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LEADERSHIP STYLES AS CORRELATES OF SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined service delivery and leadership styles among librarians in university libraries in Southwest Nigeria. A descriptive research design was adopted. The population was 305 librarians from 23 public university libraries in Southwest Nigeria. A total enumeration sampling was used for the study. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire and were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed high service delivery. Transformational leadership was the most prevalent leadership style. Significant relationships existed between transformational leadership and service delivery, transactional leadership and service delivery, and laissez-faire leadership and service delivery. The study concludes that although service delivery is generally high, innovation and technological adaptation require greater attention. It recommends strengthening transformational leadership, technology adoption, and institutional support to enhance service delivery in university libraries.

Keywords: Leadership style, Service delivery, Librarians, University libraries

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Introduction

Libraries play an essential role in university education as centres of knowledge, scholarly inquiry, and lifelong learning. Universities, as institutions of higher learning, equip their libraries with requisite human and information resources to support teaching, learning, and research, thereby facilitating the development of skilled personnel who contribute to national and global advancement (Okhovati et al., 2026). University education in Nigeria began in 1948 with the establishment of University College, Ibadan (now the University of Ibadan) (Mellanby, 2025). The establishment of other public universities began in 1961 and has continued to expand progressively over the years. Private individuals and organisations are also playing a crucial role in providing university education in Nigeria (Ahmed et al., 2026). The establishment of Igbenedion University, Okada; Madonna University, Okija; and Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo in 1999 marked the beginning of private universities in Nigeria (Oyeweso, 2019). All the universities have libraries that offer information resources and services to support teaching, learning, and research.

Effective service delivery is fundamental to the fulfillment of the mandate of university libraries. It encompasses the provision of adequate facilities, relevant information resources, and responsive professional services that facilitate teaching, learning, research, and academic productivity in an increasingly digital environment

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(Tshabalala & Dube, 2024). Given the centrality of information access to students' learning and researchers' scholarly activities, librarians are expected not only to ensure the availability and accessibility of appropriate information resources but also to provide timely and technologically responsive services (Abdullahi et al., 2024). As such, university libraries must continuously adapt their service provision to the dynamic and increasingly complex information needs of their diverse users.

Despite the essential role of librarians in promoting academic excellence, concerns and complaints about service delivery in university libraries persist across the globe. The situation is no different in Nigeria, where the quality of service delivery may be influenced by the leadership styles adopted by library administrators. Leadership practices can shape librarians' motivation, work engagement, and responsiveness to users' needs, thereby affecting the effectiveness of library services (Offem et al., 2026). Against this background, the current study focuses on the relationship between leadership styles and service delivery among librarians in Nigerian universities. Specifically, the study determined the levels of service delivery and leadership styles among librarians in Nigerian universities, and examined the relationship between leadership styles and service delivery.

Research Questions (RQs)

RQ1. What is the level of service delivery among librarians in Nigerian universities?

RQ2: What are the leadership styles used in libraries?

Hypotheses

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The following hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance:

1. There is no significant relationship between leadership styles and service delivery among librarians in Nigerian universities.

Literature Review

Service Delivery among Librarians in Universities

University libraries are specialised institutions established to provide information resources, professional expertise, and user-oriented services that support teaching, learning, research, and other academic activities. As the information landscape becomes more dynamic, technologically inclined, and complex (Jarrahi & Marchionini, 2026), there is a need for librarians to deliver services that are timely, accurate, innovative, accessible, and responsive to users' expectations. Effective service delivery is therefore central to the capacity of university libraries to fulfil their educational, research, and knowledge-support mandate (Weaver & Richardson, 2021). It extends beyond mere provision of information resources to encompass the quality, efficiency, responsiveness, and value of professional services rendered to users (Khan et al., 2023). Key dimensions of service delivery include accuracy, timeliness, innovation, and user satisfaction.

Accuracy is a fundamental dimension of effective library service delivery because the reliability of information provided by librarians can influence users' academic work, research outcomes, and confidence in library services. Timeliness concerns the promptness with which librarians respond to users' requests and provide needed services (Bamigboye

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et al., 2021). Innovation involves the introduction and application of new ideas, technologies, methods, and practices to improve the relevance and effectiveness of library services (Adeyemi et al., 2025). User satisfaction, meanwhile, reflects the extent to which library services meet or exceed users' information needs and expectations. Collectively, these dimensions provide a basis for assessing the effectiveness of service delivery among librarians in university libraries.

