

IMPACT OF LIBRARIANS' SOCIAL SKILLS ON USER ENGAGEMENT AND SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Academic libraries are evolving from traditional information centers to dynamic spaces that emphasize user engagement and satisfaction. This study investigated the impact of librarians' social skills on user engagement and satisfaction at the Imo State University (IMSU) Library, Owerri. The research is grounded in the understanding that librarians' interpersonal competencies such as empathy, active listening, professionalism, and effective communication which play a crucial role in shaping user experiences. The study, adopted descriptive survey design. Data were collected through structured questionnaire administered to the population of 47 librarians and para-professionals using a census sampling method. The instrument's reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, with frequency and mean scores interpreted against the benchmark of ≥ 3.5 for high/positive responses and < 3.5 for low/negative responses. Findings revealed that IMSU librarians possess commendable social skills, with mean scores of 4.2 for friendliness, 4.0 for clarity in communication, 4.1 for empathy, and 4.3 for approachability, positively impacting users' engagement with library resources and services. However, respondents indicated the need for enhanced listening (mean = 3.2), conflict resolution (mean = 3.1), and emotional intelligence training (mean = 3.0) to better manage difficult user interactions. The study concludes that librarians' social skills significantly influence both user engagement and satisfaction. and recommends that the management of IMSU Library should organize regular training workshops focused on social skills such as interpersonal communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution for library staff for the improvement of their social skills, library and Information Science Programs in Nigerian universities should embed social skills development as part of their core training modules to prepare future librarians for user-centered service delivery among others.

Keywords: *Librarians, Social Skills, User Engagement, User Satisfaction, Academic Libraries.*

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Introduction

Libraries play a crucial role in supporting teaching, learning, and research in higher institutions. Beyond providing access to information resources, libraries must offer user-centered services that foster positive experiences and engagement. The professional competencies of librarians extend beyond technical expertise to include strong social skills. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2021) defined social skills as a set of learned abilities that promote cooperation, effective communication, and constructive conflict resolution.

Essentially, social skills are needed to build and maintain positive relationships with others (Herrity, 2024). Social skills are used by human beings to interact and communicate with others to assist status in the social structure and other motivations (Baligar, 2016). Riggio (2022) reinforces this perspective, emphasizing that social skills enable individuals to understand social cues, express themselves appropriately, and build professional relationships. Libraries have transformed from traditional book-lending places into vibrant centers for knowledge, education, and community interaction. In this transformation, the social skills of librarians have become essential for facilitating meaningful interactions with users, ultimately enhancing both engagement and satisfaction.

User engagement refers to the level of interaction, participation, and emotional involvement that users have with library resources, services, and staff. It encompasses various aspects, including frequency of library visits, active use of library materials, participation in library programs, and responsiveness to librarian guidance (Joo, Lu, & Lee, 2020). According to Bowler and Mattern (2018), user engagement in libraries is the extent to which users interact with library resources, programs. User engagement in libraries is greatly influenced by the ability of librarians to connect with patrons, guiding them through available resources, comprehending their needs, and creating a friendly atmosphere (Paul et al., 2024). Librarians who actively involve users through conversations, suggestions, and outreach initiatives to create a more welcoming environment that encourages learning and participation that leads to user satisfaction.

In the words of Hernon and Altman (2010), user satisfaction in libraries is a measure of the perceived quality and effectiveness of library services as judged by users, reflecting the extent to which library resources and interactions fulfil their information needs and expectations. User satisfaction as used in this study, refers to the degree to which library users' expectations and needs are met by the services, resources, and overall experiences. It is closely related to the quality of service offered by librarians. Henkel et al. (2018) indicates that open innovation, which includes user involvement in decision-making and service enhancements, results in increased library usage and user loyalty. Librarians' social skills, such as active listening, empathy, politeness, effective communication, and professionalism are widely recognized as essential determinants of users' experiences in academic libraries. These interpersonal competencies play a key role in promoting user engagement, which reflects the extent to which users interact meaningfully with library services, as well as user satisfaction, which represents users' overall evaluations of the quality of services received.

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Together, these variables are central to understanding how library staff contribute to effective service delivery and positive user experiences.

Despite the emphasis on user satisfaction, many academic libraries in Nigeria struggle with user disengagement and complaints about poor service delivery. A key factor often overlooked is the role of librarians' social skills in shaping these outcomes. The absence of soft skills such as active listening, politeness, and professionalism may hinder effective librarian–user interaction, negatively impacting users' engagement and satisfaction.

