



Exploration of Librarians' Assertive Behaviour in Improving Service Quality in the Digital Age

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Abstract

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This article explores the assertive behaviour of librarians in an effort to improve service quality in the digital era. It is expected that librarians can adjust to the rapid development of technology and the increasingly complex demands of users. To face these challenges, assertive behaviour is required, which includes effective communication skills, the ability to express opinions assertively, and self-confidence. This research uses the literature study method to look at various scientific sources on assertive behaviour and its impact on library service quality. The results show that assertive behaviour helps create good interactions between librarians and users, increases user satisfaction with services, and supports the transformation of libraries towards digital-based services. It is hoped that this research will provide insights for librarians on how to develop assertive skills to improve the quality of services provided by digital libraries.

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INTRODUCTION

The ability to communicate well and effectively must be owned by a librarian so that people feel comfortable when looking for information. Not only to the users, a librarian must also have good communication with fellow librarian colleagues and leaders (Daryono, 2018). Communication is very important to convey information so that people can understand what we want to say, what feelings we feel, or what emotions we give off. A study shows that effective communication can increase individual productivity levels (Rahmatullah et al., 2022).

Communicating assertively allows a person to communicate openly and freely, without offending the rights and feelings of the interlocutor (Pungky et al., 2023). Assertive behaviour helps people establish good relationships with their environment because they can take a stance that does not harm others (empathise) through verbal and non-verbal communication (Aryanto et al., 2021). The biggest challenge in establishing assertive communication is how to convey ideas, feelings, and information to others without making the person receiving it misinterpreted (Ameliya et al., 2024).

Basically, most people choose to remain silent when gathering. Such as hesitating so that they do not dare to argue, avoid talking, do not like to gather with others, and close themselves (Lianawati et al., 2021). In this case, librarians should have the initiative to help library visitors find the necessary data and information. This is due to the rapid increase in reading and searching for information directly in the library which has increased. Libraries should take advantage of this opportunity to increase people's interest in reading and attract library users by providing services that are fast, accurate, and meet the needs of library users.

According to ISO, library user satisfaction ranks first out of 29 library performance indicators (Izzah et al., 2021). The success of a library is determined by the level of user satisfaction with the quality of services provided by the library. With Law Number 43 of 2007 regarding the establishment of National Library Standards, it serves as the basis and for the progress of the library. User satisfaction is the ultimate goal of a series of efforts. To meet the needs of the users, the library should do its best (Amalia & Christiani, 2020).

With the development of information and communication technology, managing collections has become easier and faster. As a result, libraries now have services in the digital era, which offer various digital collections that are processed so that users can use them. To avoid misperceptions, this collection utilisation process must be accompanied by communication (Setiyawati, 2021).

Libraries have increased the use of information technology, which has resulted in many new products or services in today's digital era (Pratiwi et al., 2023). The incorporation of information technology into librarian activities has opened many doors for creativity and innovation. The growing need for digital skills is one of the main challenges. A librarian must have the ability to use new technologies. These changes pose a challenge for libraries in developing librarians' ability to adjust (Harianto, 2024). Librarians must have the ability to

form a knowledge ecosystem where librarians serve as a means to share information and communicate with users (Junaedi, 2019).

Based on what has been mentioned previously, the purpose of this research is to describe 'Exploration of Librarians' Assertive Behaviour in Improving Service Quality in the Digital Era' using the *Literature Review Study* research method.

METHOD

The method used is a literature study with the aim to find out how assertive librarians are in communicating. Literature study is a method to collect sources or data related to the research subject. During the information search process, researchers use books, national journals, citations, and theses related to the research topic (Parinata & Puspaningtyas, 2022). In this research, it will select, compare, combine, and sort out various notions to determine problems related to research variables (Azmi & Nurjannah, 2022).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Importance of Assertive Behaviour in Improving Library Service Effectiveness

Librarians are an important part of the library and a librarian is responsible for providing services to users with the aim of ensuring that they are satisfied with the services provided. A librarian should be considered equal to other professionals. For this reason, a librarian in the future must be able to increase their capacity to become a professional who is able to provide the best service to library users (Shobarina, 2022, p. 71). Librarians' ability to communicate will allow them to interact with each other, which greatly affects how effectively they work together (Pertamasari et al., 2022). Users and librarians can communicate verbally and nonverbally. Librarians can say greetings, hellos, and thanks to visitors, while librarians can communicate nonverbally with a smile. Although considered simple, smiles, greetings, and gratitude have a deep meaning.

