

INTERPERSONAL INTELLIGENCE AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AMONG CIRCULATION LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management (CRM) practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational survey research design. The population comprised 213 circulation librarians in university libraries across the South-South region of Nigeria. Total enumeration was used, while 205 copies of the questionnaire were successfully retrieved and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 96%. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analysed using mean, standard deviation, simple linear regression, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Findings revealed that circulation librarians possessed a moderate extent of interpersonal intelligence (Grand Mean = 3.47, SD = 1.38), while customer relationship management practices were also practised to a moderate extent (Grand Mean = 3.33, SD = 1.33). Findings further revealed that interpersonal intelligence had a strong positive relationship with customer relationship management practices and significantly predicted them ($R = .629$, $R^2 = .396$). This indicates that interpersonal intelligence explained 39.6% of the variance in customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians. The regression model was statistically significant ($F = 132.842$, $p < 0.05$), indicating that interpersonal intelligence significantly predicts customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians. The study concludes that interpersonal intelligence is a critical determinant of effective customer relationship management in university libraries. It was recommended that university library management should organise regular training programmes aimed at strengthening communication, relationship-building, listening, and customer engagement skills among circulation librarians.

Keywords: Interpersonal intelligence, customer relationship management, circulation librarians, university libraries, library users, South-South Nigeria.

Introduction

University libraries occupy a central position in higher education because they provide information resources and services that support teaching, learning, research, and community engagement. Their effectiveness depends not only on the quality and accessibility of their collections but also on the ability of library personnel to deliver responsive, user-oriented services that meet the diverse information needs of their clientele. Among the various service units within university libraries, the circulation section serves as the primary interface between the library and its users. Through activities such as lending and returning materials, responding to enquiries, assisting users, and resolving complaints, circulation librarians significantly influence users' perceptions of library service quality and overall satisfaction. This position is supported by Ikolo (2022), Ogonu et al. (2021), and Mayende et al. (2021), who observed that academic libraries contribute to teaching, learning, and research through effective information service delivery.

The increasing emphasis on user-centred service delivery has made customer relationship management (CRM) an important component of modern library management. Customer relationship management extends beyond the provision of routine library services to include strategies aimed at understanding users' needs, maintaining positive relationships, encouraging feedback, resolving complaints promptly, and improving user satisfaction. Effective CRM enables university libraries to strengthen users' confidence in library services, encourage sustained library utilisation, and improve organisational performance. Payne and Frow (2017) described CRM as a strategic approach to

establishing and maintaining long-term relationships with customers, while Kotler et al. (2020) emphasised its role in improving customer satisfaction and organisational effectiveness.

The success of customer relationship management initiatives depends largely on the competencies and behavioural characteristics of library personnel who interact directly with users. Circulation librarians are expected to demonstrate effective communication skills, empathy, patience, active listening, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities while providing library services. These interpersonal attributes facilitate productive interactions with users and enable librarians to respond appropriately to diverse information needs and service challenges. Consequently, the quality of customer relationship management practices within university libraries is influenced not only by institutional policies and technological infrastructure but also by the interpersonal capabilities of circulation librarians.

Among the personal attributes that contribute to effective service delivery, interpersonal intelligence has received increasing scholarly attention. Interpersonal intelligence refers to an individual's capacity to understand the emotions, motivations, behaviours, and expectations of others and to use such understanding to establish productive social relationships. Librarians who possess high interpersonal intelligence are generally more capable of communicating effectively, resolving conflicts, demonstrating empathy, and building positive relationships with library users. Gardner (2011) identified interpersonal intelligence as one of the multiple intelligences that enhance social interaction and communication, while Armstrong (2021) observed that employees with strong interpersonal competencies are more effective in customer engagement and relationship management.

The relationship between interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management is particularly important in university libraries because circulation librarians interact with users on a

daily basis. Every encounter between librarians and users presents an opportunity either to strengthen or weaken users' perceptions of library services. Librarians who communicate effectively, listen attentively, demonstrate empathy, and respond professionally to users' concerns are more likely to establish positive relationships that encourage continued library use and improve user satisfaction. Conversely, deficiencies in interpersonal intelligence may result in ineffective communication, unresolved complaints, poor user experiences, and reduced confidence in library services. It is therefore reasonable to expect that circulation librarians with stronger interpersonal intelligence will demonstrate more effective customer relationship management practices.