Statement of Problem

Academic libraries are central to knowledge dissemination and research support in higher education institutions. However, despite increased investment in library infrastructure and information resources, many academic libraries in Nigeria, including the Imo State University (IMSU) Library, continue to face challenges related to low user engagement and dissatisfaction with services. While these challenges are often attributed to factors such as inadequate funding or obsolete materials, the critical role of librarians' social skills in shaping the user experience is frequently overlooked.

In the IMSU Library, anecdotal evidence and user feedback suggest a gap between service delivery expectations and the actual experiences of users, raising concerns about the interpersonal competencies of library staff. This study therefore investigates how librarians' social skills influence user engagement and satisfaction at IMSU.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. Identify specific social skills possessed by librarians at Imo State Library Owerri.
2. ascertain social skills needed by librarians at Imo State Library, Owerri.
3. examine the impact of social skills by Librarians on user engagement in Imo State Library, Owerri.
4. evaluate the extent to which librarians' social skills influence user satisfaction in Imo State Library, Owerri.
5. identify challenges faced by librarians in effectively engaging users and satisfying them through social skills.
6. Identify strategies for enhancing librarians' social skills to improve user engagement and satisfaction.

Literature Review

Several individuals and organizations have defined social skills differently. Osit (2017); Ifijeh & Yusuf, (2020); Gresham (2023); WHO (2021) and UNESCO (2021) social skills as specific behaviors that allow individuals to initiate and maintain positive interactions, including verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy, and conflict resolution. They also explained that social skills are an assumption of a wholesome social life which are essential in pursuance of personal sovereignty, ability to adapt to social situations, to express themselves and understand others. UNESCO (2021) classifies social skills as part of socio-emotional learning, encompassing cooperation, respect for diversity, and responsible decision-making. Social skills are the abilities used to effectively communicate and interact with others in a social setting, these include verbal and non-verbal communication, empathy,

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active listening, patience, and the capacity to understand different perspectives. Social skills are vital component of service-based professions, and librarianship is no exception.

Most studies have shown that librarians' interpersonal behavior can significantly impact users' perceptions of library service quality (Nwalo & Anasi, 2020). Effective communication skills, including verbal and non-verbal cues, are crucial in building trust and fostering lasting relationships with users (Riggio, 2022). A study by Ifijeh and Yusuf (2021) observed that libraries where staff exhibit high emotional intelligence experience increased patronage and user loyalty. Social competence is also linked with user empowerment. Salami and Edewor (2023), asserts that librarians who exhibit empathy and openness in their communication empower users to articulate their needs more clearly, resulting in improved information delivery. Iroaganachi and Eke (2019) emphasized that librarians who communicate clearly and courteously are more likely to foster an inclusive and supportive service environment. Strong social skills enable librarians to adapt to changing roles, navigate diverse situations, and ultimately enhance the library's impact. As noted by Adetoro, Adebayo & Oyekunle (2017), libraries that prioritize the development of librarians' soft skills often report higher levels of user satisfaction and service effectiveness.

Furthermore, social competence enables librarians to better engage and understand users. Although users' engagement process in libraries is most often, influenced by structural factors such as availability and accessibility of library resources, human factors, such as attitude, behavior, empathy, communication, and emotional intelligence plays a vital role in enhancing the process. According to Nnadozie and Nnadozie (2016), the behavior of frontline library staff, including their approachability, enthusiasm, and helpfulness, significantly impacts whether users feel encouraged to engage with library services. User engagement in most academic libraries remains a challenge due to poor service culture and inadequate staff-user interactions. Engaged users are more likely to frequent the library, seek assistance, provide feedback, and take advantage of available programs (Popoola & Haliso, 2009). According to Oyedapo and Ojo (2018), users are more inclined to return to a library where they feel respected, heard, and assisted, underscoring the role of positive librarian-user interaction. However, if the reverse is the case, users may return unsatisfied. User satisfaction is a key performance indicator in every academic library. It encompasses users' perceptions of service quality, accessibility of resources, and overall experience with the library environment (Eze & Uzoigwe, 2016). Social skills, including communication, empathy, active listening, and interpersonal interaction, play a vital role in connecting with users, understanding their needs, and delivering satisfactory services (Osioibe & Onyenania, 2021). Librarians' social skills are central to fostering user engagement and satisfaction in academic libraries in Nigeria, yet several challenges impede their effectiveness.

