

INFLUENCE OF LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP STYLE ON THE JOB PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN NORTH CENTRAL ZONE OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The major purpose of this study was to determine the influence of laissez-faire leadership style on the job performance of academic Librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria. In carrying out this study, 3 research questions were posed. The entire population which consisted of all the 87 academic librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria. Two sets of data collection instruments which include Laissez-faire leadership style questionnaire (LLSQ) and Job performance of academic librarians' questionnaire (JPALQ) were used. The major findings of the study showed that the University Librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria adopted more of democratic leadership style. This is followed by the bureaucratic leadership style and then Laissez-faire leadership style and lastly autocratic leadership style. Laissez-faire leadership style does not significantly of academic librarians was low. Based on the above findings, it was recommended that University Librarians should be supervised and closely monitored by the University management to ensure that autocratic and Laissez-faire ones among them are checked. University management should through seminars and workshops encourage the usage of democratic leadership style in the administration of University Libraries.

Keywords: Laissez-faire; Leadership Style; Job Performance; Academic Librarians; North Central.

Introduction

University Librarians are the pivots around which all major and important University functions such as teaching and learning revolve. This means that the approach they adopt in directing, guiding and controlling the staff under them determine the pace of progress in their libraries. That is if the

University Librarians control, direct or guide the staff under them properly by adopting ideal leadership style, staff will show greater commitment to their duty.

But unfortunately some University Librarians are seemingly ineffective and uncommitted to their duties. Staff on their part becomes nonchalant about library work which invariably have negative impact on their job performance. According to Adamaechi and Romaine (2002) leadership is very essential in any kind of group or organization and it can mean the difference between success or failure of any group or joint activity. Hence for enterprise to achieve its goals the leadership position of such enterprise must be occupied by competent leaders.

Leadership as a concept has been defined by so many writers Ngoka (2002) defined it as a process of influencing others towards organizational performance and achievement of goals. According to Igbo (2002) leadership is a process of influencing group activity towards goals achievement. It is the behaviour or an individual when he is directing and guiding the activities of the group towards a common goals. His success or failure in attaining the goals of the organization depends largely on his ability to effectively organize and manipulate the human and material resources available to him, this is in turn depends on his leadership styles.

Scholl (2000) refers to leadership style as the pattern of behaviour used by a leader in attempting to influence group members and make decision regarding the mission strategy and operation of group activities. Clark (2000) perceived leadership style as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Ujeke, Akabogu and Ngu (1992) opined that job performance has to do with the employees strength and witnesses in his effort to accomplish task. Rhode (1989) defined job performance as an act of performing a job either well or badly.

University Librarians should ensure effective leadership style that will lead to maximum job performance. Ram (2001), Mgbodile (2004), Melling and Little (2004) described laissez-faire leadership style extensively. According to them the laissez-faire leadership style is a middle-of-the-road leadership style.

The laissez-faire leadership style of leadership which is sometimes called the loose rein leadership can be described as the detached leadership style. The word "laissez-faire" is taken from French language meaning "let things go their way", is used to describe the leader who allows his workers to

go about their work the way they want. The laissez-faire leader does not believe in exercising any degree of control over the conduct of the workers under him. He is guided by the belief that workers tend to perform better when left on their own. In line with this belief the laissez-faire leader exercises minimum control over the worker and his work operation. Workers are left to perform their work the way they please, to develop their own standard in their own time and to learn from their experiences without interference from the leader by way of control. This style of leadership is considered unsatisfactory because it signifies the absence of visible leadership which often leads to a number of undesirable behaviours among workers leading to poor work performance. Discipline might become a problem among the staff and a prevailing atmosphere of chaos might ensue. Some workers might pay less attention to their work while others might completely abandon their work or perform below expectation.

In University Libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria, it is expected that the leadership styles of University Librarians will have a direct impact on the productivity of the academic librarians under them. But the researchers interview with some Librarians in the Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai and University of Jos showed that a general prevailing climate characterized by tension existed. The research was worried about the non-application of motivational leadership techniques to make librarians perform their duties efficiently. The incessant open clashes and lack of co-operation between the academic librarians and the University Librarians was glaring. The researcher therefore became interested in this topic in order to make an in-depth study on the extent the University Librarians' Laissez-faire leadership style influence job performance of academic librarians in University Libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

In terms of objectives, the research was designed to:

1. Identify the leadership style exhibited by University Librarians in University Libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria.
2. Find out the level of performance of Academic Librarians in the Libraries.
3. Ascertain the influence of laissez-faire leadership style on the job performance of Academic Librarians in the University Libraries.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the leadership styles exhibited by the University Librarians in the University Libraries in the North Central Zone of Nigeria?
2. What is the level of performance of Academic Librarians in the University Libraries?
3. What is the influence of laissez-faire leadership style on the job performance of Academic Librarians in the University Libraries?

Research Methods

The descriptive research design method was used to carry out this study, the independent variable "laissez-faire leadership style" which was involved in the study, was not manipulated or controlled directly by the researcher. According to Nworgu (2006), the group of items to which the study relates (i.e. the population) may be small enough to warrant the inclusion of all of them in the study. Based on this, no sampling of this population was carried out the entire population was therefore used because of the smallness of the population size. The population of this study consisted of all 87 (including 9 University Librarians) (4 Federal and 5 State) University Librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was the questionnaire, the instrument was face-validity, before use by presenting it to three senior colleagues in the field of Library and Information Science. These experts were requested to examine the clarity of expression used as well as the appropriateness of language. The researcher administered and collected the questionnaire from the respondents. Thus there was a 100% rate of returns of copies for the questionnaire distributed. The data for the study were presented in tables and analyzed using mean and standard deviation.

