



## Emotional Intelligence of Librarians in Serving Users at the Library of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara

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### ABSTRACT

*Emotional intelligence is a crucial aspect in enhancing the quality and supporting the effectiveness of librarian services to library users in academic libraries. In the university library environment, interactions between librarians and users are not solely related to the technical aspects of information retrieval but also to the social and emotional dynamics that play a role in creating a positive user experience. This study aims to examine the strategies employed by librarians in utilizing their emotional intelligence to serve users and to identify the challenges they face in applying emotional intelligence in their service delivery at the University of Muhammadiyah North Sumatra Library. This research adopts a descriptive approach to provide an overview of the conditions or phenomena observed. The methodology employed is a qualitative approach, utilizing data collection techniques such as observation, interviews, and literature review. The findings from interviews with four informants indicate that librarians with high emotional intelligence are better able to communicate empathetically, assist users more effectively in information retrieval, and provide a more positive service experience for users. The implications of this study underscore the importance of training and developing emotional intelligence among librarians as part of a strategy to enhance the quality of library services.*

**Keywords:** Emotional Intelligence; Library; Librarian; Library Service; Library User

## 1. INTRODUCTION

College libraries are information resource centers always involved in problems in information retrieval (Cox, 2023). Librarians must be able to handle such things that happen in their libraries in this case librarians are able to carry out problem management in the library (Glusker et al., 2022). College libraries have the responsibility of organizing information services and interacting with many individuals

from various backgrounds (Abumandour, 2021). This can potentially lead to misunderstandings or lack of sensitivity among them (Sumaryati et al., 2022). According to Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 43 of 2007 on librarians are individuals who have competencies obtained through education and/or training in librarianship, and have duties and responsibilities to carry out library management and services, the development of librarians' emotional intelligence is a very important aspect (Indonesia Law No. 43, 2007).

With high emotional intelligence, librarians can be more effective in interacting with users, understanding their needs, and providing satisfactory services (Chigeda et al., 2022). With the librarian, the library can carry out its duties, functions and roles properly in order to provide information to students (Andini & Wijayanti, 2023). Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and utilize one's own and others' emotions effectively (Drigas et al., 2021). This ability plays an important role in connecting with others, coping with stress, and succeeding in various aspects of life (Liu & Boyatzis, 2021). Librarians must be able to adjust the situation in communicating from different ethnic groups by being able to adjust the information needs of these visitors (AuYoung et al., 2023).

Library service is the main element that defines the existence of a library (Asemi et al., 2021), while the attitude of librarians affects the quality of service delivery (Alam, 2021). The main objective of libraries is to provide resources that support users' development in professional, personal, cultural, and academic aspects through the provision of relevant materials and services (Rafiq et al., 2021). To achieve this goal, it is very important that every library service is of high quality, because a quality service will ensure effectiveness in its implementation (Twum et al., 2022). In this case the librarian must be able to manage the problems contained in the library (Harini et al., 2023). Which is widely known, namely university libraries must carry out library services and be able to interact with more than one individual (Fasae et al., 2021). The possibility of conflict between them remains, given the diverse backgrounds of many individuals. Therefore, various factors can trigger conflict (Nwofor et al., 2024) in various types of organizations, including libraries.

Valentene shares that conflict refers to disagreements between individuals and other individuals or between individuals and groups within an organization, arising from differences in ideas, interests, principles, and values (Valentene, 2020). Previous research emphasizes the importance of socialization to librarians so that they can effectively apply emotional intelligence in the library, create a harmonious work environment, and increase user satisfaction. The theory contained in the *first* (Emotional Intelligence - EI) is the skill in understanding, managing and managing personal emotions and even other human emotions effectively in communication (Bru-Luna et al., 2021). The components contained in emotional intelligence (Görgens-Ekermans & Roux, 2021) are: internal drive, ability to manage emotions, self-understanding, and ability to interact socially related to librarians, this affects the quality of service, the communication style of both parties and the management of work emotional control.

*Second*, Emotional Quality Service is the ability to master aspects of emotional control activities, empathy, and friendliness in providing services (Robinson et al., 2023). Librarians with high EI are more likely to provide highly responsive and satisfying services. (Sitorus & Nurhayani, 2023) showed that librarians who have good emotional service quality can increase user satisfaction through borrowing and returning collection services in the library. *Third*, empathy and active listening, empathy is the skill to understand and feel the feelings of others while active listening is listening attentively and without distraction. Both are related to be important components in emotional intelligence can improve information services in the library. Librarians who trust good emotional service quality can increase user satisfaction through information services in the library (Sitorus & Nurhayani, 2023).

