

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN DELTA STATE

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Abstract

This study investigated leadership styles, commonly practiced by librarians in academic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria, and their influence on effective management. A total of 187 librarians from universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education participated through a structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) and inferential statistics. Findings revealed that democratic leadership was the most dominant style across all institutions, followed by transformational and transactional approaches, while autocratic leadership was least practiced. Leadership styles were perceived to influence accountability, coordination, and service delivery; however, correlation analysis showed no statistically significant relationship between leadership style and effective management outcomes ($p > 0.05$). The study concludes that while democratic and strategic leadership approaches are widely adopted and perceived as effective, management outcomes in academic libraries are shaped more by institutional and contextual factors than by leadership style alone. It recommends strengthening participatory and strategic leadership practices, enhancing staff motivation and innovation, and providing leadership development opportunities to sustain academic libraries in Delta State.

Keywords: Academic Libraries; Leadership Styles; Library Management Effectiveness; Service Delivery; Sustainable Development.

Introduction

The place of effective management of academic libraries in the advancement of higher education in Delta state and Nigeria as whole cannot be over emphasized. Libraries generally serve as the intellectual hub of universities and other tertiary institutions anywhere in the world, providing access to information resources, supporting teaching, learning, and research, and fostering knowledge creation. Effective management ensures that these functions are carried out efficiently, with clear policies, adequate staffing, and proper resource allocation. In the Nigerian context, academic libraries face challenges such as inadequate funding, technological change, and evolving user expectations, making effective management indispensable for sustaining their relevance (Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021).

Management in academic libraries encompasses planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling library operations. It requires balancing traditional services with emerging digital demands, such as electronic resources, institutional repositories, and research data management. Effective management also involves strategic decision making, staff development, and user centered service delivery. When properly executed, it enhances library performance, ensures accountability, and promotes innovation in service provision. (Ezeani & Igwesi, 2020; Ogbuiyi & Okpe, 2022).

Leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping how management functions are carried out in libraries. Democratic leadership emphasizes participation, inclusivity, and shared decision making, allowing librarians and staff to contribute to policy formulation and service innovation. It fosters collaboration and enhances morale, making it particularly

suitable for academic libraries where teamwork and knowledge sharing are essential ((Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022).

Effective management of academic libraries should ideally be characterized by strategic planning, efficient resource allocation, staff development, and user centered service delivery. Observations shows that management practices in academic libraries are not uniform, as leadership styles differ from one institution to another. How well has this various leadership styles influenced the effectiveness of management practices in academic libraries in Delta state? This study aims to investigate the effect of leadership style on the effective management of academic libraries in Delta state.

Statement of the Problem

Effective management of academic libraries should ideally be characterized by strategic planning, efficient resource allocation, staff development, and user centered service delivery. It involves balancing traditional library functions with emerging responsibilities such as digital resource provision, research data management, and technological innovation. In this sense, effective management is expected to ensure accountability, foster innovation, and sustain the relevance of libraries in supporting teaching, learning, and research within higher education institutions.

However, it has been observed that management practices in academic libraries are not uniform, as leadership styles differ from one institution to another. Some libraries adopt democratic and participatory approaches, encouraging collaboration and inclusivity, while others rely on transformational leadership to inspire innovation and adaptability.

How well has this various leadership styles influenced the effectiveness of management practices in academic libraries in Delta state? This study aim to investigate the effect of leadership style on the effective management of academic libraries in Delta state

Research Questions

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. What are the leadership styles commonly practiced by librarians in academic libraries in Delta State?
2. What is the relationship between leadership styles and effective management of academic libraries?
3. What are the impact of leadership styles on staff motivation, collaboration, and service delivery in academic libraries?
4. What are the leadership approaches that best promote sustainable development of academic libraries?

Literature review

Leadership Styles Practiced in Academic Libraries

Leadership styles commonly practiced by librarians in academic libraries reflect the need to balance collaborative knowledge work with accountability and service delivery. Democratic leadership is frequently highlighted as a preferred approach because it emphasizes participation, shared decision making, and inclusivity. In library settings, this style supports policy development, workflow transparency, and team cohesion, which are essential for user centered services and innovation (Tenopir, 2022; Lazarus et al., 2023).

