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Users' Perception of Library Staff Performance at the Co-Operative University of Kenya

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Abstract:

Over the years university libraries in Kenya have come under heavy criticism over the delivery of information services. The challenges cited includes; inadequate financial resources, information resources and space, Shortage of professional staff, improper organizational placement, poor marketing, low level management skills among the information staff and low uptake of ICT in the provision and management of their services thus impacting negatively on the provision of quality services. No research has been undertaken at the Co-operative University of Kenya in relation to the users' perception on the performance of Library staff. In relation to the perception of the user and hence continue to offer services and the end; the library staff continue to operate without knowing how their clientele perceive their services to be. The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which the Co-operative University library meets the expectations of its clientele in terms of service delivery with a view to recommendations that enhance users' perception toward staff performance in delivery of information services. The objectives of the study were to: Examine the experiences' of the library clientele in relation to interaction and use of information services in the library, Evaluate the outcome of the customer care services offered by the information staff in the University library, Establish factors that influence staff performance in the University library, Find out the "challenges affecting delivery of information services in the University library and; Propose Recommendations to enhance delivery of information services in the Library. The significance of the study was to contribute to studies on Universities focusing on information on user's perception of the service provided; provide long lasting solution on which the perception of the users in the University Library can be enhanced positively so as to improve the quality of Services provided and form an empirical basis that will form and guide policy formulation related to University Libraries in Kenya be it private or public and positively influence policy formulation in the countries of the world especially in Africa where limited research has been done on users' perception. In carrying out the study the research design adopted a survey study which was cross sectional approach. This study used a mixed method approach as it entailed gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. The study population was 180 respondents for data collections. Probability sampling was used to identify user studies and respondents. Non-probability sampling was used to identify respondents from among information users in the category of library staff. Interviews and administration of questionnaires were used as method of data collection while an interview schedule was used as the outcomes of the study were exceptional levels for the different attributes studied and recommendations to improve on service delivery.

Keywords: Staff performance, Users perception, university libraries, co-operative university, academic institution in Kenya

1. Introduction and Background of the Study

This study was carried out at the Co-operative University of Kenya which has its main campus in Karen, Kenya, with three other branches in Nairobi central business, Mombasa branch and Meru. The University has academic Library based at the main campus and branch Libraries in each campus.

Academic libraries, a category to which the co-operative University of Kenya belongs, are powerhouses of information and knowledge that support and influence research, teaching, learning, publishing and community services in higher education and learning (Makori, 2015 & Bature, 2009). Academic libraries conduct users' perception on the performance evaluation of information services and staff to comply with the principle governing the management and activities charged with high level of provision and delivery of services as outlined in the International Federation of Library

and Institutions (IFLA, 2003). Users' perception towards information services in academic libraries strengthens and focuses on the area of excellence while addressing gaps that might hinder delivery of quality products. The users' perception on performance of information staff is based on customer feedback. Several forms are used, depending on objectives of the analysis of the usability testing that focuses on effectiveness.

1.1. Information and Knowledge Economy

According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (1996), in the information context, information and knowledge is an economy which directly involves production, distribution and use of knowledge and information. Such an economy will thus depend highly on the information and knowledge produced by the society to create goods and services. In such an economy, the highly valued information leads to innovation, a noble cause. Information, viewed as a capital, is thus a vital component in production. Investment is high in Information and Communication Technologies ICTs in delivery of information as well as in research and development of University libraries. Production in this kind of economy is increased from basic industrial production to production of high value such as services that demand high level knowledge empowerment. As a result, more emphasis on human capital has high value with enough resources being channeled to the creation of highly skilled human resource base that can utilize new knowledge of high value.