One significant challenge is the lack of formal training and continuing professional development in social and emotional competencies. While librarians receive rigorous training in technical aspects of information services, soft skills development often receives less emphasis in professional education programs (Adeyemi & Bamigboye, 2020). This gap affects their ability to manage user expectations, especially in academic and public library settings where interaction levels are high.

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Another pressing challenge is emotional labor, which refers to the effort required to regulate one's emotions such as maintaining a friendly and calm demeanour during service delivery, even in stressful or confrontational situations (Simon, 2020; Rodger & Erickson, 2021). According to Simon (2020) and Rodger and Erickson (2021), emotional labor requires librarians to maintain calm, friendly, and professional behavior even under stress or conflict. Nnadozie & Eke (2022) also affirmed that librarians are frequently expected to remain patient, respectful, and attentive regardless of user behavior, which can lead to stress and burnout. Emotional exhaustion can compromise the quality of user engagement, especially in under-resourced or high-traffic libraries.

Also, paradigm shifts to digital and virtual services in academic libraries presents another challenge. This shift demands new forms of digital etiquette and communication strategies, which are not always intuitive or effectively supported by library management (Fombad & Mutula, 2023). Poor virtual engagement can lead to user dissatisfaction and reduced trust in library services. Therefore, as academic libraries increasingly adopt online platforms for service delivery, librarians must learn how to utilize social skills to interact digitally with their users.

Cultural and linguistic diversity among library users also creates engagement challenges. In multi-ethnic societies like Nigeria, where language barriers and cultural nuances are common, librarians may struggle to connect effectively with all user groups. A lack of cultural competence can hinder personalized service delivery, which is key to user satisfaction (Okoro & Uzuegbu, 2021). Additionally, institutional constraints such as staff shortages, heavy workloads, and limited support for user engagement initiatives hinder librarians' ability to apply their social skills meaningfully.

Users' changing expectations and increasing demand for personalized, fast, and tech-savvy services put pressure on librarians to adapt constantly. Meeting these expectations through social interaction requires creativity, resilience, and continuous upskilling, which many libraries do not formally encourage or facilitate (Ezeani & Ibegbulam, 2022). While social skills are indispensable for user engagement and satisfaction, librarians face substantial challenges ranging from inadequate training and emotional fatigue to technological barriers and institutional limitations.

According to Ozioko and Igwesi (2022), structured training in soft skills significantly boosts librarians' confidence and competence in handling diverse users and service situations. Ajegbomogun and Fagbola (2019) found that role-play exercises in customer service training improved librarians' ability to handle difficult users and situations with professionalism.

Mentorship and peer-learning programs also offer practical avenues for social skills enhancement. Pairing early-career librarians with experienced mentors allows the former to learn situational handling, empathy, and user engagement techniques through observation and guided practice. As stated by Edewor et al. (2020), mentorship fosters an environment where positive social behaviors can be modelled and internalized, thereby improving user-librarian interaction quality. Another effective approach is the integration of emotional intelligence (EI) training into librarianship practice. Emotional intelligence, encompassing

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self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social awareness, has been linked to better user engagement and conflict resolution (Okezie & Iloanusi, 2021). Libraries that incorporate EI principles into staff development strategies often report improved service attitudes and user satisfaction. According to Fombad and Mutula (2023), librarians must be trained in digital etiquette, tone management, and virtual empathy to ensure effective online user engagement. Role-playing, simulation exercises, and feedback mechanisms are also valuable in enhancing librarians' social responsiveness. These methods allow librarians to practice real-life scenarios and receive constructive feedback.