Findings, Analysis and Discussion

Out of the 87 copies of questionnaire that were administered to the Librarians, 87 (100%) were retrieved. The data from the retrieved questionnaire are hereby presented using simple statistics like mean and standard deviation.

Research question 1: What are the leadership styles exhibited by the University Librarians in North Central Zone of Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean of mean scores and SD of responses on leadership styles

S/NO	Leadership Styles	Mean of mean	SD
1	Autocratic leadership style	2.46	0.30
2	Democratic leadership style	2.90	0.33
3	Bureaucratic leadership style	2.63	0.31
4	laissez-faire leadership style	2.62	0.31

Sources: Field Sources

Table 1 shows that the four leadership styles are utilized by the University Librarians at varying mean levels.

Research question 2: What is the level of performance of Librarians in the University Libraries?

Table 2: Mean and SD of responses on the level of performance of the Librarians

S/NO	Level of performance of the Librarians	N	Mean	SD
1	The Librarians are exceptionally effective in the performance of their duties	9	2.52	0.67
2	The Librarians perform duties moderately	9	2.78	0.54
3	The librarians are highly proficient in the practical application of professional/technical knowledge	9	2.64	0.44
4	The Librarians get a great deal done with a set of time frame	9	2.67	0.68
5	The Librarians perform their duties but nit positively outstanding	9	2.51	0.49
6	The Librarians perform duties competently under pressure	9	2.43	0.70
7	The Librarians are definitely ineffective and are not up to the duties	9	2.74	0.33
8	The Librarians maintain very high standards; and their work is virtually error proof	9	2.49	0.48
9	The Librarians grapple with the problems after they arise	9	2.55	0.51
10	The Librarians anticipate problems before they arise	9	2.54	0.62
11	The Librarians get straight to the roots of the problem	9	2.66	0.48
12	The Librarians seldom see below the surface of a problem	9	2.55	0.33
13	The Librarians proposal are constantly consistently sound	9	2.56	0.47
14	The Librarians are tactless and cannot deal with the public	9	2.60	0.59
15	The Librarians are easily thrown off balance, and they are not reliable even under normal circumstance	9	2.54	0.53
16	The Librarians are deficient in applying professional/technical knowledge to practical issues	9	2.38	0.50
17	The Librarians are accurate in the use and interpretation of figures	9	2.69	0.32
18	The Librarians are determined to carry out task through, to the end	9	2.64	0.39
	Mean of mean	9	2.60	0.29

Source: Field Observations Record

Table 2 above indicates that the respondents have varying level of opinions on the level of performance of Librarians in University Libraries in North Central Zone of Nigeria. For instance, they agreed that they are exceptionally effective in the performance of their duties, get a great deal done within a set time frame; get straight to figures and they are determined to carry task through to the end. However, the respondents stated that they grapple with the problem after they arise; seldom see below the surface of a problem and are deficient in applying professional/technical knowledge to the practical issue. They are tactless and cannot deal with the public.

This shows that the level of job performance of Librarians is low.

Table 3: Mean and SD of Responses on the Influence of Laissez-faire Leadership Style on the Job Performance of Academic Librarians.

S/NO	Laissez-faire Style	N	Mean	SD
1	The University Librarian does not fight the cause of library staff promptly	78	2.63	0.31
2	The University Librarian gives me a high degree of freedom in carrying out my duties	78	2.63	0.31
3	The University Librarian work without a plan	78	2.63	0.31
4	The University Librarian does not consult with colleagues on major issues	78	2.63	0.31
5	The University Librarian fails to take necessary initiatives	78	2.63	0.31
6	The University Librarian hardly gives attention to his work	78	2.63	0.31
7	The University Librarian is rarely seen in the library	78	2.63	0.31
8	The University Librarian does not supervise	78	2.63	0.31
	Mean of mean score		2.62	0.31

Sources: Field sources

Note: N = Number of Academic Librarian
SD = Standard Deviation

From Table 3, all the items have mean scores above 2.5 on laissez-faire leadership style and so the University Librarians are laissez-faire in style. That is, the University Librarians do not fight the course of library staff promptly, gives the Academic Librarians high degree of freedom in carrying out their duties, works without a plan, fails to take necessary initiatives and do not consult with colleagues on major issues. The University Librarians hardly give attention to their work, they are rarely seen in the library and do not supervise anybody's work.

The finding on influence of laissez-faire leadership style on the job performance of professional librarians confirms Nwankwo's (2001) submission that laissez-faire leadership is no leadership at all because it does not encourage the workers. It does not believe in exercising any degree of control over the conduct of workers under him. Workers are left to work on their own with leaders offering little or no instruction or supervision. Workers perform their work the way they please, develop their own standards without directives from their leader. Their type of leadership is considered unsatisfactory because it signifies the absence of visible leadership which often leads to a number of undesirable behaviours among workers thus leading to poor performance. Huczynsk and Buchaman (2004) found out that under this dispensation, chaos and anarchy may be common features in the organisation because people's activities are not guided by the leadership. As a result they concluded that job performance and productivity are bound to be low. These findings are in line with Nungie (2005) who said that laissez-faire leadership does not enhance and promote productivity as well as performance of workers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations have been presented:

- * University Librarians are to supervise and closely monitor their own administration in order to allow University management to ensure that the autocratic and laissez-faire ones among them are checked so as to provide conducive climate for the academic Librarians.
- * Workshops and University seminars would enable strengthen and enhance adoption of democratic leadership style in the administration of University Libraries in the North Central Zone of Nigeria.
- * State owned Universities need to enhance conditions of service for their Librarians. This will in no small measure encourage them to perform their duties more efficiently.

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