1.2. University Libraries and Vision 2030

Vision 2030 is blueprint by government to guide the country in achieving the status of the mid-economy by the year 2030. This vision has been built on three pillars which are social, political and economic pillars. University libraries have a major role to play in the country in achieving vision 2030. The university libraries are supposed to roll out the information resources that will immensely contribute in the enlightening decision-making implementation of the government which forms the block to this vision.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

In any information driven society, university libraries are expected to play a vital role in support and the realization of the institutional mandate which is research and socio-economic development. The Library should act as a change agent in the promotion of the reading habits in the information industry specifically in disseminating information. This is relevant to increased demands in economic production, thus the need to come up with innovation and apply new technology which increases the speed of information dissemination. Most university libraries, be they public or private, provide services to both primary and secondary users. Secondary users may be the alumnae who request for specific kind of information depending on their need and nature of the library.

1.4. Purpose of the study

The aim of the study was to investigate the extent to which the Co-operative University library meets the expectations of the clientele in terms of service delivery with a view to propose appropriate ways of enhancing users' perception toward staff performance in delivery of information services.

1.5. Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- Examine the experience of the library clientele in relation to interaction and use of information services in the library.
- Evaluate the outcome of the customer care services offered by the information staff in the University library.
- Establish factors that influence staff performance in the university library.
- Find out the challenges affecting delivery of information services in the university library.
- Propose solutions to enhance information staff performance in delivery of information services in the University library.

1.6. Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the sense that it exposed some problems with regard to users' perception on performance of library staff at the Co-operative University of Kenya. The suggested mitigation measures arising from the study will help the management to improve service delivery to all the users. The study findings will enable library staff to re-engineer information service delivery not only at the Co-operative University library but to other institutions of higher learning. The study will contribute immensely to knowledge and ideas on users' perception of the performance of library staff and act as a basis for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Model for User's Perception on Library Staff Performance

This study adopted the gap model by (Parasuman & Zeithmal, 2002). Explains how service providers like organizations including libraries end up either providing poor or high services. The model has 1-5 barriers that shows how quality service is determined by the existence of a number of gaps that act as barriers to most library users. In turn, the library administration needs to identify and remove the barriers in order to achieve quality services amongst the

users. In turn, the library administration needs to identify and remove the barriers in order to achieve quality services amongst the users.

3. Methodology

The study used a mixed research approach which entailed gathering both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were collected using questionnaires and involved numerical data while qualitative data involved non-numerical data which were collected using interviews. The study population consisted of 16 Library staff, 100 faculty staff and 906 students. Probability and non-probability sampling were used to select the study sample. The stratified and purposive sampling techniques were used. Data collection methods included distribution of questionnaires. Data was presented in tables and graphs, and analysed using statistical packages for social sciences (SPSS).

4. Discussions of Findings

4.1. Demographic Information

The study established that the majority (25, 13.8%) of the respondents who comprised of the students, the faculty and staff members used the library for various purposes. The use of electronic resources and non-book materials was very low. The findings of the study also showed that the respondents (2, 2.0%) used the library for entertainment and leisure especially the students. The study findings also revealed that the respondents (7, 12.6%) found library resources relevant for academic pursuits of both student and staff accessible in the library. The majority of the respondents agreed that library resources are accessible for academic pursuits while some disagreed, hence improving the academic.

Interaction with Library staff and use of information resources: The first objective was to find out the interaction and use of information resources at the Co-operative University of Kenya Library by both students and faculty staff. Both respondents were asked to state the reasons for using the University library and the findings are presented in the tables 1 below. The majority (70.0%) of the respondents used the University library as a place for reading and study while (2.0 %) preferred it as a place to pass time, entertainment and leisure. The study also revealed that (15.0%) used the library for research, whenever they wanted to borrow books. (4.0%) stated that they preferred to meet and socialize and do group work. The university library as a place for entertainment and leisure was highlighted by (2%) of the respondents. The findings indicated that the respondents at the Co-operative University used the library as a source of knowledge and learning.