## 2. METODE PENELITIAN

This research uses an in-depth descriptive qualitative approach (Hanyfah, 2022) on the topic of "emotional intelligence" in improving service quality so as to increase visitor attraction at the UMSU Medan library. Researchers chose the approach because it allows them to explore the experiences, perceptions, strategies and processes of interaction between librarians and visitors related to the implementation of emotional intelligence in the context of the library work environment. The qualitative approach aims to understand a phenomenon thoroughly through the perspective of individuals who are the subject of research. There are several researchers who became the focal point for choosing this method, namely:

1. The research approach aims to deepen the understanding of emotional intelligence by exploring experiences, perceptions and interactions.
2. Research Location, this research was conducted at the library of Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra, the library is a large private library and has superior accreditation.
3. Data collection techniques, in this technique have several stages as follows; interviews, observation and documentation.
4. Data analysis technique is Data analysis is a systematic process of organizing and compiling data obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation. The steps include categorizing data, dividing into units of analysis, synthesizing information, compiling patterns, selecting relevant data, and drawing conclusions that facilitate understanding for researchers and readers, this technique has stages in the technical data analysis process including three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.
5. To ensure the validity of the data, this research applied the triangulation technique. Triangulation is a data verification approach that compares results from different sources, techniques, or different times in qualitative research. The aim is to ensure that the data obtained is valid and reliable. Some types of triangulation used in this stage include.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### Librarian's Ability in Applying Emotional Intelligence for Information Retrieval in the Library of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera

##### 1. Librarians' Understanding of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is an intelligence that is a non-cognitive ability that includes aspects beyond technical knowledge and skills, such as self-awareness, empathy, and adaptability in interacting with others. It looks like instinct but can still be learned or trained. The definition of emotion means that positive energy that contains ethical values can help or accelerate the process if managed properly and humanely. The ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own and others' emotions is at the core of emotional intelligence.

With this ability, one can channel feelings effectively to achieve goals, build productive relationships, and achieve success in the workplace. Emotional intelligence includes various aspects such as self-awareness, mood management, self-motivation, impulse control, and skills in interacting with others. In the Library of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara Medan, the application of emotional intelligence is seen in the attitude of librarians who are friendly, patient, and responsive to the needs of users. One example is librarians showing empathy by listening to library complaints and providing appropriate solutions. Emotional intelligence in shaping positive interactions between librarians and visitors (Suryanto & Erlianti, 2018). As stated by one of the informants, namely

*"Understanding every user who comes to the library with different expressions must have different feelings. With that, this is one of our duties to understand it and serve*

*with a happy heart because we have practiced understanding expressions with training."*

## 2. Emotional Sensitivity in Information Services

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand more effectively the sensitivity of emotions which includes the ability to motivate either oneself or others to make the best decisions. Librarians will excel if they are able to manage emotions, both positive and negative. Positive emotions will arise when he/she feels relaxed with his/her work so that serving the users with a friendly attitude and a sense of love for the library, one can create a pleasant atmosphere. Conversely, negative emotions arise when someone feels resentful towards a patron or coworker. There are several skills that must be mastered by library staff in their services in order for users to search for the information they need successfully, and that skill is sensitivity. Sensitivity is a strong ability to feel someone's feelings or situation. With something like this, visitors can easily find information with the help of the library staff.

One of the skills that librarians must have is emotional intelligence, which involves the ability to realize, understand, and control the feelings of oneself and others in social interactions. Emotional intelligence plays a very important role in supporting the quality of librarian services, especially in dealing with users with various characters and information needs (Sumaryati et al., 2022). The ability of librarians to understand and respond to users' feelings plays a crucial role in helping them find the information they need. Librarians who are sensitive to library users' emotional expressions and needs can provide more appropriate assistance, create a comfortable atmosphere, and increase the sense of being valued among library users. As the results of interviews with informants:

*"We help each other and support each other for the success of the library users in finding information through our sensitivity. Therefore, the users are more comfortable and helped by such services and it does not give a bored effect for them to search for information at a later time. And if the users are already confused in searching for information and this is seen from our side then we will ask them, with the active sensitivity contained in the librarian all information searches for the library will be easier."*

Implementation of Emotional Intelligence through CARE Theory One effective approach in implementing emotional intelligence through CARE theory, among others:

- 1) Concern: Librarians provide care for every library user's needs and feelings one example is helping to find the information needed.
- 2) Attention: Librarians pay full attention when interacting with users, ensuring effective communication.
- 3) Responsiveness/Response: Librarians are quick to respond to questions or problems faced by users.
- 4) Empathy: Librarians are able to feel and understand the feelings of the patrons, showing an attitude of care and respect.

The existence of the CARE theory at the University Library of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara Medan has improved service quality and user satisfaction. The emotional quality of librarians has a significant effect on user satisfaction in circulation services (Sitorus & Nurhayani, 2020).

### **Librarian Training in the Application of Emotional Intelligence for Library Services**

Librarians' career development is strongly influenced by their level of emotional intelligence.

It is said by (Hak, 2021) that emotional intelligence has a positive impact on career development, showing a significant relationship between emotional intelligence and career decisions. Librarians who have high emotional intelligence have a greater chance of developing themselves and their careers in various work environments. In addition, emotional intelligence can be improved through effective conflict management strategies. Research by (Valente and Lourenço, 2020) emphasizes that librarians with high emotional intelligence tend to use compromise strategies in conflict management, which can improve their ability to manage conflict constructively. Therefore, it is important to organize regular training to direct and develop librarians' emotional intelligence in dealing with conflict. In accordance with the results of an interview conducted with one of the librarians at the UMSU library as follows:

*"In the UMSU library there is an evaluation every month or every week, so every time there is a performance from one of the staff that is not good it will be evaluated, for example helping each other and reminding each other. And every action provides better education so that what is not good can be fixed and not repeated in other mistakes. Especially for librarians, they are given more routine training"*

### **Main Barriers in Managing Emotional Intelligence Skills at the University Library of Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara**

The main obstacle in developing emotional intelligence in the North Sumatra Muhammadiyah University Library is the limited training of librarians. There are several groups that distinguish so that it is uneven to get training as a whole. In addition to the millennial generation who did not receive training, namely librarians who did not include graduates from library science majors, this is cool because the librarians of the Muhammadiyah University of North Sumatra library are not all graduates from the library science department.

Organizing regular training plays a crucial role in developing librarians' emotional intelligence. However, there are challenges in its implementation, including unequal access to training among librarians. This phenomenon often happens to librarians who do not have a formal educational background in library science. As one of the informants in the library of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara said as follows:

*"Every month there is training for librarians related to emotional intelligence but not all who get the training. Those who get the training such as librarians who are still young with library science graduates"*

This affects librarians' limited ability to manage emotions, recognize and understand both personal and library users' emotions. In fact, emotional intelligence is indispensable in public service contexts such as libraries, where direct interaction with users often involves complex emotional situations, such as complaints, urgent requests, or service conflicts. The lack of emotional training makes librarians less prepared to deal with work pressure and can reduce the quality of interpersonal relationships in the library environment (Fadilah & Masruri, 2023). Emotional intelligence that can be said to be successful or good is able to provide improved service quality, satisfaction with librarians and can create a psychologically healthy work environment (Suryanto & Erlianti, 2018).

### **4. CONCLUSION**

One of the service quality in the library of Universitas Muhammadiyah Sumatera Utara is the emotional intelligence service of its librarians. The ability of librarians who have high emotional intelligence is able to interact with users empathetically, resolve conflicts effectively, and create a positive service experience. With care, concern, responsiveness and empathy, this has proven to be effective in increasing service satisfaction for users. The development of librarians' emotional intelligence should be prioritized as a strategy to improve library services. Emotional intelligence provides effective

communication and being an active listener is also one of the factors of good library services. This leads to full attention to the speaker with a good response, as well as the opposite as if it shows a lack of attention it will have an unfavorable response as well. However, there are obstacles to the emotional intelligence of librarians, such as the limited obstacles of uneven training, especially librarians who do not have or do not have a background in library science education. It is necessary to evaluate and improve training programs for all librarians in order to develop optimal emotional intelligence.

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