Although customer relationship management has attracted considerable attention in business organisations and, increasingly, in academic libraries, empirical studies have focused predominantly on organisational strategies, technological innovations, service quality, and user satisfaction. Comparatively fewer studies have examined the contribution of interpersonal intelligence to customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians, particularly within university libraries in South-South Nigeria. This gap in empirical knowledge limits understanding of the extent to which interpersonal intelligence contributes to effective customer relationship management in the study area. It is against this background that this study examined interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Customer relationship management has become an essential component of contemporary university library services because it contributes to improved user satisfaction, service quality, and effective utilisation of library resources. Circulation librarians occupy a strategic position in achieving these outcomes since they interact directly with library users and are responsible for responding to

enquiries, managing complaints, providing guidance, and maintaining positive user relationships. Consequently, effective customer relationship management depends not only on organisational policies and available resources but also on the interpersonal abilities of circulation librarians.

Despite the increasing emphasis on user-centred library services, reports of communication challenges, ineffective complaint management, inadequate user engagement, and varying levels of user satisfaction continue to exist in some university libraries. These challenges suggest that differences in librarians' interpersonal intelligence may influence the effectiveness of customer relationship management practices. Circulation librarians who possess stronger interpersonal intelligence are expected to communicate more effectively, understand users' concerns, demonstrate empathy, and establish positive relationships that enhance service delivery.

Although previous studies have investigated customer relationship management, service quality, organisational effectiveness, and user satisfaction in academic libraries, limited empirical evidence exists on the influence of interpersonal intelligence on customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. This knowledge gap makes it difficult to determine the extent to which improving interpersonal intelligence may enhance customer relationship management and library service delivery. It is this gap in empirical knowledge that necessitated the present study.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the extent of circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

2. What is the extent of customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?
3. What relationship exists between circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

H₀: There is no significant relationship between circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Literature Review

Interpersonal Intelligence

Interpersonal intelligence is recognised as one of the essential human competencies that facilitates effective interaction, communication, and relationship building within social and professional environments. In service-oriented professions such as librarianship, employees are expected not only to possess technical knowledge but also to demonstrate the ability to understand the emotions, behaviours, and expectations of those with whom they interact. Consequently, interpersonal intelligence has become an important determinant of effective service delivery because it enables professionals to communicate appropriately, resolve conflicts, demonstrate empathy, and establish productive relationships with clients and colleagues. Gardner (2011) conceptualised interpersonal intelligence as the capacity to understand other people's emotions, motivations, intentions, and behaviours and to use this understanding to interact effectively within social

situations. Similarly, Armstrong (2021) described interpersonal competence as an essential workplace attribute that enhances teamwork, communication, leadership, and customer engagement.

Within university libraries, interpersonal intelligence is particularly important because circulation librarians maintain continuous interaction with library users. Every encounter between librarians and users requires effective communication, active listening, patience, empathy, and responsiveness. Librarians who possess these qualities are generally better able to understand users' information needs, provide appropriate assistance, resolve complaints professionally, and create positive service experiences that encourage continued library use. Aina (2014) observed that interpersonal competencies contribute significantly to effective reference and circulation services because librarians constantly interact with users possessing diverse backgrounds, expectations, and information needs.

The increasing complexity of information services has further expanded the importance of interpersonal intelligence in library practice. Beyond lending books and registering users, circulation librarians now assist users in accessing electronic resources, navigating digital information systems, resolving technical difficulties, and providing personalised information support. These responsibilities require librarians to combine technical competence with effective interpersonal communication in order to respond appropriately to users' concerns. Consequently, interpersonal intelligence contributes not only to successful communication but also to users' confidence in library services and their willingness to continue using library resources.

Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that interpersonal intelligence contributes positively to workplace effectiveness and service delivery. Gardner (2011) argued that individuals with stronger interpersonal intelligence demonstrate superior communication, collaboration, and conflict management skills. Armstrong (2021) similarly reported that employees possessing effective

interpersonal competencies are more capable of building productive relationships with customers and improving organisational performance. Within library settings, studies have shown that librarians who communicate effectively, demonstrate empathy, and respond professionally to users' needs contribute significantly to improved service quality and user satisfaction. Collectively, these studies suggest that interpersonal intelligence constitutes an important professional competency for circulation librarians responsible for delivering user-centred library services.