Purpose of Using the University Library by Students	Frequency	Percentage
Place for reading and studying	70	70.0
Research work	15	15.0
To borrow books	7	7.0
Socialize and group work	4	4.0
Pass time	2	2.0
Entertainment and leisure	2	2.0

Table 1: Purpose for Use of the University Library by Students (N=100)

4.2. Multiple Respondents

The faculty staff members were also asked to state the purpose of using the University library. As indicated in Table 2. the faculty members visited the library for various purposes including: study course books (43,75.3%), use reference books/information(18,24.0%), retrieve specific information/unpublished material for research(26,34.5%), and study in a quiet place(33,44.0%), respondents used the library to borrow books(n=30,40.0%), or use internet/e-resources(20,26.7%), online databases (17,22.7%), The other hand (12,16.0%) respondents reported visiting the library to check on theses/dissertations (3,4.0 %?), to use reprographic services and another (3, 4.0 %) to use government publications.. This revealed that the available library resources were accessible and this had played a remarkable role their academic performance. The study revealed other reasons for the student respondents to use the library visited the library to photocopy materials, to read for examinations while just to read journals and to use the online resources.

Purpose for Using the University Library	Frequency	Percentage (N=70)
Study course books	43	75.3
Reprographic services	3	4.0
Borrow books	30	40.0
Use reference books/information	18	24.0
Use online databases	17	22.7
Use internet/e-resources	20	26.7
Retrieve information/unpublished material	26	34.7
Study in a quiet place	33	44.0
Consult thesis/dissertation	12	16.0
Use government publications	3	4.0

Table 2: Purpose for Which Faculty Members Used the University Library
Multiples Choices

4.3. Levels to Which the Library Satisfied Clientele's Information Needs

Respondents from both categories also identified numerous information services provided in the library as indicated in Table 3. The findings were closely related to empirical studies highlighted in the study that the cardinal goal of the academic and University library is to support research, teaching, learning, publishing and community services in higher education and learning (Makori, 2015,& Bature, 2009). In addition, clientele royalty determines the existence, performance and survival of libraries in academic institutions. Most of the library users at the Co-operative University of Kenya indicated that information services were not adequate. This is clearly captured and illustrated in Table 3 .and they include then followings; Reading and studying (45%), research work 30%), borrowing and returning of books (15%), socialize and group work (4 %), and new bulletins (2%).

Information Services	Frequency	Percentage
Reading and studying	45	45
Research work	30	30
Borrowing /return books	15	15
Socialize and group work	4	4
News bulletin	2	2

Table 3: Information Services Provided by the University Library
Multiple Responses

4.4. Customer Care Offered by the Information Staff in the University Library

The second objective was to evaluate the outcome of the customer care services offered by the information staff in the University Library. They were requested to state the extent of interaction and the resulting library staff-clientele relationship which was also evaluated.

Both the faculty and students were in agreement that some effort had been made to provide the users with various services which meet their needs. Such services included: circulations services(25,13.8%), references services(25,13.8%),e-resources(25,13.8%), internet(15,8.3%), current awareness services(20,11.1%), customers(25,13.8%), user literacy programs and knowledge management(25,13.8 %) and photocopy services (15,8.3%). The responses presented in Table 4 illustrate the services that were provided at the Co-operative University library. The library seemed to provide the services that were essential in an academic library while leaving out other fundamental ones that determine the success of the user, such as selective dissemination of information, user library discussion forums and document delivery services.

Customer Care Services	Frequency	Percentage
Circulation services	25	13.8
Reference services	25	13.8
E-resources	25	13.8
Internet	15	8.3
Selective dissemination of information	0	0
Current awareness services	20	11.1
Customer care	25	13.8
User and Library staff discussions	0	0
Document delivery	0	0
User literacy program	25	13.8
Photocopying	15	8.3

Table 4: Customer Care Services in the Library/Information
Services Offered in the Library

4.5. Factors That Influence Staff Performance in the University Library

The third objective was to investigate the factors that influence staff performance in the University Library. The significant proportion (35%) of the employees at the Co-operative University of Kenya library did not know motivational their levels, while (28.6 and 36.4%) indicated low and high levels of motivation respectively in the University system for long as highlighted in figure 1.

