Influence of Leadership Styles on the Performance of University Libraries in Kenya

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Abstract: This study used the convergent parallel mixed-methods design to explore the influence of leadership styles on the performance of University Libraries in Kenya. The study used a multi-stage sampling technique to draw respondents from 12 public and private university libraries. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected using a questionnaire and key informant interviews, respectively. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), while qualitative data was analysed using Atlas.ti. The study revealed that most university head librarians used democratic and transformational leadership styles. The study concludes that some leadership styles influenced libraries' performance. Particularly, bureaucratic and laissez-faire leadership styles affect library performance negatively. The study recommends that universities and libraries fund programs that help aspiring and working university librarians to strengthen their leadership skills to be able to apply appropriate leadership styles in their contexts.

Keyword: Leadership styles; library performance; university librarians; library management.

Introduction

University libraries play a crucial role as centres of innovation and knowledge repositories in Kenya's evolving higher education system. These libraries are not only expected to keep up with the rapid changes in technology (Gikunju et al., 2023; Kwanya, 2023a) but also to set the bar for new methods that fit the changing educational scene (Wong, 2017). University libraries' capacity to handle these changes deftly and effectively is integrally linked to their efficacy and performance. While it is becoming

more apparent that university library leadership in Kenya faces difficulties, leadership challenges in academic libraries are not just a Kenyan problem.

Aslam (2018) asserts that many academic libraries globally experience serious leadership deficiencies. This is a primary concern, recognising that the leadership approaches employed by library leaders play a significant role in determining organisational effectiveness (Chung & Al-Khaled, 2022). Ashiq et al. (2019) emphasised that inadequate leadership in academic libraries is under a sharp focus because the institutions currently operate in a dynamic educational but resource-constrained operational context. Germano (2010) and Musangi et al. (2019) argued that the degree to which academic libraries meet their institutional goals depends on the effectiveness of the leadership provided. The effectiveness of leadership is dependent on the style applied. In the library context, for instance, staff will innovatively respond to change in the information universe and offer quality services only if there is effective leadership helping them to focus on the appropriate areas with the right attitude and tools.

The digital era has presented university libraries with several challenges, which include the need to adapt to rapidly evolving technology (Kalusopa et al., 2021; Kwanya, 2023b), satisfy the information demands of a new generation (Nakitare et al., 2020) and take action in response to the transforming academic landscape (Gikunju et al., 2024). In order to respond appropriately to these issues, effective leadership has become crucial (Enweani, 2018). Odili (2019) emphasised that leadership within university libraries should address these challenges and motivate librarians to unleash their creativity and subject-matter knowledge in providing excellent services. However, empirical studies on the impact of leadership styles in Kenyan university libraries are still rare (Koech & Namusonge, 2012). In response, this study sought to establish the complex link between university librarians' leadership styles and libraries' performance in Kenya.

Literature Review
Segun-Adeniran (2015) asserts that a leadership style is the behaviour pattern a leader uses to influence the group members to think and act in a way that supports joint group mission, activities and strategy. Newstrom and Davis (2015) perceived a leadership style as how a leader provides direction and implements plans by motivating people. A leadership style is a leader's manner or technique to influence and motivate subordinates to accomplish organisational goals and objectives effectively and efficiently. Al-Khajeh (2018) believes that a leadership style is a comparatively constant form of conduct that describes a leader. On their part, Obiwuru et al. (2011) describe a leadership style as explicit or implicit patterns of actions used by a leader to motivate subordinates to act in a way that ensures organisational excellence. They assert that leadership styles are predictors of leadership effectiveness.

Some of the leadership styles include autocratic leadership, where leaders set rules and make choices mainly on their own, taking benefit of the authority existing in their designation or rank to set the schedule for the group members (Kalu-Dolly & Okpokwasili-Nonyelum, 2018). Democratic leaders expedite group dialogue and prefer to take participation from all followers before concluding (Chukwusa, 2019). Transactional leadership is more of a "give and take" kind of affiliation in the workplace. Therefore, "give and take" is the central system of relations between supervisors and juniors and involves activities such as giving financial compensation for accomplishing agreed goals (Akhigbe et al., 2014). A transformational leader is motivating and imaginative and guides individuals such that subordinates attempt more than their capabilities at the workplace and similarly discover and invent in their work positions (Saliu et al., 2018). Laissez-faire leaders take a "detached" approach, providing group members with the autonomy to stretch and apply their conclusions (Tayfur-Ekmekci et al., 2021). Charismatic leaders provoke interest, zeal and dedication in subordinates by expressing a convincing visualisation and increasing the subordinates' self-confidence in attaining the goal (Mittal & Dhar, 2016). Bureaucratic leadership, proposed by Max Weber in 1947, is a leadership style in which subordinates can follow explicit procedures and outlines of power generated by the supervisors (Salary, 2019).

