

Unravelling the leadership styles used by head librarians in universities in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

There is an ongoing debate about what makes a leader successful. Whereas multiple views are discernible from the literature, the factors that determine leadership styles are not adequately discussed. This paper explores the leadership styles head librarians in university libraries in Kenya use. It specifically explores the roles and qualities of head librarians as leaders in universities in Kenya. Further, it analyses the leadership styles they apply and their effectiveness in facilitating successful university library leadership. The paper also examines the influence of age, educational level, and gender of the head librarians on their leadership styles. The study was conducted using a mixed methods research approach in eight (8) public and four (4) private university libraries in Kenya. Quantitative data was collected from library staff and library users (staff and students) using questionnaires, while qualitative data was collected from head librarians using interviews. The findings reveal that head librarians oversee the strategic and operational functions of university libraries. To perform these roles effectively, head librarians need effective communication skills. They should also be visionary, inspiring, motivating, patient, consistent and firm. The findings also reveal that the most effective head librarians apply a democratic leadership style. It is also demonstrated that while there may be some association between gender and leadership styles, it is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant. It also emerged that having a higher level of education (PhD) significantly influences head librarians' leadership styles compared to having a lower level of education (MSc). However, the association between age and leadership styles was not statistically significant.

(Key words: *Library leaders, qualities of librarians, role of librarians, academic librarians, Kenya)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership is one of the main factors linked to attaining organisational goals and objectives (Al-Khajeh, 2018). Indeed, it is defined as the practice of influencing groups or individuals' activities toward achieving the set goals and objectives of their organisations. Influential leaders influence their subordinates and ensure they attain their highest potential performance. Leaders understand that the behaviour of the subordinates is also a contributing factor to effective organisational performance (Wren, 2018). Therefore, effective performance should guarantee the attainment of general organisational objectives and aims. In fact, organisational performance is quantified and calculated on the team's capability to attain set goals since this is a sign of the competence level of those inside the organisation. Many organisations are developing different methods to increase their

performance through innovation to attain high performance and sustain it (Ivanov & Avasilcãi, 2014).

A leadership style is a leader's approach to motivating and influencing subordinates to accomplish organisational vision and mission (Al-Mahayreh & AbdeL-Qader, 2015). Therefore, organisational leaders' leadership styles impact the organisation's performance (Al-Khajeh, 2018). The styles adopted by an organisational leader help to steer the organisation towards effective performance and attainment of its goals and objectives. Since leadership is regarded as a significant contributor to organisational performance, the leadership style embraced significantly influences any organisation's success or failure (Ngetich & Muchemi, 2017). This applies to all organisations, including libraries. Therefore, university head librarians, as leaders, play a pivotal role in attaining the university goals and

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objectives concerning teaching, learning and research activities of its faculty members and the entire university community (Akparobore & Omosekejimi, 2020). For effective performance of a university library, the head librarian needs highly influential capabilities and leadership skills to inspire, motivate and guide the subordinates to work with zeal, confidence and enthusiasm towards achieving the university library goals and objectives (Hao & Yazdanifard, 2015).

The university head librarian's leadership style and personal qualities dictate the implementation and attainment of the library's vision and mission (Saliu et al., 2018). Authority, leaders as transformation managers, and leadership styles impact the efficiency of university head librarians. Existing literature is unanimous about the impact of leadership styles on the success of a leader. The leadership requirements for university head librarians to enable their effective performance include confidence, knowledge, daring, extensive discussion, and team-building. They are expected to be excellent listeners, reachable to library staff, have strong communication skills, and be dependable and self-assured (Martin, 2018; Wong, 2017).

The leadership styles applied by head librarians in universities in Kenya and the extent to which they influence their leadership success are unknown. This paper examines the roles of head librarians as leaders in university libraries in Kenya, assesses their qualities as leaders, and investigates the leadership styles they use.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The reviewed literature revealed several leadership styles which leaders adopt and adapt to ensure their effectiveness in their positions. These include transactional, transformational, laissez-faire, autocratic, democratic, bureaucratic, and charismatic leadership styles.

Xenikou (2017) explains that transactional leadership begins by defining the relationship between seniors and juniors as a communal exchange motivating followers predominantly through conditional rewards. The rewards result from attaining the desired goals and good task performance. A transactional leader undertakes a cost-benefit financial exchange to encourage juniors to pursue tangible goals in return for benefits (Bass, 2008). Transactional leadership may also involve the exchange of values like honesty, responsibility, fairness, and reciprocal obligation between leaders and followers. Such exchange results in compliance by employees as a consequence of the support given by the leader in

directing efforts towards the attainment of mutual goals (Xenikou, 2017).

According to Hautala (2005), transformational leadership is a classic example of a more profound leadership style. Whereas the action taken by a transactional leader is influenced by the situation and the maturity of the followers, a transformational leader influences the deeper needs of the followers, resulting in long-term effects. Antonakis and House (2014) liken transactional leadership to situational leadership theory, given that followers are motivated to act either through rewards or punishment. By contrast, the impact of transformational leadership is both deeper and broader. Of course, transformational leaders also consider subordinates' situations and maturity levels. However, they believe each case and person is different, which motivates them. This results in sustainable individual commitment, leading to more significant effort and better performance (Hautala, 2005).

