librarians and clients with the self-administered questionnaires.

Statistical analysis

The data were as mean and standard deviation. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to examine the normality of the data. One-sample t-test, multivariate linear regression, and Pearson's correlation coefficient were used to investigate the research hypothesis. All statistical analysis was performed in SPSS version 21.

Results

The findings showed that 34.29% of the librarians were male and 65.71% were female while 66.40% of the users were male and 33.60% were female. As a result, females dominated the librarians and males dominated the users. Most librarians (42.86%) were 36 to 45 years old and 14.29% of them were under 35. Most users (72.27%) were 20 to 30 years old and 3.20% of them were under 20. Most librarians (51.43%) and users (59.20%) had a bachelor's degree. The most frequent work history among librarians was 16 to 25 years (40%).

Table 1 shows the mean score of EI components among librarians working at the University of Guilan. According to Table 1, the components of EI (self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship-management) were significantly higher than average (average = 3).

Table 1. The Scores of Emotional Intelligence Components Among librarians of the University of Guilan

Components	Mean	Standard Deviation
Self-management	3.86	0.440
Self-awareness	3.72	0.537
Social-awareness	3.42	0.466
Relationship-management	3.84	0.556

User satisfaction with services was measured by items 1 through 24 in the User Satisfaction Questionnaire. Frequency distribution of answers to these 24 items is presented in Table 2. According to table 2, among the factors of continuous commitment, the components of "librarian's trust", "librarian's working with patience", and "librarian's guidance" had the highest means of 4.22, 4.02 and 3.99, respectively; and the components of "sharing personal issues with the librarian", "expressing confidential things to the librarian without fear", and "the extent of librarian's support" had the lowest mean scores.

There was significant moderate positive correlation between user satisfactions with EI component of self-management (0.656), and significant low positive correlation with EI component of self-awareness (0.471), and relationship-management (0.415), and significant negligible correlation with EI component of social-awareness (0.252). The results of the multivariate regression model of EI components predicting user satisfaction are presented in table 3. According to the value of the coefficient of determination, EI accounted for 50.7% variation in user satisfaction.

All of the EI components had direct and significant relationship with the user satisfaction score, such that an increase in the score of self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, and relationship-management increased user satisfaction. Self-management component was the strongest predictor of user satisfaction (standardized β coefficient = 0.556) followed by relationship-management, social-awareness, and self-awareness ranked first to fourth with a standardized β coefficient of 0.142, 0.124, and 0.11, respectively.

Table 2. The Scores of the User Satisfaction Items About Librarians Services

Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Librarian's listening to talks	3.94	0.994
The librarian's readiness to answer	3.85	1.015
The librarian's empathy	3.70	1.066
The librarian's asking about the required subject	3.65	1.195
Sharing personal issues with the librarian	2.66	1.312
The extent of librarian's support	3.48	1.230
The librarian's perseverance to meet the information needs	3.90	1.085
Librarian's attention when referred to	3.81	1.022
Librarian's guidance	3.99	1.013
Access to the librarian when needed	3.87	1.050
Librarian's trust	3.77	1.049
Librarian's valuing time	4.22	2.877
Librarian's introducing non-familiar resources	3.88	1.196
Librarian's listening eagerly	3.70	1.127
Librarian's face-to-face and friendly communication	3.63	1.088
Librarian's cooperation to clarify information needs	3.66	1.100
Expressing confidential things to the librarian without fear	2.73	1.293
Librarian's permanent willingness to cooperate	3.82	0.982
Librarian's working with patience	4.02	0.941
The pursuit of information needs eagerly and seriously by the librarian	3.94	1.021
Librarian's sufficient knowledge of the library resources	3.98	1.082
Librarian's training for better use of resources	3.59	1.129
The establishment of convenient communication with the librarian	3.65	1.030
Librarian's retrieving requested documents carefully and without making a mistake	3.89	1.026

Table 3. Estimates of the Association Between Emotional Intelligence Components and User Satisfaction Using Linear Regression Model

Variable	B coefficient	T statistic	P-value
Self-management	1.109	13.788	0.001
Self-awareness	0.165	2.181	0.030
Social-awareness	0.199	3.133	0.002
Relationship-management	0.214	3.063	0.002

Discussion

The findings of current study showed the EI of librarians as a significant predictor of library users' satisfaction. Skilled and efficient manpower is one of the most important tools for achieving the goals of an organization. One of the factors that greatly affect each person's organizational behavior is EI (12). Management of emotions and feelings can actually increase employees' productivity in an organization (14). One of the most important indicators of efficiency and effectiveness of organizations is the satisfaction of their clients. In addition, today, information systems in libraries have created a competitive environment. In order to survive in a competitive information environment, academic libraries try to improve the quality of their services (15). It appears possible to improve user satisfaction in libraries by focusing on EI as one of the important conditions in the process of employing librarians. Nevertheless, EI is currently not seriously considered in employing librarians.

The results of this study showed that the mean of EI and its related components (self-management, self-awareness, social-awareness, relationship-management) was higher than average, hence indicating that the status of the EI of librarians in University of Guilan is at a desirable level. The findings of this study at this stage were not consistent with the findings of Sha'bani et al. (16) and Amraei et al. (8). It appears that the high EI of librarians at the University of Guilan is attributed to the fact that their continuous interaction with students, professors and researchers help these librarians to satisfy their clients by enhancing their EI skills through self-study so that they can be more effective and efficient at workplace.

Furthermore, according to the results of this study, among the components of user satisfaction, "librarian's trust", "librarian's working with patience", and "librarian's guidance" had the highest means and the components of "sharing personal issues with the librarian", "expressing confidential things to the librarian without fear", and "the extent of librarian's support" had the lowest means. User satisfaction with the librarians of the University of Guilan was due to the fact that most librarians working at the University of Guilan have a degree in librarianship. Librarians have received the necessary training during the course of the basics of reference work at the undergraduate level as well as in the management courses at the postgraduate level.

Previous studies have focused on the relationship between librarian's EI and their job satisfaction and communication skills (8,17). Based on the literature review, this study was the first to address the relationship between librarian's EI and user satisfaction. Based on the results of this study, the highest correlation was found between user satisfaction and the component of self-management in the librarians of the

University of Guilan. This means that librarians who have the ability to control emotions, who use good mental states to help themselves and maintain their status when confronted with obstacles, and who motivate themselves through achievement of their desired results, will be successful in managing the library as well as in satisfying users in academic libraries, which is one of the main indicators of library efficiency and development. In a previous study by Mills et al., EI was an effective strategy for creating interactions between users and librarians (12). In a study by Oloajo et al., the dimensions of EI had a direct relationship with the efficiency of librarians (6).

Conclusion

This study revealed a positive and significant relationship between librarians' EI and user satisfaction at libraries of the University of Guilan. Librarians who have employ EI provide services in a way that are more satisfactory. Therefore, having a desirable level of EI for a librarian is necessary to satisfy the users of the library, which can be improved through its establishment as one of the requirements for a librarian at the recruitment stage, self-study by the already-employed librarians, and also the arrangement of specialized in-service courses.

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Ethical consideration

This study has been approved by scientific Review Board of Islamic Azad University, Tonekabon Branch, Iran.

Conflicts of interests

Authors declared no conflict of interest.

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