# Leadership within the cadres in Nigerian Academic Libraries

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#### Leadership roles within the cadres in Nigerian Academic Libraries

#### Abstract

The study investigated leadership roles in academic libraries with the purpose of discovering the librarians' perception as well as evidence of leading from within the ranks and not necessarily from a managerial or supervisory position. The research methodology applied was the quantitative method. Using the case study of two mid-northern Nigerian Universities, findings show that although librarians in non-supervisory roles demonstrate leadership attributes that help improve services delivered to users in their libraries, yet, supervisory staff are more likely to suggest new ideas than non-supervisory staff. In this case, the growth and innovative processes of the library becomes stifled. Therefore, there is a need for the academic library to refocus its leadership structure and be willing to acknowledge other leadership styles especially ones that will encourage librarians in all ranks to showcase their talents and creative abilities; particularly in areas or services where their passion lies in order to promote the library innovative process and drive service development.

Keywords: Nigerian Academic libraries; Leadership in Academic libraries; Library cadres; Leadership within the ranks; Non-managerial leadership

#### 1 Introduction

Studies reveal there are various leadership styles and that the definition of leadership and what it constitutes continue to evolve over the course of time (Janes, 2014: Mosley, 2014). In defining leadership, one needs to first highlight the distinction between "managers" and "leaders". Contrary to popular assumptions, several studies reveal that leadership is not management: while leadership involves creativity, innovation, imagination, motivation, trust, and assisting the development of others. Management, on the other hand, has to do with problem-solving, planning, budget planning, staffing and controlling (Allner 2008; Hernon 2007). Also, Townley (2009) explained managerial position as having an administrative authority which can be transferred or assigned, whereas, leadership is reciprocative and voluntary-with the leader choosing to lead and the followers agreeing to follow. The modern-day definition describes leadership as "a process whereby an individual influence a

group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (NorthHouse, 2013, p.4). Contemporary approach claims leadership has three basic components: influence, followership, and goals. (Deakin University, 2018; Hernon, 2007; Mosley, 2014).

In addition to leadership being a function of process, literature also reveals that in order for libraries to continue to survive, leadership must be visible in all positions. According to Dewey (1998, p.93), It is important for 21st-century librarians in every rung of the organizational ladder to demonstrate leadership skills –" not just as managers of people but of programs, services and activities" otherwise the libraries will be in an inadequate position to compete with modern technology-driven information outlets. In other words, for an organization to thrive, the adopted leadership styles are critical in achieving sustainable innovative growth. This study, therefore, aims to examine the extent to which academic librarians in different ranks understand leadership outside the context of management; and that librarians regardless of their rank, whether supervisory or not, can demonstrate leadership attributes required to achieve organizational goals, and proffer innovative solutions that can advance library services and their parent institutions.

The research was conducted within the context of two Nigerian universities: Baze University, a privately owned university situated in Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory of Nigeria and the Federal University of Technology Minna, (FUTMINNA), a government-owned university in Niger State of Nigeria. The libraries of both universities are run by librarians in different cadres ranging from Library assistants, Assistant librarians, Librarian I, Librarian II, Senior Librarians, and Principal Librarian. But all are being preceded by a top management staff, the University Librarian. In both universities, the criteria required for the librarians to advance along these ranks are based on academic gualifications and scholarly publications. In addition to meeting the basic academic requirements, the office of the university librarian is equivalent to a professorial position. A common occurrence mostly in public universities but lesser in private institutions of higher education is that senior librarians are often seen heading a department that consists of a team of other librarians in lower ranks. Also, mostly in public universities, the office of the university librarian, unlike the other cadres, is often offered to the individual the university body nominates and appoints. To successfully achieve its aim, the study will identify the extent librarians regardless of their ranks are permitted to introduce and lead new initiatives in their libraries; investigate and identify how the initiatives led by non-supervisory library staff have improved and advanced library services to the benefit of users; and investigate the types of leadership roles in Baze University and FUTMINNA libraries. The study will also aim to answer the following questions: Do libraries recognize and acknowledge that leadership can exist within the various ranks in the academic library? And to what extent are innovative librarians in all levels of the library involved in engendering changes that are advancing the library services offered to users?