In providing library services, problems related to librarian communication that are considered poor often arise, and many people argue that negative views about the quality of services provided by librarians to visitors. This can be seen from the indicators of the relationship between librarians and visitors related to librarian communication itself. According to the community's assessment of library services, librarians have not provided optimal services, have not shown high enthusiasm, rarely smile, do not welcome and welcome visitors, and do not respond and meet the needs of users (Sahidi & Munsirah, 2021).

There are a number of factors that influence the social progress of library staff. One of these is maturity. Social skills require intellectual and emotional maturity, the ability to interact with others, an understanding of social processes, and the ability to give and receive opinions from others. The ability to speak is also important. Therefore, physical maturity is necessary for effective socialisation, so that everyone can fulfil their obligations physically (Darmayanti et al., 2024).

As a librarian, what is needed to behave assertively is to maintain their attitude or behaviour towards visitors or library users, such as how to communicate with visitors and be a good listener for visitors (Ramadiani, 2021, p. 119). Librarians' assertive behaviour can affect the quality of services provided by the library. Factors that determine good service quality include *tangibles*, *reliability*, *responsiveness*, *assurance*, and *empathy*. Libraries are polite and always ready to serve readers, comfortable spaces and adequate facilities, and librarians who are kind, safe, caring, and polite (Shobarina, 2022, p. 71). Assertive communication skills are very important to have and manage as a librarian who has a lot of contact with people. This is important so that users receive the best service and remain respectful without appearing reluctant.

According to Glints (2021), there are several suggestions to strengthen assertive communication, such as the following: (1) Pay attention to the way you speak. When a person's speaking style has been passive and stiff, it is necessary to change the style of speaking assertively. (2) Ask for *feedback*. When starting a conversation, use an assertive communication approach and ask if everything is good enough or something needs to be improved. (3) Use strong body language. Using strong body language is one of the best ways to learn to communicate assertively. For example, you should always look at the user when asking a question or not cross your arms when giving information because it seems arrogant (Bahrudin & Fadillah, 2021). Assertive behaviour helps libraries fulfil their duties and functions as managers of knowledge and information. Assertive behaviour encourages librarians to give all users broad access to information (Husna, 2018).

Librarians see various situations and conditions and are able to communicate well with customers to ensure they are satisfied with their services. So, a librarian must have more abilities in the library field to develop and build the image of the library in a more advanced direction and of course the quality of service that satisfies the users. To provide good service to the users, librarians must consider the aspects of personality and good social interaction.

These aspects should be developed by librarians. To make customers satisfied with their services, librarians should learn how to make them feel comfortable and friendly. So, the personality and social interaction of librarians cannot be eliminated (Shaleha & Masruri, 2023). Good service will make customers more loyal, while poor service will make customers dissatisfied and will not return to the library. For this reason, librarians must provide good service by building good relationships as well (Sahidi & Munsirah, 2021).

In an effort to improve library services, librarians are expected to use communication techniques to help users by making decisions that are beneficial to them. This will enable them to change their knowledge, attitudes and behaviour and directly help the development of the library. Two types of communication techniques are as follows: (1) Disseminating information, which is conveying messages that individuals need to understand so that they can make the right decisions, and (2) Conducting attitudes, persuasion, or actions based on psychology that can attract individuals' attention (Khaerah, 2020).