As service delivery is increasingly shaped by technological transformation, changing patterns of information seeking, and growing expectations for immediate and seamless access to scholarly resources, librarians must combine professional knowledge with technological competence and adaptive service practices to maintain their relevance within the contemporary academic environment. Librarians should be able to translate those resources into accessible, efficient, and user-centered services (Stepanov, 2023). As such, examining service delivery through the dimension of accuracy, timeliness, innovation, and user satisfaction thus provides a more comprehensive understanding of how librarians contribute to the academic mission and service effectiveness of universities.

Leadership Styles among Librarians in Universities

Understanding how leadership styles influence service delivery among librarians is a significant issue in developing and maintaining work environments that promote timely, accurate, innovative, and user-centered services. Leadership is a vital organisational process through which managers influence employees towards the attainment of

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organisational goals (Olutoye & Asikhia, 2022). In university libraries, leadership involves setting a clear vision, motivating staff, coordinating resources, and creating an enabling environment that supports effective information service delivery. According to Aslam (2020), library leaders provide strategic direction by communicating institutional goals and guiding librarians towards their attainment. Library leadership extends beyond administrative responsibilities to include promoting innovation and integrating emerging technologies that enhance users' access to information resources and services.

Effective library leadership is essential to the successful functioning of university libraries, as leadership influences how activities, relationships, and services are managed. In Nigerian library settings, leadership occurs through different styles that shape how librarians work towards organisational goals. Transformational leadership is recognised as a practical style in modern Nigerian libraries (Adekoya & Inyang, 2023). It motivates librarians to pursue shared organisational goals through vision, inspiration, and professional development (Lo et al., 2020). Transactional leadership, in contrast, emphasises exchanges between leaders and employees, using rewards and incentives to encourage compliance and goal attainment (Ikonne & Unobe, 2021). Laissez-faire leadership involves minimal supervision and greater employee autonomy (F et al., 2023). It allows library staff to make decisions, resolve problems, and address work-related challenges with limited direct intervention from leaders.

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Empirical studies have revealed that leadership constitutes a vital organisational determinant of library service delivery. Akanmidu et al. (2021) found that transformational and transactional leadership styles predominated in the National Library of Nigeria and were associated with high levels of service delivery. Also, Bada and Atanda (2021) examined leadership styles and service delivery in university libraries in Oyo State, Nigeria, demonstrating the relevance of leadership styles to the effectiveness of library services. More recently, Buhari et al. (2026), in a study of 23 public polytechnic libraries in South-West Nigeria, established a significant relationship between leadership styles and service delivery. This empirical evidence indicates that leadership styles are consequential to the quality and effectiveness of library service delivery, although variations in institutional contexts, leadership approaches, and outcome measures suggest the need for more context-specific investigation.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive research design. The population was 305 librarians from 23 public university libraries in South-West Nigeria. Due to the small and manageable size of the population, a total enumeration sampling was used for the study. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The research questions were answered using frequencies, means, and standard deviations. A criterion-weighted mean of 3.00 was adopted as the decision

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threshold. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to test the hypothesis at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion of the Findings

RQ1. What is the level of service delivery among librarians in universities in Nigeria?

Table 1: Level of Service Delivery among Librarians in University Libraries in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Services Delivery	VHE	HE	ME	LE	VLE	Mean (□)	Std Dev.
	Timeliness							
i	Librarians respond swiftly to enquiries	51	98	13	47	15	3.55	1.24
ii	Newly acquired information resources are processed and made available swiftly	44	93	5	52	30	3.31	1.37
iii	Service problems are resolved in a proper way	37	101	3	49	34	3.26	1.37
iv	Librarians schedule and deliver library instruction sessions on time	41	89	7	52	35	3.22	1.40
v	Users get requested information resources within a tolerable period	43	79	5	53	44	3.11	1.46
	Average Mean						**3.29**	
	Accuracy							
vi	Information resources are classified and shelved appropriately	47	89	3	52	33	3.29	1.41
vii	Information provided by librarians is dependable and error-free	52	81	6	46	39	3.27	1.46
viii	Information literacy training delivered in library is flawless and error-free	42	93	6	48	35	3.26	1.39
xi	Librarians provide correct responses to information enquiries	35	96	11	53	29	3.26	1.32
x	Guidance on assessing reliable academic sources is accurate and supportive	41	77	9	58	39	3.11	1.42
	Average Mean						**3.24**	
	User Satisfaction							
xi	The library meets users' needs	52	99	11	41	21	3.54	1.28
xii	Librarians are polite in their interactions with users	51	101	4	31	37	3.44	1.41