Hartog et al. (1997) explain that laissez-faire leadership is passive and is the opposite of transformational and transactional leadership. They assert that laissez-faire leaders must be more active and avoid decision-making and staff supervision. Hartog et al. (1997) opine that such leaders need to take responsibility for any decisions or results and be more collaborative. Steinmann et al. (2018) refer to them as "hands-off" and "do nothing" leaders who avoid being present in the activities of their subordinates. Bass (2008) argues that laissez-faire leadership should not be perceived as "democratic, relations-oriented, participative, or considerate leadership behaviour". Similarly, it is not a delegation of responsibilities. This is because delegation involves the leader actively providing direction to the staff or what and how to perform delegated work. It also requires supervision of the delegated tasks.

Autocratic leaders monopolise decision-making. They only interact with their followers when issuing strict instructions (Kalu et al., 2019). Managers who love commanding their subordinates popularly use this style. Such managers issue instructions on what should be done and how without listening to suggestions from the subordinates. It has been observed that the use of excessive authority reduces the performance of subordinates. It can also result in resentment, hostility, and lack of innovation since the leaders use force and fear to get work done. Janse (2018) argued that autocratic, also known as authoritarian leadership, is less prevalent in the modern age and is likely to be resisted by employees.

Gill (2014) defines democratic leadership as encouraging subordinates to participate actively in decision-making.

However, it is essential to point out that although subordinates are invited to participate in decision-making, the leader makes the final decision. Jerotich (2013) explains that democratic leaders are respected by their subordinates. Otara (2011) argues that employees do not expect democratic leaders to know everything because democratic leaders employ intelligent people. He explains further that democratic leaders view employees as partners whose participation in decision-making needs to be encouraged. Democratic leaders attain results through collaboration and teams. This approach enhances the performance of the individual workers as they feel enthusiastic and involved in making decisions. Several authors (Iqbal et al., 2015; Nwaigwe, 2015) believe democratic, people-oriented leadership is better than autocratic, production-oriented leadership.

According to Ojokuku et al. (2012), bureaucratic leaders use policies to guide processes toward meeting organisational targets. They rely on policies to execute organisational strategies and objectives. Staff are persuaded to perform tasks to expectations based on targets set in policies. Thus, the direction is dictated by organisational policies. Furthermore, bureaucratic leaders are known to be strict on compliance with procedures and processes to the extent that they care less about people. As a result, they are passive and averse to change. Ojokuku et al. (2012) opine that as long as policies are placed before people, employee issues will not be addressed promptly or adequately. Although policies are in themselves not destructive, they demotivate and frustrate staff when they are applied unthinkingly. Nwokocho and Iheriohanma (2015) explain that this leadership style faces the same cardinal problem, similar to autocratic leadership. They assert that both leadership styles focus less on motivation and workforce development.

Charismatic leaders are perceived as having a divinely given gift to influence people and execute power over them. Ojokuku et al. (2012) opines that charismatic leadership is the most effective leadership style. Khatri (2005) explains that charismatic leaders are more successful than others because they have a vision and personality that motivate their followers to implement their vision. Consequently, charismatic leaders are generally the most valued. Workers under charismatic leaders operate in an environment where creativity and innovation thrive. Aruzie et al. (2015) suggest that workers find it easier and more natural to follow charismatic leaders than others. Although charismatic leadership has many benefits, there is one major challenge with it. Organisations led by charismatic leaders falter when the leader leaves through natural or

personal transition. Ojokuku et al. (2012) assert that such organisations must be more robust in the leader's absence. Again, the power of charismatic leaders lies in their personality, a trait which may be difficult to imitate or replicate. Awuor and Kamau (2015) explain that most charismatic leaders do not nurture their successors since they tend to weed out potential competition.

Although there is literature on leadership styles, the coverage of their application by head librarians in universities is fragmented. This makes it difficult for library leaders to cope with demanding challenges occasioned by the need to adapt to the changing information ecosystem. To be able to meet the dynamic expectations of their users, there is a need to focus attention on effective library leadership. In the Kenyan context, there is also a dearth of literature on library leadership making it even more difficult for head librarians to identify and adopt effective leadership styles. This paper contributes to the discourse on role, qualities and leadership styles of head librarians in universities in Kenya.

III. METHODOLOGY

The ontological assumption of this study is that leadership constitutes a unique reality in every situation and context. Therefore, the study sought to unravel the leadership styles of Kenyan university head librarians in context. Epistemologically, it was assumed that this reality was developed from the individual perspectives and experiences of the subjects of the study, the librarians. This study also applied the pragmatism paradigm, which emphasises the research problem and uses all approaches available to understand it (Elsbach & Kramer, 2016).