Supporting and Hindering Factors of Librarian Assertiveness

a. Supporting Factors for Librarian Assertiveness

1) Supportive Work Environment

The work environment affects a person's behaviour at work. This must certainly be considered. A person's work environment greatly affects how they interact and communicate, as well as their commitment. The work environment is a place where work activities are carried out by employees. Someone will work better in a good work environment (Brasit & Oktaviani, 2023). Nitisemito said the work environment includes all things related to employees and can affect the way they do their jobs, such as cleanliness, the level of isolation, and the relationship between employees and managers (Erna Angreani Manuain, 2022). A company must provide an adequate working environment for its employees. This should include the physical environment (comfortable, clean workspace, good air communication, colour, light, and enough music), as well as the non-physical environment (workplace temperature, employee welfare, relationships between employees and their leaders, and places of worship) (Manik, S., & Syafrina, 2018). A good workplace can help implement tasks so that someone has the motivation to work and increase optimal performance (Komalasari et al., 2023).

One of the supporting factors for librarian work motivation is the need for security, which in this case means work security is a comfortable workplace environment and adequate facilities for librarians. The work security in question is security from loss. Librarians will not have the motivation to do their job well when they are distracted or have trouble concentrating (Safri & Miski, 2022).

2) *Soft Skills* Development and Training

HR development can help achieve competitive advantage and improve employee performance through training and skills development programmes. In the short and long term, these programmes aim to improve employees' abilities and skills. This includes job-related technical skills, communication skills, and analytical thinking abilities (Ardiyansyah et al., 2023).

Soft skills are skills beyond academic and technical skills that focus more on intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. Efforts to improve librarian professionalism including *soft skills* are as follows:

First, listening skills: the ability to accept suggestions, opinions, and ideas from users Librarians must deal wisely with various characters of users. In this situation, individual ability is very important to overcome the bad nature of the library. the ability to act as a listener where the librarian listens and accepts suggestions, criticisms, and ideas from the library.

Second, communication skills: Librarians must be able to communicate well and continuously with the users as they must have extensive knowledge of delivering information that is easy to understand

and giving the right direction to the users. Librarians should use polite and good language when talking to the users. Librarians can also speak softly to the patrons; however, a bad mood sometimes affects the librarian's communication style; this can happen because the librarian is tired or because of their poor physical condition. The facial expressions shown by librarians are also in accordance with their usual speaking style or not made up when communicating. Librarians can also help readers get the information they need, such as when readers ask about book search or Opac. Librarians can explain well so that readers can receive and understand the information they need. Since the main function of the library is communication, librarians are expected to use their best communication skills when helping patrons. Well-equipped libraries, up-to-date laboratories and classrooms, as well as other educational tools, can be undermined by substandard services. Libraries and other service providers would do well to implement better service management strategies to improve service quality, as dissatisfaction is caused by poor service (Sitorus & Nurhayani, 2023).

Third, public relations skills: The ability of librarians to cooperate or relate with users, teachers, institutions, and other organisations to improve services and support library operations. If good listening and communication skills are combined, good public relations skills can result. Working with users, teachers, related institutions, and other organisations is unique and cannot be equated (Wijonarko, 2020). Librarians can build relationships with users by building relationships. Librarians who work to build relationships also have empathy for the users. For example, people who are sick are expected to recover soon. In addition, librarians have good ethics in building relationships with users. While serving readers, librarians are friendly and polite to each visitor in a way that makes the reader feel comfortable with the librarian. Librarians can also work together with visitors to provide better library services (Ariani, 2020).

Fourth, management: A librarian must have sufficient management quality to serve the visitors. Librarians are able to encourage customers to follow library rules. Librarians are able to be firm when customers bring bags and do not put them in bag lockers according to library regulations. Librarians are also able to clearly explain what rules must be obeyed by customers while in the library. In addition, librarians will directly reprimand users who violate library regulations. This is in accordance with Stoner's theory (1982), which states that leadership is a process of directing and influencing the activities of a group of members related to their duties, as follows; (a) Leadership is related to other people, subordinates, or followers. Group members help determine the position and status of the leader and carry out the leadership process by readily receiving direction from the leader. Without subordinates, all leadership traits are useless. (b) Leadership is concerned with the unequal distribution of power among group members and leaders. Leaders have the authority to direct the activities of their group members. However,

group members cannot direct leaders directly, but they can do so indirectly. (c) Leadership is concerned with the activity of giving direction to subordinates or followers. Leaders can also use their power of influence to get members to do things or achieve goals (Ariani, 2020).