According to Segun-Adeniran (2015), university libraries cannot perform well without appropriate leadership. University librarians are in charge of their libraries and exercise operational and strategic leadership over them. The exact title of the academic library heads may vary, depending on the organisation, but there is clarity about their leadership roles (Lembinen, 2018). Therefore, they must embrace the most suitable leadership styles. As members of university management, university

librarians exercise authority over the library staff, collection and services. Hongo et al. (2023) argued that university libraries can be affected positively or negatively by how the librarians delegate authority, interact with other staff and make decisions. For instance, university librarians interested in good performance by their subordinates ideally act as role models and lead by example. This makes it easier for the subordinates to acknowledge that what they are being asked to do is achievable, thereby stimulating effectiveness and efficiency in the organisation.

It is essential to underscore that leaders cannot achieve meaningful results by being bossy. Cheung et al. (2018) explained that a good leader models good behaviour for the subordinates to emulate. Han et al. (2019) asserted that the attitude of humility and commitment challenges the subordinates to perform exceedingly well. Segun-Adeniran (2015) argues that when leaders demonstrate an attitude of humility, it appeals to the subordinates who emulate them, thereby sustaining good organisational performance. Therefore, university librarians must demonstrate a suitable leadership style to enhance and sustain good performance in their institutions (Kwanya & Stilwell, 2018). A combination of styles may also work in certain circumstances depending on the changing needs of subordinates. For instance, while transactional leadership may be appropriate in some scenarios, transformational leadership may be best suited for the organisation in others.

Methodology
Design
This study employed the convergent parallel mixed methods design. This design integrates both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance research conclusions. The data collection for both methods occurred simultaneously and results were analysed separately before being compared and integrated to draw comprehensive conclusions. This design enabled triangulation, allowing the researchers to validate and corroborate findings from different data sources, thereby increasing the accuracy and reliability of the conclusions.

Population and Sampling
The population in this study was 16,147 individuals drawn from eight public and 4 private universities in Kenya. These are the top universities in Kenya by Webometrics ranking. There are more public than private universities in Kenya, hence the rationale for selecting more public universities. These included 408 librarians, 10,545 university staffs and 5,194 students as indicated in table 1.

Table 1: Population and Sampling

SN	University	Librarians		University staffs		Students	
		Population	Sample	Population	Sample	Population	Sample
1	University of Nairobi	161	50	2,670	71	1,180	69
2	Kenyatta University	28	20	1,500	70	1,064	68
3	Moi university	41	26	1,000	68	588	65
4	Egerton	46	28	1,000	68	555	65
5	JKUAT	32	22	2,600	71	347	60
6	Technical University of Kenya	28	20	881	67	581	65
7	Multimedia University of Kenya	8	7	130	47	218	55
8	Machakos	14	12	176	52	356	61
9	Catholic University of Eastern Africa	11	10	210	54	59	26
10	Strathmore University	7	6	131	47	124	46
11	United States International University of Africa	24	18	200	53	71	36
12	African International University	8	7	47	29	51	30
	TOTAL	408	228	10,545	697	5,194	645

The sample was 228 librarians, 697 university staffs, 645 students and 12 head librarians, making a total of 1,582 respondents. The study used a multi-stage sampling technique. First, stratified sampling was used to select public and private universities. The researchers further stratified the population into

library staff, users and head librarians. A census was used for head librarians. Information-oriented sampling was used to select library users while simple random sampling was used to choose library staff.

Instruments

Data was collected using a questionnaire and an interview schedule. A structured questionnaire, using closed-ended items in the form of multiple-choice, ordinal, interval and ratio questions was used. The interview schedule comprised open-ended items to which respondents provided unstructured answers based on their personal perceptions and experiences.