Customer Relationship Management Practices

Customer relationship management (CRM) has evolved into a strategic management philosophy that focuses on establishing, maintaining, and strengthening long-term relationships between organisations and their customers. Although the concept originated within business organisations, it has increasingly been adopted by academic libraries because of the growing emphasis on user-centred information services and continuous improvement in service quality. In university libraries, customer relationship management extends beyond routine service delivery to include understanding users' information needs, encouraging user participation, managing complaints effectively, maintaining continuous communication, and promoting user satisfaction. Payne and Frow (2017) described customer relationship management as an integrated strategy for developing mutually beneficial relationships with customers, while Kotler et al. (2020) emphasised its contribution to customer retention, satisfaction, and organisational effectiveness.

Effective customer relationship management practices within university libraries encompass several interrelated activities. These include responding promptly to users' enquiries, providing accurate information, managing complaints professionally, encouraging users' feedback, maintaining courteous communication, and ensuring that services are responsive to users' changing needs.

Libraries that successfully implement customer relationship management practices are more likely to

improve users' perceptions of service quality, strengthen institutional reputation, and encourage sustained utilisation of library resources. Kaishe-Mulungu et al. (2025) reported that positive interactions between librarians and users significantly influence users' satisfaction with library services and their willingness to continue using library facilities.

The increasing application of digital technologies has further transformed customer relationship management practices within university libraries. Modern libraries now employ electronic communication platforms, social media, institutional websites, online enquiry services, digital feedback systems, and automated circulation systems to strengthen communication with users and improve service responsiveness. These technologies provide librarians with additional opportunities to understand users' needs, monitor service quality, and respond promptly to users' concerns. Nevertheless, technological innovations alone cannot guarantee effective customer relationship management because successful implementation depends largely on the communication skills and interpersonal competencies of library personnel.

Previous empirical studies indicate that effective customer relationship management contributes significantly to library performance. Payne and Frow (2017) observed that organisations implementing effective CRM strategies experience improved customer loyalty and organisational effectiveness. Similarly, Kaishe-Mulungu et al. (2025) found that quality interactions between library personnel and users significantly enhance users' satisfaction with library services. Mayende et al. (2021) also reported that customer-centred service provision improves users' perceptions of academic libraries and strengthens institutional performance. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that customer relationship management has become an indispensable component of contemporary university library service delivery.

Relationship Between Interpersonal Intelligence and Customer Relationship Management Practices

The relationship between interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management is based on the understanding that effective service delivery depends largely on employees' ability to establish productive relationships with customers. Individuals possessing high interpersonal intelligence generally communicate more effectively, demonstrate empathy, understand customers' expectations, resolve conflicts appropriately, and create positive service experiences. These behaviours correspond closely with the principles of customer relationship management, which emphasise effective communication, responsiveness, trust, relationship building, and customer satisfaction. Consequently, circulation librarians who possess stronger interpersonal intelligence are expected to demonstrate more effective customer relationship management practices.

The Theory of Multiple Intelligences, proposed by Gardner (2011), provides an appropriate theoretical explanation for this relationship. The theory argues that intelligence is multidimensional and that interpersonal intelligence represents an individual's ability to understand and interact effectively with others. Within university libraries, circulation librarians possessing higher interpersonal intelligence are better positioned to interpret users' needs accurately, communicate effectively, manage complaints constructively, and establish positive working relationships with library users. The theory therefore suggests that interpersonal intelligence should positively influence customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians.

Empirical evidence supports this theoretical expectation. Gardner (2011) argued that interpersonal intelligence enhances effective communication, teamwork, empathy, and social interaction, all of which contribute to improved customer relationships. Armstrong (2021) similarly observed that employees possessing stronger interpersonal competencies demonstrate greater

effectiveness in customer engagement, conflict management, and relationship building. Payne and Frow (2017) further reported that organisations characterised by effective interpersonal communication and customer-centred employee behaviour generally achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction and relationship quality. Within university libraries, Kaishe-Mulungu et al. (2025) found that positive interactions between librarians and users significantly improve users' perceptions of service quality and library satisfaction.

Despite increasing scholarly interest in customer relationship management within academic libraries, relatively few studies have specifically examined the influence of interpersonal intelligence on customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in Nigerian universities. Most existing studies have concentrated on service quality, organisational performance, user satisfaction, technological innovation, or customer service strategies without explicitly investigating the contribution of interpersonal intelligence to customer relationship management. This gap is particularly evident within university libraries in South-South Nigeria, where circulation librarians remain the principal interface between libraries and users. The present study was therefore undertaken to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational survey research design to examine the relationship between interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. The population comprised 213 circulation librarians, and total enumeration was adopted. Of the 213 questionnaires administered, 205 were successfully completed and returned, representing a 96% response rate.