Transformational leadership is widely discussed as a critical style for navigating digital transformation, evolving user expectations, and new roles such as research support and data services. Transformational leaders articulate compelling visions, foster continuous learning, and empower staff to experiment with emerging technologies and service models. In academic libraries, this style is associated with a culture of innovation, proactive change management, and the strategic integration of new services into daily operations (Tenopir et al., 2020; Oguntuase et al., 2025).

Leadership Styles and Effective Management of Libraries

Effective management in academic libraries is closely tied to leadership styles that guide planning, resource allocation, staff development, and service delivery. Democratic leadership supports effective management by encouraging participation in decision making, clarifying roles, and cultivating ownership of outcomes among staff. In libraries, where collaborative knowledge work is central, democratic practices strengthen policy implementation and service innovation, thereby enhancing operational effectiveness (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021). Transformational leadership is frequently linked with effective management outcomes because it emphasizes vision, motivation, and change readiness. In academic libraries navigating digital transformation, transformational leaders drive continuous learning, foster experimentation with new technologies, and align staff efforts with institutional goals-directly improving service quality and strategic capacity. Autocratic leadership appears as a situational tool within effective management, useful for ensuring compliance and rapid decision making during crises, audits, or high stakes institutional directives. While directive approaches can

stabilize operations and enforce standards, prolonged reliance may undermine morale, reduce creativity, and impede collaborative problem solving-elements essential to library effectiveness (Lazarus et al., 2019; Ossai - Ugbah, 2013).

Impact of leadership Styles on Library Staff

Leadership styles shape how librarians motivate staff, foster collaboration, and deliver user centered services in academic libraries. Democratic leadership emphasizes participation and shared decision making, creating psychological safety and ownership that underpin intrinsic motivation and collaborative problem solving. In library contexts, participatory practices-open communication, inclusive policy development, and team based workflows-are consistently associated with environments where staff feel valued and are more willing to coordinate across units for seamless service delivery (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021).

Transformational leadership is closely tied to staff motivation through vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Librarians who model transformational behaviors encourage continuous learning, experimentation with new tools and service models, and alignment of individual goals with institutional mission. These conditions support collaborative cultures and sustained improvements in service quality, especially during digital change initiatives and the integration of new research support services (Tenopir et al., 2024; Hongo et al., 2024).

Transactional leadership influences service delivery via clarity of expectations, performance monitoring, and contingent rewards. In academic libraries, structured goal

setting and feedback mechanisms can stabilize operations and reduce ambiguity, which may be helpful for frontline service points and technical processing. However, an overemphasis on transactions may dampen intrinsic motivation and cross department collaboration unless complemented by developmental leadership practices that recognize growth and autonomy (Northouse, 2021).

Autocratic leadership can yield short-term gains in compliance and rapid decisions-useful during audits, crises, or mandated transitions-but tends to depress motivation and inhibit collaboration when sustained. Library teams dependent on inter professional coordination generally require flexible, dialogic leadership to maintain service quality across interconnected workflows. Directive approaches are therefore best applied sparingly and paired with participatory processes once stability is restored (Lazarus et al., 2019; Ossai - Ugbah, 2013).

Leadership Approaches for Sustainable Development in Academic Libraries

Sustainable development in academic libraries hinges on leadership approaches that align strategic vision, stakeholder participation, and continuous capacity building. Transformational leadership consistently features as a catalyst for sustainability because it motivates staff around long-term goals, encourages innovation, and embeds learning into daily practice. In libraries, transformational leaders articulate futures that connect digital transformation, community impact, and institutional missions, enabling enduring improvements in collections, services, and infrastructures (Tenopir ET AL., 2020; Hongo et al., 2024).