Validity and Reliability

The study ensured the validity by aligning the research objectives to the data collection process and tools. This helped to match the assessment measure to the research goals and objectives. Furthermore, the researchers strictly followed the data collection procedures. A panel of subject-matter experts reviewed the data collection tools and instruments and confirmed their ability to collect valid data. Additionally, this study used internal consistency of the tools and a pilot test of the research instruments to enhance reliability. The researchers piloted the research instruments at Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology and KCA University to check their consistency.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected to answer the first research question on the leadership styles used by head librarians in Kenyan universities was analysed

descriptively using the SPSS. Qualitative data for the same question was analysed thematically using Atlas.ti. Only quantitative data was used to address the second research question about the influence of leadership styles on the performance of libraries. This data was analysed inferentially using SPSS.

Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to key ethical considerations to ensure the integrity and safety of the research process. For instance, the participants were adequately informed about the research purpose before the administration of both the questionnaire and the interviews. A formal informed consent form was prepared, which the respondents read, understood and signed to indicate their willingness to participate. To maintain anonymity and confidentiality, the study did not collect any information that could identify or reveal the respondents' details, thus keeping participants' identities confidential. Overall, the study complied with the necessary research protocols, including obtaining an ethical clearance certificate, a research permit and institutional authorisation letters before collecting data from the participants.

Findings and Discussion
Response Rate

The response rate appears in Table 2. The study had a sample size of 1,582 individuals. From this, 1,342 were library users, 228 were library staff (librarians) and 12 were university librarians (head librarians. The response rate was 1,136 out of the 1,582 potential respondents. Thus, the overall response rate was 72%. Table 2 presents the respective responses per university based on the strata.

Table 2: Response Rate

Respondents	Sample	Frequency of responses	Percentages (%)
Library users	1342	954	71
Librarians (library staff)	228	171	75
Head librarians	12	11	92
Total	**1582**	**1136**	**72**

Research Question 1: What are leadership styles used by head librarians in Kenyan Universities?

This research question sought to establish the leadership styles used by head librarians in Kenyan universities. To reach this objective, librarians were asked to indicate the leadership styles used by their head librarians. A total of 171 librarians responded to the question. The data shows that 75 (44%) of the

librarians indicated that their head librarians used the democratic leadership style. This was followed by transformational leadership style indicated by 66(39%), charismatic by 9(6%), bureaucratic 8(4%), laissez-faire 6(3%), transactional 4(2%) and autocratic leadership by 3 (2%).

Figure 1 shows the word cloud of the responses from the university head librarians. The larger the

word size, the more prominent the leadership style. This was generated from the qualitative data collected from the university head librarians when they were interviewed. Similarly, more university head librarians considered themselves using democratic and transformational leadership styles. Some also used laissez-faire leadership.

Figure 1: University head librarians' perception of their leadership styles

The results show that librarians most frequently used democratic and transformational leadership styles. It is crucial to note that a leadership styles change based on situation, requirements of the library and one's personality. Similarly, a study conducted by Butt et al. (2023) in Pakistan reported that a large percentage of librarians used the democratic leadership style. The study further reported that democratic leadership encourages teamwork, participation and shared decision-making, which improves organisational effectiveness and worker happiness in library contexts. The study further reported that transformational leaders inspire and encourage their colleagues in academic library environments.

Research Question 2: What is the influence of leadership styles on the performance of libraries in Kenyan universities?

A model summary in Table 3 shows findings of the regression analysis, which attempted to indicate the influence of leadership styles on the performance of libraries. The model has the R-value of 0.533, which suggests a moderately strong linear relationship between leadership styles and the performance of libraries. The value of R-Square is 0.284, which indicates that 28.4% of the dependent variable (performance of libraries) can be explained by the independent variables (leadership styles). This means that 28.4% of the variability in the performance of university libraries is accounted for by the specific leadership styles adopted by the head librarians.

Table 3: Model Summary

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.533[a]	.284	.253	.502

a. Predictors: (Constant), Charismatic, Autocratic, Transactional, Laissez-faire, Bureaucratic, Transformational, Democratic

In the model:
Y = Overall performance of the university library = is the **dependent variable**
The **independent** variables are chosen from the leadership styles, namely:
X_1 = Democratic
X_2 = Transformational
X_3 = Bureaucratic
X_4 = Transactional
X_5 = Autocratic
X_6 = Laissez-faire
X_7 = Charismatic

The regression equation's beta coefficients comprise both the y-intercept term (beta zero) and the slope term (beta one). The Unstandardised coefficients

are the primary subject of attention. These coefficients are not altered or scaled in any way. From Table 4, the regression equation for the effects of leadership styles on the performance of university libraries appears as follows:

$Y = C + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + \beta_6X_6 + \beta_7X_7$
Where by:
Y= Overall performance of the university library
C= Constant (5.420)
$\beta_1 = 0.198$; $\beta_2 = 0.133$; $\beta_3 = -0.792$; $\beta_4 = -0.167$; $\beta_5 = -2.204$; $\beta_6 = -1.00$; $\beta_7 = -0.417$;

Hence, the equation:
$Y = C + 0.198X_1 + 0.133X_2 - 0.792X_3 - 0.167X_4 - 2.204X_5 - 1.00X_6 - 0.417X_7$

Table 4: Coefficients of Leadership Styles and Performance of University Library

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.420	3.904		1.389	.167
	Democratic	.198	.296	.170	.670	.504
	Transformational	.133	.296	.112	.450	.654
	Bureaucratic	-.792	.340	-.289	-2.329	.021
	Transactional	-.167	.383	-.043	-.435	.664
	Autocratic	-2.204	.410	.000	.000	1.00
	Laissez-faire	-1.000	.355	-.318	-2.817	.005
	Charismatic	-.417	.340	-.152	-1.226	.222

a. Dependent Variable: Overall performance of university library

Table four shows the effect of specific leadership styles on the performance of university libraries. This called for testing of seven null hypotheses.

The First Hypothesis H₀: Democratic leadership style does not affect the performance of the university library

With the p-value of .504, which is greater than the critical value (.050), the study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Failure to reject the null hypothesis means that the study does not have adequate evidence to declare significant effect of the democratic leadership style on the performance of libraries.

Some scholars made similar conclusions. Orewa (2019) argued that although democratic leadership is generally highly regarded, it does not significantly affect productivity on its own. This suggests that other factors play a more significant role in organisational performance outcomes. Erdem (2021) also asserted that while democratic leadership may improve staff morale and job satisfaction, it does not directly increase performance unless combined with specific motivational incentives and a supportive organisational environment.

Similarly, Alam et al. (2021) averred that democratic leadership style can only have a minimal direct effect on productivity in structured work environments, where job roles and policies are clearly defined. There are, however, other studies which suggest that democratic leadership enhances organisational performance because it promotes participative decision-making (Briggs, 2023), a positive work environment (Chukwusa, 2019), inclusiveness (Nadeem, 2012) and collaborative environment (Grant, 2023). Therefore, opinions about the influence of democratic leadership on organisational performance are divided.

The Second Hypothesis H₀: Transformational leadership style does not affect the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of .654, which is greater than the critical value (.050), the study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Failure to reject the null hypothesis means that the study does not have adequate evidence to declare significant effect of the transformational leadership style on the performance of libraries.

This finding is in tandem with recent research, which has indicated that transformational leadership may not significantly impact libraries' performance. This

can be attributed to the fact that while transformational leaders are known for inspiring and motivating their teams, this leadership style alone does not necessarily translate into measurable improvements in library performance. For instance, studies (Ghasabeh et al., 2015; Schiuma et al., 2022; Sihite et al., 2020) suggest that factors, such as resource availability, community engagement and technological integration play more critical roles in the effective functioning of libraries. Transformational leadership can enhance staff morale and foster an innovative atmosphere but its effectiveness can be limited without the necessary support systems and resources. This highlights the need for a comprehensive approach that combines leadership with other vital operational factors to achieve optimal performance in library settings.

The Third Hypothesis H₀: Bureaucratic leadership style does not affect the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of .021, which is lesser than the critical value (.050), the study rejected the null hypothesis. Rejecting the null hypothesis means that Bureaucratic leadership style affects the performance of university libraries. The bureaucratic leadership style, which is characterised by rigid adherence to rules and processes, hierarchical decision-making and restricted autonomy for subordinates (Biyana, 2021) is the only leadership style that influenced the performance. As a result, the study rejects the null hypothesis and since the unstanderzided coefficient is -.792, the study concludes that the bureaucratic leadership style has a negative influence on the overall performance of the university library. Similarly, the study of Akanji et al. (2018) in Nigerian Universities established that restrictive decision-making procedures and stringent adherence to regulations limited the library's capacity to innovate and adapt changes. The study recommended the university libraries to consider flexible and inclusive leadership strategies to improve performance and increased user responsiveness. This observation match with the suggestion of Tran (2021) that bureaucratic decision-making processes prevent staff empowerment and libraries' capacity to adapt changes.

The Fourth Hypothesis H₀: Transactional leadership style has no effect on the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of .664, which is greater than the critical value (.050), the study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Failure to reject the null hypothesis means that the study does not have adequate evidence to declare significant effect of the transactional leadership style on the performance of libraries.