Data were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire validated by experts in Library and Information Science and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument's reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha. Data were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while simple linear regression and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Work Experience of the Respondents

Work Experience	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1-10 years	76	37.1
11-20 years	84	41.0
21 years and above	45	22.0
Total	205	100.0

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents, 84 (41.0%), had 11–20 years of work experience, followed by 76 (37.1%) with 1–10 years, while 45 (22.0%) had 21 years and above. This indicates that the majority of the circulation librarians were experienced professionals.

Research Question 1: What is the extent of circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 2: Circulation Librarians' Interpersonal Intelligence in University Libraries

NUM.	Interpersonal Intelligence Items	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev
1.	I can work with and solve complex problems.	70	46	37	25	27	3.43	1.40
2.	I get along easily with different types of people.	63	46	39	30	27	3.99	1.19
3.	I make contact easily with other people.	90	62	28	11	14	3.88	1.24

4.	I am able to analyze my own motives and ways of action.	82	66	24	17	16	3.63	1.30
5.	I frequently think about my own feelings and sentiments and seek reasons for them.	68	57	35	27	18	3.47	1.33
6.	I can demonstrate how to do something in practice.	57	58	37	31	22	3.34	1.35
7.	I am information and technology compliant.	48	60	39	29	29	3.48	1.39
8.	I maintain professional ethics while doing my work.	64	49	40	25	27	3.73	1.30
9.	I can call most of the patrons by their names.	77	53	36	21	18	3.62	1.42
10.	I can teach several one person at a time.	75	54	31	14	31	3.50	1.33
11.	I possess good research skills.	63	50	36	38	18	3.33	1.39
12.	I can work independently.	56	48	36	38	27	3.31	1.44
13.	I am self-motivated.	60	38	47	26	34	3.38	1.45
14.	I possess good questioning skill.	61	52	29	30	33	3.31	1.39
15.	I can keep records very well.	54	49	36	39	27	3.47	1.42
16.	I can entertain more than one question at a time.	65	52	33	25	30	3.04	1.34
17.	I have good listening skill.	40	38	47	51	29	3.26	1.47
18.	I know how to motivate library customers to speak.	59	43	30	38	35	3.48	1.44
19.	I feel that there is nothing I cannot do in my profession very often.	72	41	34	30	28	3.33	1.64
20.	I assist library customers in getting what they want without wasting their time.	77	37	19	20	52	3.43	1.40
Grand Mean/Std. Dev.							3.47	1.38

Decision Rule: Very High Extent 4.51-5.00; High Extent 3.51-4.50; Moderate Extent 2.51-3.50; Low Extent 1.51-2.50 and Very Low Extent 1.00-1.50.

The findings revealed that circulation librarians possessed a moderate level of interpersonal intelligence ($\bar{x} = 3.47$, $SD = 1.38$), indicating that they generally demonstrated good communication,

empathy, teamwork, and relationship-building skills required for effective interaction with library users.

This finding suggests that circulation librarians generally possess the communication, empathy, teamwork, and relationship-building competencies required for effective interaction with library users. Although the overall level was moderate, the result indicates that there is room for further improvement through continuous professional development. This finding corroborates Gardner (2011) and Armstrong (2021), who emphasised that interpersonal competencies enhance effective service delivery and organisational performance.

Research Question 2: What is the extent of customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

Table 3: Customer Relationship Management Practices in University Libraries

NUM.	Customer Management Items	Relationship Practices	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
1.	Complaints from patrons are always welcome		70	78	25	10	22	3.80	1.26
2.	When any patron's has a problem, my library shows a sincere effort to solve it		51	77	38	22	17	3.60	1.21
3.	Users are encouraged to give feedback about library performance		65	52	44	26	18	3.59	1.29
4.	I address real-time queries and requests" for a slight correction		41	62	48	37	17	3.36	1.22
5.	I ensure the library has trained and empowered frontline staff		32	66	40	36	31	3.16	1.31
6.	I make sure the library always gathers feedback from patrons in real time and at the right moments		40	63	33	28	41	3.16	1.42
7.	The library periodically reviews patrons' complaints		40	80	27	30	28	3.36	1.32
8.	I ensure that the library formally communicates patrons' feedback to all library employees		57	57	41	24	26	3.46	1.35
9.	I take patrons' feedback on		51	62	47	25	20	3.48	1.26