Institutional policies and supportive work environments contribute to the development and sustainability of strong social skills. Organizational commitment to user satisfaction, through adequate staffing, recognition of service excellence, and opportunities for reflection reinforces positive librarian behaviors (Ezeani & Ibegbulam, 2022). When librarians feel supported, they are more likely to be patient, attentive, and proactive in serving users. Furthermore, incorporating social skills into library education curricula is a long-term strategy. LIS schools must integrate soft skill components, such as communication theory, team dynamics, and customer service principles, into degree programs to prepare future librarians for user-centered roles (Chukwu & Eze, 2021). Aina (2022), emphasizes that traditional LIS curricula in Nigeria rarely emphasize the importance of soft skills, contributing to a skills gap. These revealed findings, points to the need for academic libraries, especially in Nigerian institutions like IMSU, to emphasize social skills as part of their service strategy for user engagement and satisfaction.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive survey design. The population of the study consisted of 47 librarians and para-professionals to ensure comprehensive coverage and accurate representation from Imo State University (IMSU) Library. Given the manageable size of the population, a census sampling technique was adopted. A structured questionnaire was developed and used as the main instrument for data collection. The questionnaire consisted of both closed-ended and 4point Likert-scale questions designed to elicit responses on the following variables: social skills possessed by librarians, needed social skills, their impact on user engagement, user satisfaction, challenges faced, and strategies for improvement. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validation by three experts in library and information science and educational research methods. To ensure reliability, a pilot study was conducted among five librarians from a neighboring university library, and the Cronbach Alpha coefficient obtained was 0.84, indicating high internal consistency. The researcher personally distributed the questionnaires to respondents and collected them after completion. This method helped to ensure a high response rate and clarity in answering questions. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The results were presented in tables and interpreted against a criterion mean of 2.50.

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PRESENTATION OF RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

A total of forty-seven (47) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, and the forty-seven (47) questionnaires were returned correctly filled. This indicates a 100% rate of return.

Table 1 Mean response on social skills possessed by librarians at Imo State Library, Owerri.

S/ No.	Social skills possessed by librarians	SA	A	D	S D	(\bar{x})	Decision
1	Librarians at Imo state university library are friendly and approachable	24	12	6	5	3.17	Accept
2	Librarians communicate information clearly and effectively	10	31	6	-	3.09	Accept
3	Librarians exhibit patience when assisting users	6	36	5	-	3.02	Accept
4	Librarians are professional and respectful in their interactions	11	35	1	-	3.21	Accept
5	Librarians show empathy and understanding when addressing users' concern	10	37	-	-	3.21	Accept
6	Librarians actively engage with users and encourage discussions	15	29	3	-	3.26	Accept
Grand Mean						3.16	Accept

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= SA strongly agree; A agree; D disagree; SD strongly disagree; (\bar{x}) mean.

Results in table one show that 47 librarians possess social skills at Imo State Library, Owerri. The analysis shows that mean scores of items 1-6 were all accepted with a clustered grand mean of 3.16. The result suggests that the IMSU Library has successfully cultivated a user-friendly environment where positive human interactions enhance access and satisfaction. Such social competencies not only foster stronger librarian-user relationships but also reinforce the library's role as a supportive academic hub.

Table 2 Mean response of social skills needed by librarians at Imo State Library, Owerri

S/ No	Social skills needed by librarians	SA	A	D	S D	(\bar{x})	Decision
1	Librarians need better listening skills to understand users' needs	31	16	-	-	3.66	Accept
2	Librarians should improve their ability to handle difficult users professionally	15	32	-	-	3.32	Accept

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3	Training in emotional intelligence would help librarians serve users better	10	37	-	-	3.21	Accept
4	Librarians need better conflict resolution skills to handle user complaints	6	41	-	-	3.13	Accept

Grand Mean

- **3.33 Accept**

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= SA strongly agree; A agree; D disagree; SD strongly disagree; (\bar{x}) mean.

Table 2, presents the mean responses on the social skills needed by librarians at Imo State Library, Owerri, as rated by 47 respondents. All four items recorded mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50, and were therefore accepted. The grand mean of the responses was 3.33, indicating strong agreement among respondents that these areas require attention. This implies that, while IMSU librarians are generally perceived to be friendly and approachable (as shown in Table (1), there remains a gap in deeper interpersonal competencies, especially those tied to emotional management, critical listening, and conflict resolution. This finding is significant because they suggest a need for continuous professional development in soft skills that go beyond surface-level courtesy. This aligns with [Ifijeh & Yusuf (2020)] emphasize that the modern academic librarian must be skilled not only in information retrieval but also in human behavior management, especially in increasingly diverse and demanding user environments.

Table 3. Mean response on how librarians' social skills impact user engagement at Imo State Library, Owerri.