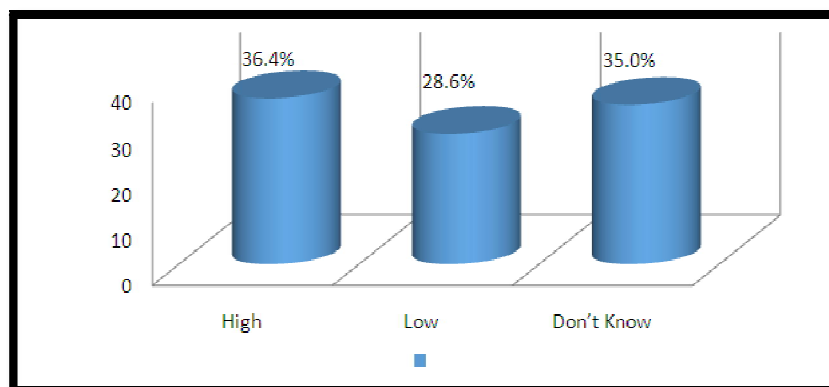


Figure 1: Motivational Levels

4.6. Challenges Affecting Delivery of Information Services in the University Library

The fourth objective was to identify the challenges affecting delivery of information in the University Library. The users identified 6 main barriers/ hindrances to them to access information while using the Co-operative University of Kenya Library as indicated in figure2. The barriers, if addressed by the management of the Library, will make their stay comfortable. And they are, unclear signage (4, 25%), long delay in shelving of returned information materials (4, 25%), use of multiple interface for online (3, 18.8%), failing to monitor/restrict use of OPAC (2, 12.5%), providing of poor quality printer and services (2, 12.5%), Library management not trying to simplify things (6, 25%).

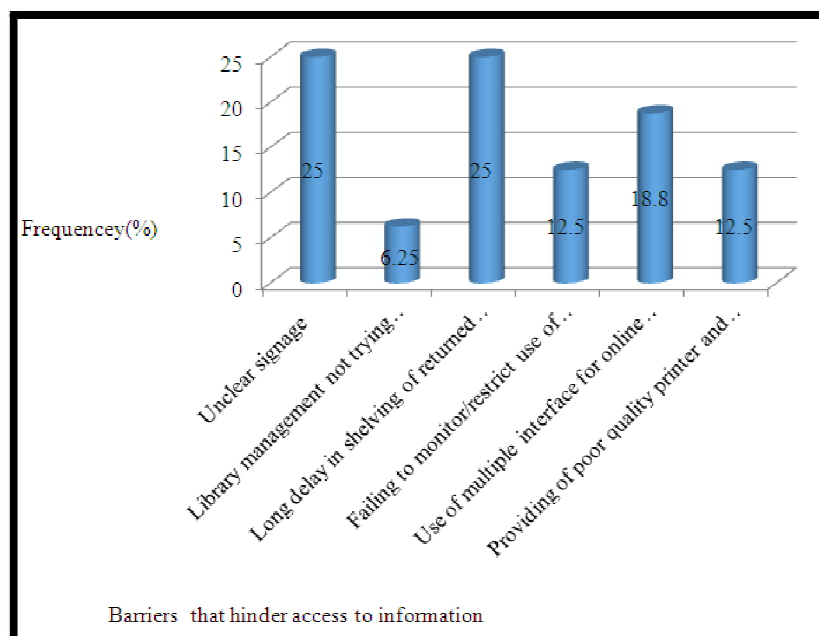


Figure 2

5. Conclusion

The Co-operative University of Kenya plays an important role in providing information services to promote education and research in the University. In general, creating a performance evaluation environment usually requires changing organizational values and cultures, changing people's behavior and work pattern and providing people with access to each other and to relevant performance evaluation skills. University libraries should allocate more resources so as to provide information services that are more relevant to the needs and demands of the student population.