Therefore, the study applied a mixed research approach because the research questions required quantitative and qualitative answers. Also, the mixed methods approach was chosen to enable the researchers to cross-examine the multiple and complex factors involved in varied experiences by respondents to provide more complete responses (Kwanya, 2022). The study specifically adopted a convergent parallel mixed method design. Both quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (interviews) data were collected simultaneously and analysed separately. The convergent parallel design allowed triangulation, utilising the complementary capabilities of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, expanding findings, enhancing validity and trustworthiness, grasping complexity better, and reaching a wider audience – participants' perspectives.

A multiple-case study research design consisting of eight (8) public and four (4) university libraries in Kenya was used. The public universities were the University of Nairobi, Kenyatta University, Egerton University, Moi University, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, the Technical University of Kenya, Machakos University, and Multimedia University of Kenya. The private universities were Strathmore University, United States International University - Africa, Catholic University of Eastern Africa, and Africa International University. Data was collected from librarians (head librarians and other professional librarians) and library users (staff and students) using

questionnaires and interviews. Quantitative data was analysed statistically using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. A thematic analysis was used for qualitative data using Atlas.ti.

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are presented here according to the key themes and specific objectives. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the head librarians in Kenyan university libraries.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of head librarians

Head Librarians' Education level	Frequency	Percentages
Masters	2	18
Doctorate	9	82
Total	11	100
Head Librarians Gender	Frequency	Percentages
Male	3	27
Female	8	73
Total	11	100
Head Librarians' Age level	Frequency	Percentages
46-55	3	27
56-65	6	55
Above 65	2	18
Total	11	100

Roles played by head librarians within the library

The study sought to identify the roles librarians play within the library. The question was a multiple-response question. Most (148) of the librarians indicated they maintain the physical library collection and provide

research assistance. Others (142) also indicated that they stay current with developments in librarianship and technology, while 131 mentioned developing and delivering library instruction and information literacy programmes. The least (28) mentioned role played was managing the library budget. Table 2 below shows all the results.

Table 2: Roles played by head librarians

Roles played by head librarians	Frequency
<i>Maintaining the physical collection</i>	148
<i>Providing research assistance</i>	148

Roles played by head librarians	Frequency
<i>Managing the budget</i>	28
<i>Developing and delivering library instruction and information literacy programs</i>	131
<i>Staying current with developments in the field of librarianship and technology</i>	142
<i>Collaborating with faculty and staff to support the teaching and research mission of the university</i>	124
<i>Promoting and marketing library resources and services</i>	127
<i>Assessing and evaluating library services and programmes</i>	105
<i>Participating in the selection and acquisition of library materials</i>	75
<i>Supervising and training library staff and students</i>	119

Qualities of an effective library leader

The themes that emerged from the interviews with the head librarians indicated that they should possess good communication skills, vision, motivation, and inspiration. Some of the qualities are reported verbatim hereunder.

"Visionary with a clear vision of the future; good communication and listening skills"

[Head Librarian 10]

"A good listener/communicator; firmness in decision making"

[Head Librarian 1]

"Motivating and inspiring; communicating effectively; empowering others"

[Head Librarian 9]

"Good communication; equality; consistency"

[Head Librarian 6]

"Communication and being able to be in touch with staff"

[Head Librarian 7]

"Patient; visionary; time conscious"

[Head Librarian 8]

"They have a vision, integrity, motivating and inspiring others, and have good communication skills"

[Head Librarian 3]

Leadership styles used by head librarians

Figure 1 (on the following page) presents the leadership styles used by the head librarians in Kenyan university libraries. The democratic style was the most popular.

Requested to give some examples of how they have used the leadership styles, the following verbatim statements were provided.

"I consistently use democratic leadership with those I supervise. I encourage them to take ownership of their sections and welcome new ideas that can lead to improved services. As a result, section heads are empowered to make some decisions and to, in turn, empower those they supervise".

[Head Librarian 10]

"I consistently use democratic and transformational leadership styles to supervise and encourage the library staff to work towards achieving the university library goal and be responsible in their various sections."

[Head Librarian 6]

"In meetings, I use democratic leadership to encourage staff to speak up and share their ideas".

[Head Librarian 8]

"In staff reshuffles, I involve the various section leaders since they know the staff under them better; we build strong section teams".