#### **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

The section starts by examining the prevalent leadership structure in Nigerian academic libraries. Also discussed is the need to accommodate leadership within the library ranks, particularly less hierarchical leadership styles that have the potential to drive a sustainable library innovative process. The review concludes by examining the caution that needs to be considered while adopting this approach.

#### 2.1 Leadership in Academic Libraries

The leadership structure common in all types of libraries, not just those in academics is usually a managerial top-down, hierarchical system; it consists of an executive director or a university librarian who supervises a management team of principal and senior librarians who in turn manage department heads and other personnel down the line (Townley, 2003; Bartlett, 2014, p.1; Janes, 2014; Harris-Keith, 2016). As described in previous works of literature, the leadership structure in Nigeria's university-based academic libraries is mostly restricted to a succession of managerial leadership which is highly transactional and rarely accommodates the context of leadership style that encourages employees' creativity in the workplace. Consequently, the services and operations of most academic libraries in Nigeria still rely mainly on limiting traditional library systems which were not designed to accommodate the changes introduced by the information age. According to Mosley (2014, p.2), managerial leadership plays an important role in establishing an "organization's strategic priority and culture" and the top-down model may be the most commonly adopted leadership style, yet, it is not always necessarily the best approach to apply in all situations. There are other leadership approaches that are

more effective in helping to harness employees' skills and talents, promote the delivery of quality services, provide customer satisfaction and achieve other general objectives of the organization (Stephens and Russell, 2004; Goulding & Walton, 2014 ). Beyond the fore claim of the benefits of having a titled leader calling all the shots at the top of the organization, both Mosley (2014) and Topping (2002) propose another leadership approach - leading from all sides. The proposal to adopt leadership from all levels as a strategy to accomplish organizational objectives is a contrarian view totally skewed from the normal practice (Lubans, 2010). However, according to Baker (1993 cited in Stephens & Russell, 2004, p.240)" anyone who wants to have a better idea of what is happening and what is about to happen needs to read widely in a number of sources one normally might consider exotic or tangential". That said, innovations and techniques used in advancing today's modern libraries originated in other fields outside librarianship and information sciences. For instance, most leadership styles and organization development models were originally invented in business or management fields before they were adopted by other organizations, [including libraries] (Stephens & Russell, 2004).

#### 2.2 Leadership from all levels

Leading from a managerial position is far from the only place a person can lead ( Hernon, 2007; Cawthorne 2010: Jannuzi, 2014). One of Henry Ford's (founder of Ford Motors) famous quotes states that "you don't have to hold a position in order to be a leader". However, inspiring a vision and bringing it into reality without holding a formal managerial office can be daunting as it can arouse suspicion or plan to usurp the current management (Janes 2014). Nonetheless, leading without an office or title is gaining recognition and increasingly being studied as it is informally introduced to inspire librarians and staff at all levels in the organization to approach work from a proactive perspective (Barlett, 2014). Different terminologies used in literature to describe leadership from all levels include leadership from all sides; leadership from within; grassroots leadership; personal leadership; distributed leadership; transformational leadership; among many others. Janes (2014) gave literal descriptions of what it means to lead from all levels as an employee whose approach towards professionalism, their confidence, knowledge, ideas, vision and contributions reverberates amongst colleagues across the organization using the mechanism, not of an office or rank but of [personal attributes such as] good communication and most importantly, excellent interpersonal skills. Also, Barlett (2014, p.1) explain leading from all sides as "the people that others approach for help with problems, who thoughtfully contribute ideas and comments at staff meetings, who make decisions in their areas of professionalism with confidence, and who stay informed of developments in the larger organization. In short, they influence others..." and according to lannuzi (2014), these are also people who distinguish themselves through volunteering and stepping up confidently to pick up responsibilities without needing to be propelled. John C. Maxwell, a successful author and speaker on leadership explained that influence can manifest itself anywhere and with anyone, regardless of the humbleness of their job titles. That said, the overall success and progress of libraries may be critically **dependent on the "commitment, engagement, and culture**" present in **levels** outside authority or managerial roles (Mosley, 2014, p.2). Such influences garnered from anywhere within the organization in spite of rank or title might just be what is most needed to move libraries forward in Nigeria.