	library resources and services seriously and respond appropriately.							
10.	I make sure there is an effective recovery strategy in place for any service failures	36	61	36	49	23	3.19	1.29
11.	I ensure there is a proper punishment system on patron's complaints	55	45	42	31	32	3.29	1.41
12.	I ensure the library has a formal feedback and complaints management system	38	70	30	36	31	3.23	1.35
13.	My focus is to increase number of library patrons	35	77	24	30	39	3.19	1.39
14.	I concentrate on improving patrons' satisfaction.	37	70	29	30	39	3.18	1.40
15.	I facilitate the library to develop customer relationship management system	35	52	41	45	32	3.06	1.34
16.	I ensure that other staff are trained enough to practice CRM	46	71	39	31	18	3.47	1.24
17.	I think that CRM is key to library survival	45	66	28	35	31	3.29	1.38
18.	I ensure that the library's service structure revolves around customer relationship management.	38	59	32	35	41	3.09	1.42
19.	I ensure that skillful staff are provided to assist in the execution of CRM	28	68	36	42	31	3.10	1.30
20.	I emphasise educating library users on how to access and utilise library services effectively.	50	80	19	25	31	3.45	1.38
Grand Mean/Std. Dev.							3.33	1.33

Decision Rule: Very High Extent 4.51-5.00; High Extent 3.51-4.50; Moderate Extent 2.51-3.50; Low Extent 1.51-2.50 and Very Low Extent 1.00-1.50.

The findings revealed that customer relationship management practices were implemented to a moderate extent among circulation librarians ($\bar{x} = 3.33$, $SD = 1.33$), indicating that they generally engaged in effective communication, user support, complaint management, feedback utilisation, and relationship-building with library users.

This indicates that librarians generally engaged in effective communication, user support, and complaint management. The finding agrees with Payne and Frow (2017), who observed that customer

relationship management is essential for enhancing user satisfaction and maintaining positive organisational relationships.

Research Question Three: What relationship exists between circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria?

The relationship was examined using simple linear regression, which also provided the basis for testing the null hypothesis.

H₀: There is no significant relationship between circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

Table 4: Relationship Between Circulation Librarians' Interpersonal Intelligence and Customer Relationship Management Practices in University Libraries in South-South, Nigeria

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.629 ^a	.396	.393		.24111
ANOVA					
Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	7.722	1	7.722	132.842	.000 ^b
Residual	11.801	203	.058		
Total	19.523	204			
Coefficients					
Model	Unstandardize d Coefficients	Standardize d Coefficients	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.245	.181		6.870	.000
The extent of circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence in university libraries	.598	.052	.629	11.526	.000

a. Dependent Variable: The extent of customer relationship management practices in the university libraries

b. Predictor: (Constant), The extent of circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence in university libraries

The regression analysis revealed that interpersonal intelligence significantly predicted customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians ($R = .629$, $R^2 = .396$, $F = 132.842$, $p < .05$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = .396$) indicates that interpersonal intelligence accounted for 39.6% of the variation in customer relationship management practices, while the remaining 60.4% may be explained by other factors not included in this study. Since the p-value was less than .05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that interpersonal intelligence significantly influences customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

The finding agrees with Gardner (2011), Kotler et al. (2020), and Payne and Frow (2017), who reported that communication, empathy, and relationship-management skills enhance customer satisfaction and relationship effectiveness. The result further supports the Multiple Intelligences Theory, which posits that interpersonal intelligence facilitates effective social interaction and relationship building.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. University library management should organise regular training programmes aimed at improving communication, empathy, listening, and relationship-building skills among circulation librarians.

2. Library administrators should incorporate interpersonal intelligence competencies into staff recruitment, selection, and performance evaluation processes.
3. Professional development programmes should be designed to strengthen librarians' customer service and interpersonal communication skills.
4. Circulation librarians should be encouraged to participate in workshops and seminars on customer relations, emotional intelligence, and user engagement.
5. University libraries should create supportive work environments that encourage effective interpersonal interactions between librarians and library users.

Conclusion

The study concluded that interpersonal intelligence is an important determinant of customer relationship management practices among circulation librarians in university libraries in South-South Nigeria. Circulation librarians demonstrated a moderate extent of interpersonal intelligence and customer relationship management practices. Furthermore, interpersonal intelligence was found to have a strong positive and significant relationship with customer relationship management practices. Therefore, strengthening circulation librarians' interpersonal intelligence through continuous professional development and institutional support is likely to improve customer relationship management practices, enhance user satisfaction, and strengthen the overall quality of library service delivery.

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