[Head Librarian 3]

The head librarians were asked to explain how their leadership styles help meet the needs of different library members. They indicated that they mainly studied the situation and involved the library staff. This is done by getting to know each other's strengths and what they can do better. Figure 2 (on the following page) represents some of the explanations given by the head librarians

Figure 2: Leadership styles used by librarians

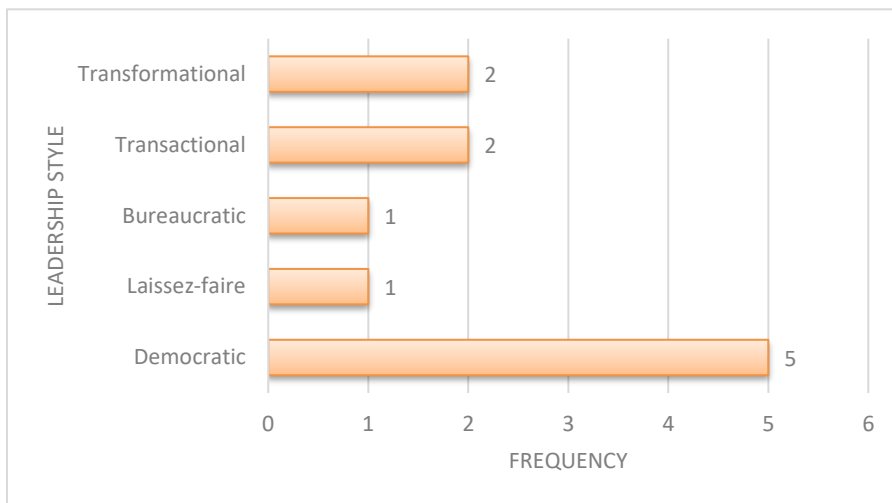
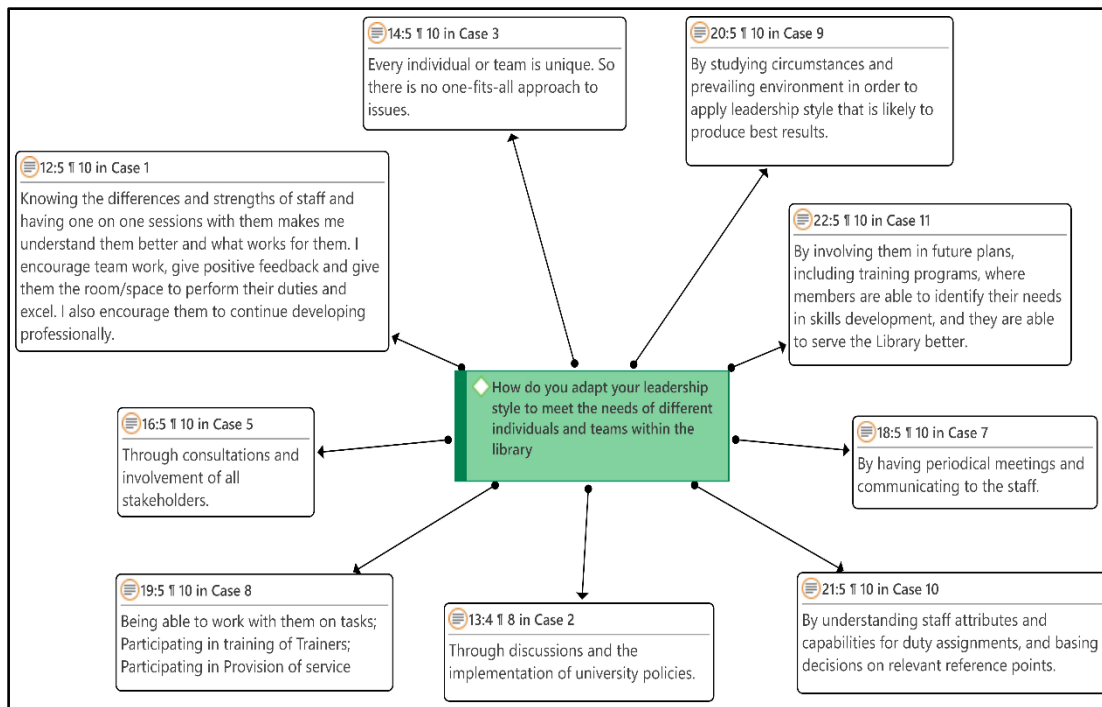


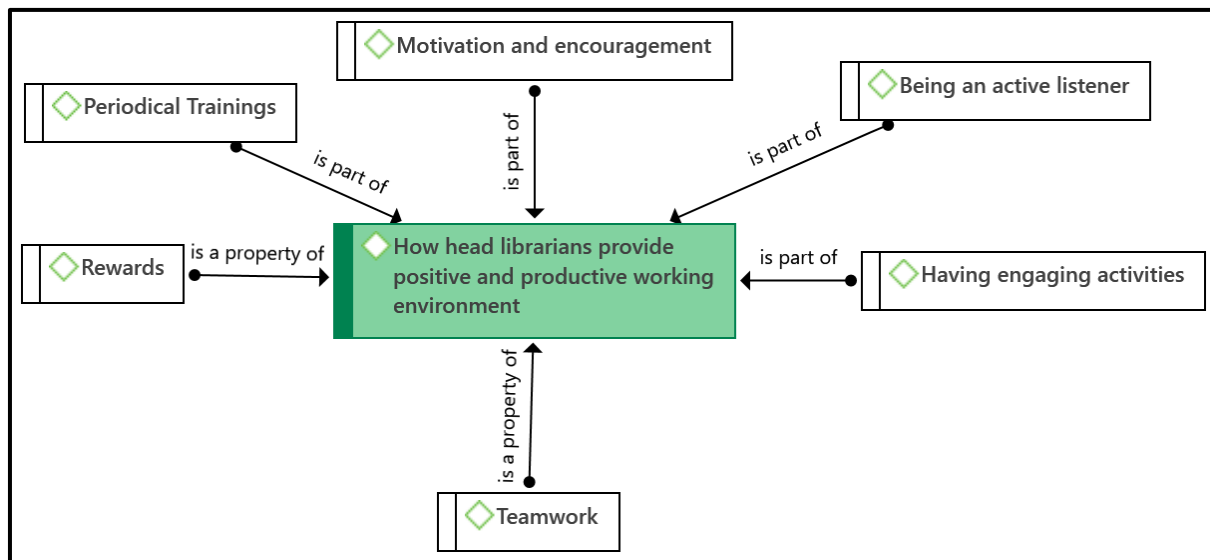
Figure 1: Leadership styles used to meet the needs of different individuals and teams