#### 2.3 Leadership, not management: matching the employees' skills-set

Although, it has been argued that the demonstration of leadership attributes within all the ranks of the organization can encourage creativity and also drive a sustainable innovative process, however, it is important to note that the ability of an employee to demonstrate innovative leadership skills at a lower or middle level does not necessarily mean such staff will be able to function effectively as an administrative or managerial leader (Mosley, 2014). This is because, usually leading from within the ranks is one in which personnel are strongly motivated by passion and with a strong desire of getting things done (Janes, 2014) According to Mosley (2014, p.4) "different leadership roles emphasize different types and styles of leadership skills" and most often grassroots leaders are able to showcase such leadership abilities because they are engaged in activities which lie within their areas of interest. As a result, an organization should not always be in a haste to reward creative personnel with promotions that involve offering them a titled or managerial position, because they may or may not be gifted in such role. Recognizing leadership can manifest anywhere within the ranks regardless of the office is demonstrated by acknowledging the values delivered at basic levels rather than forcing candidates into positions that do not match their skill-sets. Therefore, creating a sustainable innovative process (Germano, 2012; Mosley, 2014) requires

establishing an environment whereby both the managers and non-supervisors or subordinates are keen to communicate effectively as leaders.

#### **3 METHODOLOGY**

The research methods used to achieve the objective of the study was the quantitative survey. The research instrument used for the collection of data was the questionnaire and interview. In total the population comprised of 18 library staff of different ranks from the Federal University of Technology Minna (FUTMINNA) and Baze University, Abuja. The population used in the study was determined by the size of the library staff employed in both universities and their desire to participate in the study. The Library staff from FUTMINNA consist of 1 Librarian I, 3 Librarian II, and 2 Higher Library Officers. While those from Baze University, Abuja consist of 3 Library II, 5 Assistant Librarians, 2 Graduate Librarians and 2 Library Assistants. Ethical matters were considered during the administration of the research instruments as well as in the analysis of the data. In addition, the study was conducted on a small scale within the context of two universities in the mid-northern region of Nigeria. The choice of institutions used for the study was determined by their proximity to the researcher. Consequently, it is difficult to generalize based on the findings of this study, the effect of leadership roles that emanates from academic library staff across the different ranks, particularly from those in non-supervisory positions.

#### **4 RESULTS**

In addition to stating their job titles as presented above, respondents from FUTMINNA and Baze University, Abuja also specified their job roles as either supervisory or non-supervisory; therefore, it is on this basis they were categorized in order to satisfy the objectives of the study. Findings from the research instruments are analyzed and discussed using a thematic approach.

#### 4.1 Job roles and Leadership styles

#### Table 1. Leadership styles practised in both university libraries

Total number of observations: 26

Number omitted due to missingness: 9 (1 in LEADERSHIP.STYLE.PRACTICED.AT.THE.UNI.LIBRARIES, 8 in INSTITUTION)

Total number of observations used: 17

INSTITUTION	MANAGERIAL	AUTOCRATIC	PARTICIPATORY	TRANSFORMATIONAL	NON-MANAGERIAL	TOTAL
BAZE	(5)45.45%	(3)27.27%	(0)0%	(2)18.18%	(1)9.9%	(11)100%
FUTMINNA	(4)66.8%	(0)0%	(1)16.7%	(1)16.7%	(0)0%	(6) 100%

In order to identify the leadership approach the respondents perceived as being practiced in their university libraries, they made multiple selections from the different leadership styles presented on the questionnaire. The data in table 1 shows that in both institutions, the most selected option is managerial Baze (45.45%) and FUTMINNA (66.8%). This was followed by autocratic (27.27%) which was mostly selected by the respondents from Baze University but none from FUTMINNA. Table (1) also shows that the only selection made for Non-managerial (9.9%) was by a respondent from Baze University. Few of the respondents from both institutions also selected transformational and participative leadership styles.