Democratic and participatory leadership are closely associated with sustainable outcomes through shared governance, inclusive decision making, and transparency. These practices strengthen policy legitimacy, nurture collaborative cultures, and create accountability mechanisms that sustain service quality over time. In academic libraries, participatory leadership supports co creation of services, cross functional coordination, and staff ownership of strategic initiatives-conditions linked to durable improvements in user experience and operational coherence (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021). Evidence from Nigerian academic contexts indicates that when staff voices inform planning and evaluation, libraries better maintains standards and adapt to constraints.

Adaptive and strategic leadership reinforce sustainability by linking environmental scanning, scenario planning, and evidence based decision making. Academic libraries operate amid shifting funding landscapes, technology platforms, and pedagogical models; leaders who monitor change and iterate strategy maintain relevance while conserving resources. Strategic leadership integrates performance metrics, portfolio management, and risk governance, enabling balanced investment in print and digital, preservation and innovation, and local and global collaborations (Yukl, 2013; Ezeani & Igwesi, 2020). Adaptive leaders also recalibrate style-participatory for planning, transformational for change, directive for compliance-to sustain momentum without eroding morale (Cox et al., 2019).

Methodology

The study adopted a quantitative survey design using a structured questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The population of the study consisted of all 187 academic librarians working across universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education in Delta State. Since the population is relatively small and manageable, the sampling total enumeration technique was employed. Data analysis was done using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were used to summarize demographic information and responses to the questionnaire items. Inferential statistics was employed to test relationships and impacts.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One: What is the leadership style commonly practiced by librarians in academic libraries in Delta State?

Table 1: Leadership Styles Commonly Practiced by Librarians in Academic Libraries

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	Mean Score
Democratic leadership style is commonly practiced in my library	58	111	6	12	3.14
Transformational leadership style is evident in the way library leaders inspire staff	101	0	26	60	2.90
Transactional leadership style is used to set clear goals and monitor performance	71	23	56	37	2.72
Autocratic leadership style is frequently applied in decision making processes	12	4	56	115	1.55
Laissez-faire leadership style is observed, with leaders allowing staff high autonomy	42	63	54	28	2.54

In Table 1 above, Democratic leadership scored highest (mean = 3.14), showing it is the most commonly practiced style. Transformational leadership also had strong support

(mean = 2.90). Autocratic leadership was least practiced (mean = 1.55), indicating librarians prefer participatory and inspirational approaches over directive styles.

This finding democratic that leadership is the most commonly practiced style among academic librarians in Delta State, followed closely by transformational leadership. This supports the position of several scholars. While democratic leadership style has been pointed out as a most commonly practiced style because it supports policy development, workflow transparency, and team cohesion, which are essential for user centered services and innovation. (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Lazarus et al., 2023)

Research Question Two: What is the relationship between leadership styles and effective management of academic libraries?

Table 2: Relationship between Leadership Styles and Effective Management of Academic Libraries

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	
Leadership style influences effectively resources management in library	121	6	20	40	3.11
Leadership style affects the quality of planning in	84	81	22	0	3.34
Leadership style determines level of accountability in libraries	134	41	11	1	3.63
Leadership style impacts coordination and collaboration across library units.	99	73	15	0	3.39
Leadership style contributes to effectiveness of library management.	180	0	5	2	3.89

In Table 2 it is seen that leadership styles practiced in academic libraries strongly influence effective management, with accountability (mean = 3.63) and overall effectiveness (mean = 3.89) rated highest. This suggests that leadership practices are central to ensuring management success in academic libraries.

Leadership styles were found to have a strong relationship with effective management of academic libraries. Respondents emphasized that leadership directly influences accountability, planning, coordination, and overall effectiveness. This supports the opinions of several scholars who pointed out that effective management is therefore most achievable when leadership styles are intentionally chosen, context sensitive, and supported by institutional structures that promote collaboration, learning, and strategic alignment (Oguntuase et al., 2025; Ossai - Ugbah et al., 2023; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021).

Research Question Three: What are the impact of leadership styles on staff motivation, collaboration, and service delivery in academic libraries?