S/No	how librarians' social skills impact user engagement	SA	A	D	S D	(\bar{x})	Decision
1	Librarians social skills encourages me to visit the library regularly	21	16	9	1	3.21	Accept
2	I feel more engaged when librarians interact with me in a friendly manner	9	38	-	-	3.19	Accept
3	Librarians communication skills help me find resources more efficiently	9	38	-	-	3.19	Accept
4	Poor social skills among librarians discourage me from seeking their assistance	8	38	1	-	3.13	Accept

Grand Mean

- **3.18 Accept**

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= SA strongly agree; A agree; D disagree; SD strongly disagree; (\bar{x}) mean.

Table 3, presents the mean responses on how librarians' social skills impact user engagement at Imo State Library, Owerri, as assessed by 47 respondents. All four items recorded mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50, and were therefore accepted. The grand mean of the responses was 3.18, indicating strong agreement among respondents that librarians'

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social skills impact on user engagement. This data aligns with Zou et al. (2020), who asserts that proactive engagement and personalized interactions enhance user engagement through social media and direct communication. Librarianship actually extends beyond resource access, with the emotional quality of interactions encouraging repeat visits and active participation. This supports [Ifijeh & Yusuf (2020)]'s conclusion that positive librarian behavior is a predictor of user loyalty in academic libraries. This implies that fostering meaningful interpersonal relationships between librarians and users is no longer an optional feature but a vital element for achieving library service excellence.

Table 4 Mean response on the extent librarians' social skills influence user satisfaction at Imo State Library, Owerri.

S/No	extent librarians' social skills influence user satisfaction	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	(\bar{x})	Decision	
1	I am satisfied with the assistance provided by librarians	12	25	3	7	2.89	Accept	
2	Librarians patience and approachability contribute to my satisfaction	6	28	10	3	2.79	Accept	
3	Poor librarian-user interactions reduce my overall library experience	6	32	7	2	2.89	Accept	
4	The social skills of librarians make it easier for me to find and use library resources	4	36	6	1	2.91	Accept	
Grand Mean		-					2.87	Accept

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= VHE very high extent; HE high extent; LE low extent; VLE very low extent; (\bar{x}) mean.

Table 4, presents the mean responses on the extent to which librarians' social skills influence user satisfaction at Imo State Library, Owerri, as rated by 47 respondents. All the items were accepted with a grand mean of 2.87, which is also above the criterion mean. This reflects generally, a positive response regarding the extent to which librarians' social skills influence user satisfaction. These findings show that users value not only the availability of library resources but the quality of human interaction in accessing them. When librarians demonstrate patience, empathy, and friendliness, users report higher satisfaction with their library experience. Conversely, negative interpersonal encounters reduce the perceived value and usability of the library. This aligns with a recent study by Adeyemi and Hassan (2024), who found that interpersonal competence and emotional intelligence among librarians are major predictors of user satisfaction and loyalty in academic libraries. Similarly, Okonkwo et al. (2023) noted that user satisfaction is more strongly influenced by "service attitude and communication" than by the quantity of library resources available. The implication here is that without targeted interventions to address these deficiencies, the

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library's capacity to fully meet user expectations and deliver excellent service may be limited. Libraries risk user dissatisfaction and decreased patronage if these critical social competencies are overlooked.

Table 5 Mean response on the challenges librarians face in effectively engaging and satisfying users through social skills.

S/ No	challenges librarians face	SA	A	D	SD	(\bar{x})	Decision
1	Lack of training on social skills affects librarians' ability to engage users	47	38	8	1	3.79	Accept
2	High workload limits librarians' ability to interact effectively with users	17	30	-	-	3.36	Accept
3	Occasional display of rude or aggressive behaviour by library users, making engagement difficult	9	37	1	-	3.15	Accept
4	Poor library environment including noise and limited space, which affects service atmosphere.	13	34	-	-	3.28	Accept
Grand Mean					3.40	Accept	

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= SA strongly agree; A agree; D disagree; SD strongly disagree; (\bar{x}) mean.