#### Table 2. Job Positions

Total number of observations: 18

	BAZE	FUTMINNA	TOTAL
ROLES			
NON-SUPERVISORS	(8)80%	(2)20%	(10)100%
SUPERVISORS	(4)50%	(4)50%	(8)100%

The information in Table 2 displays the proportion of the respondents in supervisory and non-supervisory positions. 80% of the non-supervisory library staff work at Baze University, while the remaining 20% at FUTMINNA. The number of respondents who indicated that their job involves supervising the work activities of other staff below their position are equal (50%) in both universities.

#### 4.2 Leadership outside the context of management

### Table 3. Leadership is separate from management Total number of observations: 18

STRONGLY AGREE AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
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ROLES						
NON SUPERVISOR	(4)40%	(2)20%	(3)30%	(0)0%	(1)10%	(10)100%
SUPERVISOR	(4)50%	(2)25%	(0)0%	(0)0%	(2)25%	(8)100%

Table 3 reveals that a significant proportion of the respondents in both supervisory (50%) and non-supervisory (40%) positions strongly agree that leadership is separate from management. 30% of the respondents in non-supervisory roles were silent, while 25% of the supervisors strongly disagree.

Table 4. In your institution employees can only influence while holding a titledleadership position.Total number of observations: 18

INSTITUTION	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
BAZE	(4)33.33%	(2)16.67%	(2)16.67%	(3)25%	(1)8.33	(12)100%
FUTMINNA	(1)16.7%	(2)33.3%	(1)16.7%	(2)33.3%	(0)0%	(6)100%

In response to the statement, in your institution employees can only influence while holding a titled leadership position: half of the respondents from Baze University indicated strongly agree (33.33%) or agree (16.67%). While the response rate of the other half is spread across: disagree (25%), strongly disagree (8.33%), and neither agree nor disagree (16.67%). In like manner, 50% of the respondents from FUTMINNA also indicated either strongly agree (16.7%) or agree (33.33%). While the other 50% responded by indicating disagree (33.33%) or neither agree nor disagree (16.7%).

#### 4.3 Staff influence by Rank

 Table 5. A Librarian regardless of rank can make contributions and identify operational needs

Total number of observations: 37

Number omitted due to missingness: 19 (19 in INSTITUTION) Total number of observations used: 18

ROLES	24 STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	TOTAL
NON- SUPERVISORS	(5)50%	(5)50%	(0)0%	(0)0%	(0)0%	(10)100%
SUPERVISORS	(6)75%	(2)25%	(0)0%	(0)0%	(0)0%	(8)100%

Table (5) reveals that in response to the statement a librarian regardless of rank can make contributions and identify operational needs, respondents in non-supervisory positions indicated either strongly agree (50%) or agree (50%). Those in supervisory positions also indicated either strongly agree (75%) or agree (25%).

### Table 6. In which of the following areas does your input satisfy the library users' needs?

Total number of observations: 22

Number omitted due to missingness: 4 Total number of observations used: 18

	TEACHING	RESEARCH	STUDY	Total
Roles				
Non-supervisors	(8)72.72%	(3)27.27%	(0)0%	(11)100%
Supervisors	(9)90%	(1)10%	(0)0%	(10)100%

The areas of library services, non-supervisors indicated their ideas have influenced and promoted changes are in teaching (72.72%) and research (27.27%). Similarly, those in the supervisory categories indicated they also made an impact in the areas of teaching (90%) and research (10%).