Efficient resource management includes the following as in the case of funding issues, optimising the use of resources is essential. One way to do this is to organise budgets strategically. This can maximise the effect of limited resources. The priority-based budget allocation method adopted by libraries can improve the effective use of funds. Flexible Utilisation of Library Space: Libraries with flexible and multifunctional layouts experience an increase in space utilisation and user satisfaction. Effective Use of Human Resources such as optimising the use of human resources can improve productivity and service quality. Studies show that effective career development and performance management can improve librarian motivation and performance (Ramadhan & Anjasmara, 2024).

A librarian in the digital era has fourteen abilities needed to master information technology. These capabilities include: a. Database design and management; b. Data management; c. Electronic publications; d. Software; e. Data architecture; f. Electronic data sources; g. Data integration; h. Intra and external website design; i. Software usage; j. Programming; k. Workflow; l. Text processing; m. Metadata; and n. Software intended to handle data (Safitri, 2017).

b. Factors inhibiting librarian assertiveness

1) Lack of Management Support

Library management often faces problems such as lack of clear guidelines, limited facilities, and low levels of user satisfaction. To overcome these problems, standardisation has produced a number of clear and organised operational guidelines, which include rules for collection management, user services, and facility maintenance (Fadil Mubarak et al., 2024). In a study conducted by Kaunang et al (2021) the things that cause a lack of management in the library are lack of supervision, which causes employees to be absent during working hours, lack of human resources, lack of employee understanding of user needs, and workers who are not fast and responsive in providing services (Kaunang et al., 2021). Library management means organising, directing, guiding, controlling, and performing librarianship tasks to achieve library goals. Optimising human, material, and budgetary contributions to achieve group goals is the key to management in simple terms. Human resource management is crucial to the progress of libraries, and it has become more strategic recently. In addition, when leading human resource management, all aspects of planning, organising, delegating, leading, and controlling must be considered (Senjaya & Susinta, 2022).

2) Digital Competence Limitations

A librarian can do their job as an information manager by providing information, filtering information, and communicating it to users as needed. Librarians must continue to become more professional because

data is growing rapidly. In the era of globalisation, various problems arise. At least two problems faced by librarians are as follows: first, they are required to align their various collections with current technological advances; second, they are dealing with generations born and raised in the digital era, who are certainly better able to communicate and search for information (Rahmadanita, 2022). Librarians are needed as mediators and facilitators of information in today's digital era because people's need for information is increasing along with the various ways to get information (Nada, 2021). Libraries must keep abreast of technological advances and user demands in order to meet the needs of their patrons. These efforts include many things, such as providing training to library staff, implementing information technology, expanding resources, and paying attention to readers' needs. The importance of these efforts is not only to increase user satisfaction, but also to maintain the library's role as an institution that provides access to knowledge and information (Zuhri et al., 2023). Therefore, if a librarian does not have competence in the digital field, it will reduce the level of assertiveness due to their ignorance.

CONCLUSIONS

Librarians' assertive behaviour is essential to improve the quality of services provided by libraries. In the digital era, librarians must not only have technical skills; they must also be proactive, communicative, and confident in providing services. Assertive behaviour helps librarians to interact effectively with users, handle conflicts, and meet information needs more efficiently. By using an assertive approach, librarians can increase user satisfaction and adapt their services more responsively to change.

In addition, the suggestion in this study is that librarians can improve their assertive behaviour through training in effective communication, conflict management, and interpersonal skills. By improving their assertiveness, librarians will be better able to interact proactively and confidently with users in the digital era. In addition, improving digital literacy is essential for librarians so that they can respond to information needs quickly and appropriately.

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