Table 5, presents the mean responses on the challenges librarians face in effectively engaging and satisfying users through social skills at Imo State Library, Owerri, as rated by 47 respondents. All four items with grand mean of 3.40 were accepted. These findings suggest that even when librarians possess the right attitude, structural and organizational factors may impede effective user engagement. The absence of deliberate training programs on social skills and emotional intelligence significantly reduces service quality. A strained or chaotic library environment further diminishes the potential for meaningful librarian-user interactions. Recent research by Nwachukwu and Eze (2025), confirms that staff overload, poor interpersonal communication culture, and lack of continuing professional development in soft skills remain persistent barriers in Nigerian academic libraries. Additionally, Osei and Boateng (2024), also emphasized that environmental factors, such as inadequate seating, noise, and poor layout, directly affect how users perceive librarians service delivery. It suggests that institutional leadership must take deliberate steps to improve working conditions, staff development opportunities, and service environments to support effective user-librarian interactions. Failure to address these challenges could impair service quality, affect staff morale, and undermine user engagement efforts.

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Table 6 Mean response on strategies librarians can explore for enhancing librarians' social skills to improve user engagement and satisfaction.

S/No	strategies for enhancing librarians' social skills	SA	A	D	SD	(\bar{x})	Decision
1	Librarians should undergo regular training on social and communication skills	33	14	-	-	3.70	Accept
2	More interactive programmes should be introduced to improve librarian-user relationship	13	34	-	-	3.28	Accept
3	Hiring more librarians can reduce workload and improve user engagement	14	32	1	-	3.28	Accept
4	The library should create feedback mechanisms to assess librarians' social interactions	12	33	2	-	3.21	Accept
Grand Mean						3.37	Accept

Source: Researcher's field survey 2025. Criterion mean = 2.50 Key= SA strongly agree; A agree; D disagree; SD strongly disagree; (\bar{x}) mean.

Table 6, presents the mean responses on strategies that librarians can explore for enhancing their social skills to improve user engagement and satisfaction at Imo State Library, Owerri. All the strategies were accepted by the respondents. These findings show that users are not only aware of the importance of librarians' interpersonal behavior but also have clear expectations regarding how these skills should be nurtured and maintained. Participants emphasized the value of ongoing professional development in soft skills, which supports better user-librarian rapport. The establishment of structured feedback channels also allows librarians to continuously assess and improve their social competencies based on real user experiences. Recent studies support these strategies. According to Olatunde and Ibrahim (2024), institutional investment in staff development significantly boosts librarians' emotional readiness and communication effectiveness. Furthermore, Nwosu and Umeh (2025) found that user engagement improves measurably when library environments are more welcoming and when users feel heard through routine feedback collection. These strategies recommended by the present study, resonate with globally-recognized best practices.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of librarians' social skills on user engagement and satisfaction in academic libraries, highlighting the essential role interpersonal competence plays in effective library service delivery. Findings show that social skills such as effective communication, approachability, empathy, active listening, and problem-solving

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significantly influence how users perceive the library and its personnel. When librarians demonstrate strong interpersonal behaviours, users are more likely to feel welcomed, supported, and motivated to use library resources and services. Conversely, poor social interaction often results in user frustration, reduced patronage, and diminished satisfaction with library services. The study further reveals that in an era where academic libraries are striving to remain relevant amid rapid technological change, human interaction remains a critical factor in shaping user experiences. Socially skilled librarians create an enabling environment that promotes collaboration, encourages information seeking, and enhances users' confidence in accessing library resources. Therefore, social skills are not complementary but core professional competencies that libraries must intentionally develop and strengthen. Based on the findings, this study concludes that improving librarians' social skills is vital for enhancing user engagement and satisfaction in academic libraries. Continuous professional development, targeted interpersonal skills training, and the integration of customer-service principles into librarianship practice are recommended. By investing in these areas, libraries can foster positive relationships with their users, improve service quality, and reinforce the library's role as a dynamic, user-centered learning hub.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. That the management of IMSU Library should organize regular training workshops focused on social skills such as interpersonal communication, empathy, emotional intelligence, and conflict resolution for library staff for the improvement of their social skills.
2. That Library and Information Science programs in Nigerian universities embed social skills development as part of their core training modules to prepare future librarians for user-centered service delivery.
3. Library administrators should implement systems for regular user feedback and incorporate social skill assessments into staff performance evaluations to identify areas needing improvement.
4. That mentorship program be established where experienced librarians with strong interpersonal skills mentor newer staff members to foster a culture of supportive and respectful user engagement.
5. That the physical and psychological environment of the library should be designed to reflect warmth, openness, and inclusivity, encouraging users to feel welcome and valued.
6. That the university should support librarians in attending professional conferences and external training programs that focus on human-centered library practices.

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