### Table 7. Do you suggest new ideas or methods of practice to your superiors and colleagues?

Total number of observations: 22 Number omitted due to missingness: 4

Total number of observations used: 18

NEVER	OCCASIONALLY	OFTEN	V.OFTEN	TOTAL

ROLES					
NON- SUPERVISORS	(2) 18.18%	(6) 54.55%	(2) 18.18%	(0)0%	(10)100%
SUPERVISORS	(0)0%	(3)42.86%	(2)28.57%	(2) 28.57%	(7) 100%

The above table (7) shows the response to the question: do you suggest new ideas to your superiors and colleagues? The response of those in the non-supervisors category was: occasionally (54.55%), never (18.18%) and often (18.18%). While those in supervisory positions indicated: occasionally (42.86%), often (28.57%) and very often (28.57%) respectively.

### Table 8. Did any of your ideas lead to the introduction of new services in your library? Total number of observations: 22

Number omitted due to missingness: 6 Total number of observations used: 16

ROLES	NO	YES	TOTAL
NON-SUPERVISORS	(7)70%	(3)30%	(10) 100%
SUPERVISORS	(5)83.25%	(1)6.65%	(6) 100%

Table 8 shows the response of the respondents to the question: did any of your ideas lead to the introduction of new services in your library? For the non-supervisors, the response is (3)30% Yes and 7(70%) No. While the supervisors' response is (1)6.65% Yes and (5)83.25% No. Two of the respondents in the non-supervisory category stated that the implementation of their ideas helped to improve the speed of users' access and retrieval of relevant information. Another respondent in the same rank stated his idea promoted the relevance of [unspecified] library resources to users which led to an increase in library patronage.

#### **5 DISCUSSION**

Using a simple percentage system and tabular presentations in the analysis, the study reveals a significant number of the respondents from both Baze University and FUTMINNA indicated the managerial position as the leadership style being practiced in their university libraries. These findings coincide with previous research which stated the library leadership approach is predominantly managerial (Bartlett, 2014).

Findings also show that representatives from the same institution, Baze University, in particular, selected other leadership styles which are extremely opposite in approach and practice such as, autocratic and transformational. This tends to suggest that the respondents' perception of how they are being supervised could be based on either their knowledge of the different leadership styles or their experiences or the kind of professional relationships they have with their superiors. Nevertheless, the research shows that more than 50% of the respondents in both supervisory and non-supervisory positions have the understanding that leadership is separate from management and all the respondents either strongly agree or just agree that library staff, regardless of rank can manifest leadership attributes required to meet organizational objectives. Furthermore, the respondents in all the ranks represented, indicated their jobs impact the teaching and learning needs of the library users which are the main purpose of the academic library.

Findings from the study show that library staff in supervisory positions are the most likely to present new ideas to their superiors and colleagues. Although, few of the librarians in non-supervisory roles indicated they have put forward innovative ideas which have either improved or led to new services for library users. Despite this insight, the study also reveals a disparity in the respondents' opinion towards the extent at which one can only actually influence without holding a titled leadership position in their institutions: while half of the total number of respondents from both FUTMINNA and Baze University strongly agree or agree to the statement that holding a titled office determines the level of influence one has in their organization, the other half falls into the category of unsure, disagree or strongly disagree.

#### 6 CONCLUSION

The library leadership is strongly linked to its survival and growth, as a result, this study investigated leadership roles in academic libraries and the librarians' perception of leadership from within the ranks not just from the top managerial level. Findings show from the study that although the non-supervisory staff can demonstrate leadership attributes, yet, librarians in supervisory positions are most likely to present ideas that influence library services. Creating an organizational culture that encourages innovation where programs and services progressively transform and change depends to a large extent on variations of leadership styles

(Jantz, 2011). Therefore, in order for academic libraries in Nigeria to evolve and remain relevant to its users, there is a need to refocus the managerial leadership structure and recognize that leadership can emanate from within the library cadres. Innovative librarians, regardless of rank or at whatever stage they are in their professional journey, who are able to demonstrate leadership in services, programs, or activities as described by Dewey (1998) should be more acknowledged and encouraged to develop and showcase their skills, proffer new ideas and influence other colleagues. There is a need to conduct further research that will bring to light what librarians at entry or mid-level of their careers have accomplished on behalf of their library users or institutional body.

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