From the interviews, the head librarians also indicated that they use different methods to ensure the library staff has a positive and productive working environment. The main themes that arose were motivation and encouragement, periodical training, issuing rewards for

good work, using engaging activities within the library, and striving to be active listeners to whatever the staff members and users have to say. Figure 3 (on the following page) shows the themes.

Figure 3: Building a positive and productive working environment for library staff



The library leader's performance was evaluated based on a survey conducted among the library staff. The survey had four response options, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Table 3 below gives the

study results. The survey was a multiple-response question, and respondents could answer some questions and leave others, hence the variations of N per row.

Table 3: Performance of leadership roles by head librarians according to library staff

LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS		STRONG DISAGREE	SOMEHOW DISAGREE	SOMEHOW AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N (Row)
Library leader appropriately recognises the library staff when performing their regular work duties	N	7	17	73	62	159
	N%	4.4%	10.7%	45.9%	39.0%	100%
Library leader ensures that the library physical spaces are adequate for the performance of the staff duties effectively	N	5	15	51	99	170
	N%	3.0%	9.0%	30.0%	58.0%	100%
Library leader works with sincerity and determination to understand the parent organisation's goals and objectives	N	2	9	66	93	170
	N%	1.2%	5.3%	38.8%	54.7%	100%
Library leader firmly communicates the library's vision and strategies	N	4	11	52	101	168
	N%	2.4%	6.5%	31.0%	60.1%	100%
Library leader demonstrates executive presence and is comfortable working in all circumstances effectively with confidence	N	3	11	71	66	151
	N%	2.0%	7.3%	47.0%	43.7%	100%
Library leader is an exceptional trust-builder of high integrity	N	6	8	67	68	149
	N%	4.0%	5.4%	45.0%	45.6%	100%
Library leader inspires the library staff and builds a strong team in the library	N	11	15	72	63	161
	N%	7.0%	9.0%	45.0%	39.0%	100%
A library leader is a thought leader who can introduce new ways of "thinking" and "doing library duties"	N	3	22	57	65	147
	N%	2.0%	15.0%	38.8%	44.2%	100%

LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS		STRONG DISAGREE	SOMEHOW DISAGREE	SOMEHOW AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE	N (Row)
<i>The library leader is an outstanding communicator, skilled at both listening and messaging</i>	N	5	15	61	73	154
	N%	3.0%	10.0%	40.0%	47.0%	100%
<i>The library leader routinely provides feedback and coaching to the library team</i>	N	7	15	77	56	155
	N%	4.5%	9.7%	49.7%	36.1%	100%
<i>Library leader rewards outstanding performance and know how to reward the "right" library staff at the right time</i>	N	28	26	53	44	151
	N%	19.0%	17.0%	35.0%	29.0%	100%
<i>Library leaders can demystify library complex concepts and teach the library staff accordingly for effective library performance</i>	N	7	19	62	61	149
	N%	4.7%	12.8%	41.6%	40.9%	100%
<i>Library leader evaluates the library staff based on a fair system of performance standards</i>	N	6	23	60	65	154
	N%	4.0%	15.0%	39.0%	42.0%	100%
<i>Library leader creates a congenial environment for the library staff to work harmoniously</i>	N	7	17	64	61	149
	N%	4.7%	11.4%	43.0%	40.9%	100%
<i>Library leader provides adequate opportunities to all library staff for the development of their professional skills at work</i>	N	14	21	62	54	151
	N%	9.3%	13.9%	41.0%	35.8%	100%
<i>Library leader ensures that all the library departments provide the equipment, supplies and resources necessary for the library staff for their effective performance of their duties</i>	N	7	23	61	59	150
	N%	4.7%	15.3%	40.7%	39.3%	100%
<i>Library leader creates room necessary for training all library staff for better performance</i>	N	10	23	61	74	168
	N%	6.0%	13.7%	36.3%	44.0%	100%
<i>Library leader makes sure that the library rules make it easy for the library staff to carry out their duties efficiently</i>	N	7	20	50	94	171
	N%	4.1%	11.7%	29.2%	55.0%	100%
<i>Library leader sometimes listens to the library staff's opinions and feedback to make necessary changes</i>	N	11	15	63	61	150
	N%	7.3%	10.0%	42.0%	40.7%	100%
<i>Library leader always explains to the library staff the assignments given to them for better library performance</i>	N	9	17	53	91	170
	N%	5.3%	10.0%	31.2%	53.5%	100%