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xiii	Librarians are prepared to help users when needed	45	109	8	22	40	3.43	1.39
xvi	The quality of library services is adequate	44	91	5	62	22	3.33	1.33
xv	The physical environment meets users' expectations	43	88	6	48	39	3.21	1.43
	Average Mean						**3.39**	
	Innovation							
xvi	Librarians introduce novel services to meet changing user needs	51	91	4	41	37	3.35	1.43
xvii	Librarians often modernize library digital tools	41	96	3	47	37	3.25	1.41
xviii	Librarians are set to embrace new technologies	37	77	2	51	57	2.94	1.50
xix	Library services are restructured to reflect changes in user expectations	35	69	7	48	65	2.83	1.51
xx	Librarians request users to provide feedback on new services, and act upon the feedback	31	66	5	67	55	2.78	1.45
	Average Mean						**3.03**	
	Grand Mean						**3.24**	
	Criterion Mean						**3.00**	

Note: VHE = Very High Extent, HE = High Extent, ME = Moderate Extent, LE= Low Extent, VLE = Very Low Extent

Table 1 shows a high level of service delivery, with a grand mean of 3.24, above the criterion mean of 3.00. User satisfaction recorded the highest mean (3.39), followed by timeliness (3.29) and accuracy (3.24). Innovation had the lowest mean (3.03). It means that librarians demonstrated high service delivery, but innovation and technological adaptation are weak. This finding is consistent with Adeyemi et al. (2025) and Kinya and Muthee (2022), who emphasised timeliness as an indicator of quality library services. The high accuracy mean suggests that librarians provide reliable services, including appropriate classification and accurate responses, supporting Ogungbenro et al. (2025), who emphasised accurate information provision.

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Research Question 2: What are the leadership styles used in university libraries in South-West Nigeria?

Table 2: Leadership Styles Used in University Libraries in South-West Nigeria

S/N	Leadership Styles	SA	A	N	D	SD	Mean (□)	Std Dev.
	Transactional							
i	Staff are made aware of the benefits of achieving goals	27	37	33	68	59	2.58	1.354
ii	The status quo is kept when plans work	34	31	13	74	72	2.47	1.445
iii	Staff receive rewards for meeting performance expectations	26	44	12	65	77	2.45	1.426
iv	Clear consequences are applied when staff fail to achieve agreed performance targets	17	39	32	67	69	2.41	1.292
v	Staff are informed of the conditions to earn a reward	30	30	14	71	79	2.38	1.422
	Average Mean						**2.46**	
	Transformational							
vi	Leaders encourage new perspectives on old difficulties	62	49	22	71	20	3.28	1.30
vii	Leaders communicate expectations to subordinates	62	39	33	79	11	3.28	1.25
viii	Leaders share their feedback on subordinates' performance	66	38	35	60	25	3.27	1.35
ix	Leaders offer staff new ways to view challenges	54	58	19	73	20	3.24	1.29
x	Leaders make their subordinate staff feel good to be around them	66	31	40	63	24	3.23	1.34
	Average Mean						**3.26**	
	Laissez-faire							
xvii	Leaders provide little or no direction and allow employees complete freedom	41	58	29	77	19	2.44	1.314
xviii	Leaders delay decisions and expect teams to handle issues independently	17	11	48	75	73	2.21	1.175
xix	Leaders rarely intervene in team activities	11	38	16	75	84	2.18	1.241
xx	Leaders request only what is necessary from subordinates	16	34	12	67	95	2.15	1.309
xxi	Leaders avoid clear guidance and leave decisions to subordinates	7	29	13	108	67	2.11	1.072
	Average Mean						**2.22**	

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Grand Mean	**2.65**
Criterion Mean	**3.00**

Note: SA = Strongly Agree (5 points), A = Agree (4 points), N = Neutral (3 points), D = Disagree (2 points), SD = Strongly Disagree (1 point)

The leadership styles used in university libraries in South-west Nigeria are presented in Tables 2. The findings revealed that transformational leadership style recorded the highest average mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 3.26), which was above the criterion mean of 3.00, indicating a high level of adoption among librarians. In contrast, transactional leadership **(**$\bar{x}$ = 2.46) and laissez-faire leadership style ($\bar{x}$ = 2.22) had average mean scores below the criterion mean.