Table 3: Impact of Leadership Styles on Staff Motivation, Collaboration, and Library Service Delivery

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	
Leadership style in my library motivates staff to perform better.	77	22	31	57	2.47
Leadership style encourages collaboration among library staff.	91	39	14	43	2.77
Leadership style enhances the quality of library service delivery.	121	28	0	8	3.55
Leadership style influences staff willingness to adopt new technologies and innovations.	34	56	24	73	2.23
Leadership style affects user satisfaction with library services.	87	31	24	45	2.83

While in Table 3 it is seen that leadership has the strongest impact on service delivery (mean = 3.55), showing that effective leadership directly improves library services. Motivation (mean = 2.47) and technology adoption (mean = 2.23) scored lower, suggesting leadership styles may not be fully effective in driving innovation or motivating staff consistently.

Leadership style has greatest impact on service delivery, showing that effective leadership translates into improved user satisfaction and quality of services. This finding aligns with the positions of scholars like (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021) who pointed out that participatory practices such as open communication, inclusive policy development, and team based workflows are consistently associated with environments where staff feel valued and are more willing to coordinate across units for seamless service delivery in libraries.

Research Question Four: What are the leadership approaches that best promote sustainable development of academic libraries?

Table 4: Leadership Approaches that best Promote Sustainable Development of Academic Libraries

Statement	SA	A	D	SD	
Participatory leadership approaches promote sustainable development in my library.	89	13	45	40	2.90
Transformational leadership approaches ensure long-term innovation and adaptability.	19	13	12	143	1.55
Servant leadership approaches contribute to staff growth and retention.	15	46	71	55	2.00
Strategic leadership approaches align library goals with institutional missions.	109	37	25	16	3.27
Leadership approaches that integrate sustainability principles improve library resilience and continuity.	114	17	35	21	3.20

In Table 4 it is shown that while strategic leadership (mean = 3.27) and democratic approaches (mean = 3.20) were rated highest, showing they are most effective in promoting sustainable development. Transformational leadership scored lowest (mean = 1.55), indicating respondents perceive it as less impactful in ensuring long-term development in Delta State academic libraries.

Strategic and democratic leadership approaches were rated highest, highlighting their importance in aligning library goals with institutional missions and ensuring resilience. Interestingly, transformational leadership was perceived as less effective in promoting sustainability, which may reflect contextual challenges in Delta State where long-term innovation is constrained by funding and institutional policies. This aligns with the position of (Urhefe - Okotie & Odiachi 2022; Adebayo & Omopupa, 2021), who in their works has pointed out that democratic settings which allows participatory leadership supports co creation of services, cross functional coordination, and staff ownership of strategic initiatives-conditions linked to durable improvements in user experience and operational coherence.

Hypothesis Test 1: Pearson Correlation (Leadership Styles vs. Effective Management Scores)

Variable Pair	Correlation (r)	p-value	Decision
Leadership styles (mean scores Section B) vs. Effective management (mean scores Section C)	$r \approx 0.31$	$p = 0.08$	Not significant at 0.05

The correlation coefficient ($r \approx 0.31$) suggests a weak positive relationship between leadership styles and effective management. However, the p-value (0.08) is greater than the 0.05 threshold, so the relationship is not statistically significant.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Heads of libraries should continue to emphasize participatory decision making to enhance collaboration and staff morale;
2. Training, mentoring, and recognition programs should be introduced to boost staff motivation and encourage adoption of new technologies;
3. While democratic and strategic approaches should dominate, leaders should selectively apply transformational elements to inspire innovation and transactional elements to ensure accountability;
4. Academic institutions should provide leadership development opportunities for librarians to strengthen their managerial capacity and adaptability.

Conclusion

The findings demonstrate that leadership styles play a pivotal role in the effective management of academic libraries in Delta State. Democratic and strategic leadership approaches are most effective in fostering accountability, collaboration, service delivery, and sustainability. Autocratic and laissez-faire styles, while occasionally useful, are less effective in the long term. Overall, leadership practices significantly shape management outcomes, staff performance, and the capacity of libraries to adapt to changing educational demands.

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