The respondents were asked to rate the leadership styles of their leaders based on their level of agreement with statements that described the leadership styles. The

options were strongly disagree, somehow agree, and strongly agree. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Rating of the leadership styles of the head librarians

STATEMENTS		STRONG DISAGREE	SOMEHOW DISAGREE	SOMEHOW AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
<i>Leadership style promotes open communication among library staff</i>	N	1	5	40	125
	N%	0.6%	2.9%	23.4%	73.1%
<i>Leadership style encourages creativity and innovation among library staff</i>	N	1	7	37	126
	N%	0.6%	4.1%	21.6%	73.7%

STATEMENTS		STRONG DISAGREE	SOMEHOW DISAGREE	SOMEHOW AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
<i>Leadership style fosters collaboration and teamwork among library staff</i>	N	1	7	29	133
	N%	0.6%	4.1%	17.1%	78.2%
<i>Leadership style promotes a culture of accountability among library staff</i>	N	0	2	50	117
	N%	0.0%	1.2%	29.6%	69.2%
<i>Leadership style effectively addresses and resolves conflicts among library staff</i>	N	0	5	48	117
	N%	0.0%	2.9%	28.2%	68.8%
<i>Leadership style promotes a positive and inclusive work culture within the library</i>	N	0	8	36	126
	N%	0.0%	4.7%	21.2%	74.1%
<i>Leadership style improves the library's ability to attract and retain qualified staff</i>	N	1	10	45	114
	N%	0.6%	5.9%	26.5%	67.1%
<i>Leadership style improves the library's ability to adapt to changes in technology and user needs</i>	N	0	4	41	123
	N%	0.0%	2.4%	24.4%	73.2%
<i>Leadership style improves the library's role in the larger university community</i>	N	0	8	36	127
	N%	0.0%	4.7%	21.1%	74.3%
<i>Leadership style improves the library's ability to respond to and address challenges and crises</i>	N	0	4	30	136
	N%	0.0%	2.4%	17.6%	80.0%

From Table 4, all the statements had the highest responses of strongly agree, and the lowest percentages of strongly disagree. The statement with the highest response of strongly agree was "leadership style improves the library's ability to respond to and address challenges and crises" 136(80%), followed by "leadership style improves the library's role in the larger university community" 127(74.3%).

Demographic factors and leadership styles

The study further correlated and regressed the demographic characteristics with the leadership styles used by the head librarians. Table 5 shows the correlations, while Tables 6 and 7 show the regressions.

Table 5: Correlation of demographic characteristics of head librarians and their leadership styles

(OBS=11)	GENDER	AGE	EDUCATION	LEADERSHIP STYLES
Gender	1.0000			
Age	-0.1272	1.0000		
Education	0.2406	0.2675	1.0000	
Leadership styles	0.2689	0.1666	-0.5720	1.0000

Table 5 shows the correlation between the demographic characteristics of head librarians and their leadership styles. For gender and leadership styles, the correlation coefficient was 0.2689. Although it is a positive

correlation, it is weak and hence does not necessarily suggest that certain genders may have a preferred leadership style. In terms of age and leadership style, the correlation coefficient was 0.1666. This is a positive weak correlation. It indicates that as age increases, there

might be a slight tendency to prefer specific leadership styles. Finally, for education and leadership styles, the correlation coefficient was -0.5720. This was a negative moderate correlation. This indicates that the head

librarians with higher education levels (PhDs) tend to prefer certain leadership styles, which are less compared to those with lower education levels (MSc).

Table 6: Model summary of the regression analysis of demographic characteristics of head librarians and leadership styles

Source	SS	df	MS	Number of obs = 11 F (3, 7) = 5.06 Prob > F = 0.0357 R ² = 0.6845 Adj R ² = 0.5493 Root MSE = 0.9232
Model	12.9430088	3	4.31433628	
Residual	5.96608206	7	.852297438	
Total	Total	18.9090909	18.9090909	

The model has an F-statistic of 5.06 and a p-value of 0.0357. This indicates that the overall regression model is statistically significant, suggesting that at least one of the independent variables (gender, age, education) is significantly related to leadership styles. The R-squared

value of 0.6845 indicates that the independent variables in the model can explain approximately 68.45% of the variance in leadership styles. The adjusted R-squared value, which adjusts for the number of predictors in the model, is 0.5493.