Transactional leadership, while effective in managing routine tasks and maintaining order, often falls short in enhancing overall organisational performance (Alrowwad et al., 2020). This leadership style tends to focus on short-term goals and compliance rather than fostering innovation, employee engagement and long-term growth (Thapa & Parimoo, 2022). As a result, organisations led using this style may struggle to adapt to changing environments and ultimately limit their potential for sustained success (Raveendran, 2021).

The Fifth Hypothesis H₀: Autocratic leadership style does not affect the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of 1.00, which is greater than the critical value (.050), the study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Failure to reject the null hypothesis means that the study does not have adequate evidence to declare significant effect of the autocratic leadership style on the performance of libraries.

Characterised by centralised decision-making and limited employee participation, autocratic leadership often stifles creativity and undermines team morale (Akor, 2014). While it may yield quick results in the short-term, its top-down approach fails to leverage the diverse talents and perspectives of employees, which are crucial for driving innovation and adaptability. Consequently, organisations led by autocratic leaders may experience decreased motivation, high turnover rates and ultimately a detrimental impact on long-term performance and growth (Al-Khajeh, 2018; Chua et al., 2018; Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018).

The sixth Hypothesis H₀: Laissez-faire leadership style does not affect the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of .005, which is equal to the critical value (.050), the study rejected the null hypothesis. Rejecting the null hypothesis means that laissez-faire leadership style affects the performance of libraries. Since the unstanderzided coefficient is -.1.000, the study concludes that

laissez-faire leadership style has a negative influence on the overall performance of university libraries. This concurs with studies which have shown that laissez-faire leadership, while promoting autonomy, can negatively impact organisational performance. Without clear direction, teams may struggle to align with goals, leading to fragmented efforts. Accountability often diminishes, resulting in inconsistent performance and reduced productivity (Khan & Tidman, 2021). Additionally, the lack of feedback can stunt professional growth, leaving employees feeling undervalued. Moreover, unresolved conflicts may arise without active leadership, undermining team cohesion and morale (Jony et al., 2019). Ultimately, this hands-off approach can create confusion and hinder innovation, making it crucial for leaders to provide the right balance between autonomy and guidance for sustained success (Silva & Mendis, 2017).

The seventh Hypothesis H$_0$: Charismatic leadership style does not affect the performance of university libraries.

With the p-value of .222, which is greater than the critical value (.050), the study failed to reject the null hypothesis. Failure to reject the null hypothesis means that the study does not have adequate evidence to declare significant effect of the charismatic leadership style on the performance of university libraries.

While charismatic leadership is often celebrated for its ability to inspire and motivate, it may not significantly influence the performance of academic libraries. This is because the core functions of libraries rely heavily on established procedures and collaborative teamwork, rather than on a single leader's vision. Furthermore, academic libraries often operate within structured academic environments, where policies and standards guide operations apply (Ashiq et al., 2019). The reliance on institutional frameworks means that the impact of an individual leader's charm or appeal can be overshadowed by these overarching systems (Kwanya & Stilwell, 2018). Additionally, the effectiveness of library services is primarily dependent on the competencies of the entire staff and the quality of resources available, rather than the personal charisma of the leader. Ultimately, the success of academic libraries hinges more on systematic organisation and collective effort than on the influence of charismatic leadership (Hongo et al., 2023).

Conclusions and Recommendations
Conclusions
This study concludes that head librarians in Kenyan universities exhibit diverse leadership styles. The most dominantly used are democratic and transformational leadership styles. However, the significance of the dominant styles on the performance libraries could not be ascertained. On the other hand, the significance of the less used laissez-faire and bureaucratic leadership styles was proven statistically significant, affecting the performance in a negative way. Therefore, the study concludes that by avoiding the two leadership styles which negatively affect the organisational performance, the head librarians may promote the performance in their libraries. These findings have significant implications to the field of library science as they highlight the importance of leadership styles in shaping library performance.

Recommendations
Since some leadership styles influence the library performance, the study recommend that universities and libraries fund programmes that help aspiring and working university librarians to strengthen their leadership skills. These programs would help them identify and adopt appropriate leadership styles suitable for their organisational contexts. Recognising the fact that leadership alone cannot have an unlimited impact on performance, universities should invest in creating an operational environment, which promotes library performance. The universities should also promote team work since leaders alone cannot sustain the organisational performance.

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