6. Recommendations

The study achieved all its objectives and research questions on the Co-operative University of Kenya library, the study investigated a number of issues central to the perception of the University library users on customer care and relationship and interaction with library who staff who were in charge of provision of information services. Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were proposed.

- Continuous Service quality Assessment in that the University library should invest in service quality assessment on a continuous basis and make the necessary adjustments where users' dissatisfactions are identified.
- Addressing Areas of Dissatisfaction This was the sole reason for undertaking research to help the Co-operative University of Kenya library to identify areas of dissatisfaction and thereby undertake remedial measures. These areas were clearly elaborated in the chapter 4 on data analysis. This research recommended that a follow up to

be done so as to make improvements all areas that were identified to be unsatisfactory in as far as service delivery was concerned.

- Increased Investment in ICTs, Information and communication technology (ICTs) underpins all the services offered in modern institutions. Like information resources, services are being automated, internet is becoming the platform for service delivery, materials are being digitized and e-resources are being embraced. Modern Users will not be fully satisfied unless the initiative is embraced. The department should raise its level of utilization of ICTs in the future.
- Staff Development, just like, ICTs, staffing is to the key realization of users' satisfaction indicator. Staffing steers the service quality components and leads to the utilization of collections. To this extent, staff should be customer focused. To do this staff needs regular training and capacity development on all issues pertaining to users' requirements. All staff should undergo ISO awareness training, where the management should be committed to quality policy communication as it is important in meeting users' requirements. ISO awareness training should be provided to new employees during orientations. Subsequent training needs should be identified by the library management and recorded on each employee's training records after evaluation and determination that it was effective. Top management should ensure that staffing and skills level within the department is appropriate to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness of operations. Finally, employees should be aware of the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of the quality objectives through regular meetings with the heads of section.
- Improve infrastructure, The Co-operative University of Kenya library has been operating on the same infrastructure for many years. There is no remarkable improvement in furniture, technology, buildings and other elements of infrastructure. This is a major contributor to dissatisfaction of users of the University library with the quality of services offered to them, The University library should invest in continuous infrastructural improvement.
- Increase funding, sustaining users' satisfaction naturally requires immense financial inputs. Matters related to infrastructure, library collections and other specific services are all heavily demanding financially. On the contrary, the budget allocated to the University library to develop these requirements is almost static. It is on this ground this study recommends.
- Work environment, the organization should ensure that facilities are maintained appropriately. To achieve conformity to information service process, including work space, equipments and any supporting service related to facilities maintenance. The University library must ensure that the appropriate human and physical factors of work environment are considered and provided such as health and safety conditions, work methods, handling methods and ambient conditions.
- Constant contact, Users who have communicated on regular basis feel cared for and they are more likely to forgive isolated or intermittent errors by the library staff, The University library should keep in contact with its customers either through newsletters, thank giving, birthday parties for employees and holidays and telephone calls.
- Tools for measuring quality, the university library should employ modern tools measuring quality and customers' satisfaction such as checklist, charts, histograms, scatters, diagrams, correlations diagrams, cause and effect diagrams, graphs and control chart, just to mention a few. Users' satisfaction data should be collected and reported using customer feedback data and customers' satisfaction survey results. Such data should be summarized into reports and presented to management review meetings and other operations meeting for analysis and action, other problem-solving techniques that can be used are brainstorming, nominal groups, and flow charts also known blue print, force field analysis and benchmarking.
- Strategic Alliance, University libraries should make customers their partners in the literal sense of the word. This means that the customers visit the offices of the organization and do a rigorous inspection and make suggestions on how to improve the organization's service quality. The customers' insight will help the organizations to be better providers of quality services.

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