Table 7: Coefficients of the regression analysis of demographic characteristics of head librarians and leadership styles

Leadership style	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P> t	95% Conf. Interval
Gender	1.540867	.6578575	2.34	0.052	-.0147187 3.096453
Age	.1451026	.0722328	-3.56	0.009	-4.632601 -.9345733
Education	-2.783587	.7819482	-3.56	0.009	-4.632601 -.9345733

Each coefficient in Table 7 represents the estimated effect of the corresponding independent variable on leadership styles, holding other variables constant. The coefficient for gender is 1.540867, suggesting that, on average, holding other variables constant, being male is associated with an increase of approximately 1.54 units in leadership styles compared to being female. However, the p-value of 0.052 is slightly above the typical significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the association between gender and leadership styles is marginally significant. This suggests that while there may be some association between gender and leadership styles, it is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant.

The coefficient is 0.1451026 in terms of age, indicating that, on average, for each additional year of age,

leadership styles increase by approximately 0.145 units. However, the p-value of 0.085 is above 0.05, suggesting that the association between age and leadership styles is not statistically significant. For education, the coefficient is -2.783587, indicating that, on average, holding other variables constant, having a higher level of education (PhD) is associated with a decrease of approximately 2.78 units in leadership styles compared to having a lower level of education (MSc). The p-value of 0.009 is less than 0.05, indicating that the association between education and leadership styles is statistically significant.

V. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings revealed that head librarians perform various roles within a university library, such as maintaining the physical collection, providing research

assistance, managing the budget, developing and delivering library instruction and information literacy programmes, staying updated with developments in the field, collaborating with faculty and staff, promoting and marketing library resources, assessing and evaluating library services, participating in the selection and acquisition of materials, and supervising and training library staff and students. In agreement with these findings, Prucha (2021) emphasised the diverse roles that head librarians undertake, ranging from educators and support workers to faculty members, research specialists, managers, and information literacy specialists. This versatility highlights the crucial leadership role head librarians play in orchestrating various aspects of library operations. Furthermore, Klain-Gabbay and Shoham (2019) reinforced the notion that university library staff may also engage in teaching and research activities, indicating the multifaceted responsibilities within the library setting. Meanwhile, Were (2019) underscored the significant contributions of librarians, particularly in information literacy programmes, showcasing their pivotal role in enhancing user skills. Examining this in the context of leadership styles, head librarians who employ appropriate leadership styles tend to excel in guiding their teams toward achieving these diverse objectives.

These roles of the head librarians evolve depending on the context of their operation. Ducas et al. (2020) argue that data management, research facilitation, scholarly communication, teaching and learning, digital scholarship, and user experience are just a few of the new and evolving responsibilities that head librarians play more and more frequently. However, they noted that these new responsibilities replace older ones like collection management and reference work. Nakitare et al. (2020) also stated that head librarians have had to reinvent their roles to meet new demands brought about by technological advancements. Numerous studies show that there has been a significant change in the roles of head librarians (Frederick & Run, 2019; Magut & Kiplagat, 2022; Manuell, 2018; Mathar et al., 2021; Mutula, 2019). The development of technology and the availability of digital resources have given university librarians new responsibilities outside of traditional collection administration (Kwanya, 2023). Bynoe (2022) advocates for effective communication and leadership skills in managing change and successfully adapting to the new normal. Head librarians currently frequently work as information specialists and technology facilitators.

The findings identify the qualities of an effective leader as good communication skills, being visionary, motivating, inspiring, firm in decision-making, and having integrity. Chow and Conte (2021) concur that

leadership qualities are essential for library employees. This emphasis on leadership qualities is directly related to library performance, as leaders who possess these attributes are more likely to inspire and guide their teams effectively, resulting in improved service delivery, user satisfaction, and overall organisational effectiveness. Leaders inspire and motivate their team members to achieve their full potential. Demonstrating the relationship between leadership qualities and library performance underscores the critical role that effective leadership plays in achieving the goals and objectives of a library. Lo et al. (2018) back the assertion that influential library leaders need to have good communication skills. Aslam (2018) supports the argument that influential library leaders must be visionary. Martin (2022) agrees that influential library leaders need to be motivating and inspiring and a catalyst for change. These findings underscore the significance of leaders in directing their followers toward goals by providing clear guidance, addressing any barriers, and providing support along the process. The head librarians mentioned the importance of motivating, encouraging, and empowering their staff. This viewpoint is supported by Martin (2018), who noted that university library leaders play a crucial role in providing the necessary support and motivation for their staff members to succeed. Similarly, Unegbu et al. (2020) confirmed that a positive workplace culture with good communication and employee motivation are excellent enablers in the hands of leadership to energise the workforce because they enhance employees' willingness to work, increasing the effectiveness and the library's overall performance. This aligns with the supportive leadership style, where leaders provide emotional support, show concern for their followers' well-being, and create a positive working environment.