The findings that transformational leadership was the most prevalent style suggests greater emphasis on communication, encouragement, and new perspectives, which is consistent with Ossai-Ugbah (2024). Transactional leadership was less evident, particularly regarding rewards, sanctions, and performance-based exchanges. This agrees with Udom and Nebeolise (2024), although Khairy et al. (2023) reported moderate use when supervision and results are required. Laissez-faire leadership recorded the lowest mean, indicating limited use of passive leadership practices, consistent with Osuji and Edom (2025).

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between leadership styles and service delivery among librarians in university libraries in South-West Nigeria

Table 3a: Relationship between transformational leadership and service delivery among librarians

	Transformational Leadership	**Service**

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			Delivery
Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.277*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.048
	N	224	224
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	.277*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.048	
	N	224	224

Table 3b: Relationship between transactional leadership and service delivery among librarians

		Transactional Leadership	Service Delivery
Transactional Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	.226*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.019
	N	224	224
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	.226*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019	
	N	224	224

Table 3c: Relationship between laissez-faire leadership and service delivery among librarians

		Laissez-faire Leadership	Service Delivery
Laissez-faire Leadership	Pearson Correlation	1	-.811
	Sig. (2-tailed)		-.001
	N	224	224
Service Delivery	Pearson Correlation	-.811	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-.001	
	Ns	224	224

The results in Tables 3a - 3c show a significant relationship between leadership styles and service delivery among librarians in university libraries in Southwest Nigeria.

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Table 3a showed a positive and significant relationship between transformational leadership and service delivery (r = 0.277, p = 0.048). This suggests that inspirational leadership improves service delivery. Table 3b showed a positive and significant relationship between transactional leadership style and service delivery (r = 0.226, p = 0.019), indicating that reward-based supervision contributes to service delivery. Table 3c revealed a strong negative and significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and service delivery (r = -0.811, p = -0.001), indicating that greater laissez-faire leadership is associated with reduced service delivery. Since all p-values are below 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that leadership styles significantly relate to service delivery, with laissez-faire leadership having a negative effect, while transformational and transactional leadership show positive effects.

These findings corroborate those of Sahabi and Ogunbote (2021), who assessed the impact of leadership styles on service delivery among librarians in Kaduna State University Library, Kaduna, and found that the leadership styles enhance service delivery among the staff. In a related study, Alex-Nmecha and David-West (2022) averred that effective service delivery in libraries is contingent on the leadership styles adopted. These findings also align with those of Ikonne *et al*. (2021), who investigated the effect of leadership style on service delivery among staff of the National Library of Nigeria and found that the library adopted both transactional and transformational styles of leadership to enhance service delivery.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings pf this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. University libraries should encourage librarians to develop innovative services, adopt relevant technologies, modernise digital tools, and restructure services in response to changing user needs. Regular technology-focused training should support these efforts.
2. Libraries should establish systematic mechanisms such as surveys, suggestion platforms, and periodic consultations to obtain and utilise user feedback for continuous service improvement.
3. Library managers should strengthen transformational leadership practices through clear communication, constructive feedback, encouragement of new perspectives, creativity, and staff participation in decision-making.
4. Library managers should apply appropriate transactional practices to clarify responsibilities and performance expectations while minimising laissez-faire practices.

Conclusion

The study concludes that librarians in university libraries in South-West Nigeria demonstrate a high level of service delivery, particularly in user satisfaction, timeliness, and accuracy. However, innovation is relatively weak. The study also concludes that transformational leadership is the predominant leadership style, while transactional and

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laissez-faire leadership are less evident. Furthermore, leadership styles have significant relationships with service delivery: transformational and transactional leadership are positively related to service delivery, whereas laissez-faire leadership is negatively related to it. The findings therefore underscore the importance of effective leadership in sustaining service quality while strengthening innovation and responsiveness to changing user needs.

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