The study reveals that head librarians in Kenyan universities predominantly lean towards employing a democratic leadership style. These findings resonate with Butt et al. (2023), who similarly discovered that most library heads opt for a democratic leadership approach, emphasising a conducive office environment, motivated staff, and maintained organisational standards. Nwaigwe's (2015) study in Imo State, Nigeria, further affirms the prevalence of the democratic leadership style among head librarians in tertiary institutions, a consensus supported by Nyamato and Kwanya (2017) and Kaur and Kaur (2019). Equally, Kalu et al. (2019) assert that university librarians strongly favour the democratic leadership style due to its positive impact on worker productivity and junior staff performance. Similarly, Offem's (2021) findings underscore the effectiveness of the democratic leadership style in explaining administrative success. This alignment is consistent with

the research of Kwanya and Stilwell (2018), who advocate for the democratic leadership style as highly effective in promoting the delivery of library services. Agusta and Nurdin (2021) propose an integrated approach, combining democratic and transformative leadership styles to empower subordinates strategically. Furthermore, various studies (Arapasopo & Adekoya, 2022; Beglou & Akhshik, 2023) establish that, particularly during times of crisis, transactional and transformative leadership philosophies prove superior to the laissez-faire approach in managing libraries. When navigating changes in academic libraries, transformational leadership is preferred over transactional and laissez-faire approaches (Sucozhañay et al., 2014).

The current study surveyed library staff to evaluate leadership functions. The responses varied, with some respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing with statements related to recognising staff, ensuring adequate physical spaces, working with sincerity, communicating vision, inspiring staff, providing feedback and coaching, rewarding outstanding performance, creating a congenial environment, providing opportunities for professional development, and more. Sanchez-Rodriguez (2021) studied diversity in the CUNY Library Profession, explicitly focusing on equity, diversity, and inclusion within the library field. The findings aligned with the current study, highlighting that a crucial role of library leadership involves facilitating the attraction, recruitment, and retention of staff with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Dolly and Nonyelum (2018) also supported the finding that leadership plays a role in recognising staff, providing opportunities for professional development, and ensuring a congenial environment. McKeown and Bates' (2013) study on emotional intelligence (EI) leadership in the setting of public libraries stressed the importance of EI leadership in library administration. They concurred that effective leadership must recognise the importance of communicating a clear vision, inspiring staff, and providing feedback and coaching.

The study revealed that while there may be some association between gender and leadership styles, it is not strong enough to be considered statistically significant. These findings concur with a number of scholars (Barbuto et al., 2007; Kotur & Anbazhagan, 2014; Mushtaq et al., 2019) that there is some correlation between gender and leadership styles. It is argued that female leaders tend to be more democratic because they are humane-oriented and diplomatic (Green et al., 2011). However, this relationship is not statistically significant. Barbuto et al. (2007) argued that variance in the association between leadership styles and gender is

contextual. This study found that there is a relationship between age and leadership styles. This concurs with other scholars such as Kotur and Anbazhagan (2014), who argued that younger leaders (up to 35 years) were found to be autocratic while mature leaders (up to 45 years) were democratic. Leaders above 45 years of age generally apply a laissez-faire leadership style. Although slightly different from Mushtaq et al. (2019), who argued that older leaders were transformational, there is evidence that the age of leaders influences their leadership styles. It is clearly evident that older leaders tend to consult more and appreciate the participation of subordinates in strategic and operational decisions. This study found that educational level also influences the leadership style of head librarians. This agrees with some scholars (Green et al., 2011) who have argued that highly educated leaders are generally charismatic and performance-oriented. On the other hand, a high level of education may also lead to higher degrees of self-importance and malevolent behaviour, which may be exhibited through autocratic leadership. In this study, however, head librarians with higher education adopted democratic leadership styles of leadership.

VI. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the critical role of leadership styles in impacting the effectiveness and success of university libraries in Kenya. The study emphasised that effective leadership comprises communication, motivation, teamwork, adaptability, and management skills. The most popular leadership style was democratic leadership, which promoted a healthy work environment, staff engagement, and cooperation, ultimately improving library performance. On the other hand, leadership styles, including bureaucratic, autocratic, laissez-faire, and charismatic, had variable degrees of detrimental effects on library effectiveness, highlighting the necessity for leaders to steer clear of rigid and controlling methods. Results for both transformational and transactional leadership styles were inconsistent, suggesting that the context may play a role in how they affect library performance. Similarly, the influence of age, educational level, and gender on leadership styles was mixed. However, this study concludes that these demographic factors do play a role in determining the leadership style of head librarians. The nature and extent of influence are dependent on other factors and context of the leadership.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, it is clear that university head librarians may improve performance by embracing democratic leadership and fostering a welcoming workplace environment. Leaders should also understand

the role that employee motivation, ongoing professional development, and effective communication play in producing excellent results. Head librarians must have a long-term perspective, be flexible, and always be aware of changing user needs and technology developments to succeed in the quickly growing digital age. University

libraries can position themselves as vital assets within the academic community and continue to support learning, research, and innovation effectively by embracing leadership styles that promote stakeholder participation and innovation.

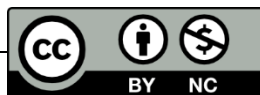
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