The effectiveness of leadership styles among academic and research librarians in Eastern and Southern Africa

A comparative study

Tom Kwanya
Department of Information and Knowledge Management,
The Technical University of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya, and
Christine Stilwell
Department of Information Studies,
University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the leadership styles that academic and research librarians apply as well as their effectiveness in meeting their institutions' strategic objectives. The study also compared and contrasted the leadership styles and their corresponding impact in the effective delivery of academic and research library services in Kenya and South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – The study applied a survey research technique to garner the opinions of the librarians about the leadership styles of their leaders. Primary data were collected through key informant interviews with academic and research librarians. Additional data were collected through documentary analysis. The data were analysed and processed through content analysis.

Findings – The findings indicate that most academic and research library leaders in South Africa and Kenya embrace a democratic leadership style. The results also show that most academic and research librarians hold the view that the leadership styles of their managers have a great impact on their individual performance and overall organisational effectiveness.

Practical implications – The results of the study can be used to recommend or adopt leadership styles which have a higher potential of making a greater impact in Kenyan and South African academic and research libraries. The results can also be used as the basis for relevant curricula and policy development.

Originality/value – The role of university librarians as leaders and the determinants of the effectiveness of academic and research library leaders, including leadership styles, have received minimal attention from scholars, particularly those in Africa. This study addresses the gap as it investigated the impact of the leadership styles of academic and research librarians on the effectiveness of their institutions, compared the academic and research library leadership scenarios in South Africa with Kenya, and makes recommendations on how to enhance leadership effectiveness.

Keywords Academic libraries, Research libraries, South Africa, Kenya, Leadership style, Effectiveness

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Leadership is defined as a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers, 1997). Leadership contributes immensely to the success or failure of any organisation (Lok and Crawford, 2004). Baumeister *et al.* (1988) use the bystander effect (failure to respond to or offer help in emergencies) to emphasise the important role effective leaders can play in getting groups to work productively. They explain that the bystander effect reduces significantly in groups guided by a leader. Other scholars also add that group productivity, efficiency and creativity tend to be higher in organisations which have designated leaders than in organisations where leadership is amorphous (Jung *et al.*, 2008; Zaccaro and Banks, 2001;

Larson *et al.*, 1996). There are some scholars, however, who are of the view that there are situations in which groups do not require a designated leader to perform. Schmid (2002), Berdahl and Anderson (2005) as well as Guastello (2007) argue that small groups composed of women which do not have to make any stressful decisions experience a diffusion of responsibility where leadership tasks and roles are shared amongst all the group members. Nonetheless, there seems to be some degree of consensus from the literature cited above that many groups prefer to be led rather than to be without a leader. Stewart and Manz (1995) argue that the need for a leader is more apparent in groups facing challenges and conflicts.

Effectiveness is perceived as the degree to which objectives are met and the extent to which problems are solved. Cooper and Nirenberg (2004) define leadership effectiveness as the successful exercise of influence by one or more people which leads to accomplishing organisational objectives congruent with a mission while earning the general approval of their constituencies. They further argue that effective leaders build a collective vision and mission, and an appropriate set of values that help people to focus on their contributions and bring out their best; establish a fearless communication environment that encourages accurate and honest feedback and self-disclosure; make information readily available; establish trust, respect and peer-based behaviour as the norm; establish environments which are inclusive and patient, showing concern for each person; demonstrate resourcefulness and the willingness to learn; and create an environment that stimulates extraordinary performance. Kotter (1996) adds that an effective leader is one who creates an environment in which an organisation continues to excel even after the leader has left the organisation. Cooper and Nirenberg (2004) describe this concept as the institutionalisation of leadership. Gonos and Gallo (2013) explain that there are two essential prerequisites of leadership which they identify as power and competence. They describe power as the ability of the individuals to change or influence the opinions or behaviour of other members while competence is the right of a person holding a position to make decisions and influence subordinates.

A leadership style is a leader's way of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. A leadership style can also be perceived as a leader's personal strategies and approaches to helping the organisation to achieve its objectives through the available resources (Obiwuru *et al.*, 2011). Gonos and Gallo (2013) add that a leadership style is how leaders use their power and competence to influence their subordinates. Leadership styles are generally identified by their style characteristics, an implicit leadership philosophy, and a set of management skills typical of each style (Warrick, 1981). There are several leadership styles which can be applied in different contexts with varying degrees of effectiveness. Some of these include autocratic, bureaucratic, charismatic, participative, transactional, laissez-faire, task-oriented, people-oriented, servant and transformational leadership styles. However, the authors applied Kurt Lewin's classical categorisation approach which lumps the leadership styles into three broad categories of authoritarian, democratic and liberal (delegative) (Gonos and Gallo, 2013; Morgan, 2013).

In authoritarian (autocratic) leadership, the leader makes most, or all, of the important decisions without involving the subordinates; directs the subordinates as to what must be done and how, without regard to their own opinions; and generally ignores any suggestions made by the other members of staff. Warrick (1981) explains that according to an authoritarian leader, the other members of staff are lazy, irresponsible and untrustworthy. He further explains that an authoritarian leader relies on authority, control, power, manipulation and hard work to get the job done. Morgan (2013) argues that authoritarian leadership may work best where quick decision making is necessary as there might not be adequate time to consult with or involve staff. He further argues that it might also be useful when employees do not possess the skills – or simply the motivation – to look after their own individual work. Authoritarian leadership discourages innovation, experimentation and learning.

Democratic (participative) leadership gives some decision-making powers to the group members although the leader still has the final say. Warrick (1981) argues that democratic

leaders assume that most people are honest, trustworthy and hard working. He adds that a democratic leader strives to develop a well organised and challenging work environment with clear objectives and responsibilities. The democratic leader endeavours to get work done by motivating and managing individuals and groups to use their full potential to achieve their personal and organisational goals. Morgan (2013) explains that staff members working under a democratic leader feel more wanted as a result of the additional responsibility which is vested in them and the fact that their opinions matter. This in turn, he argues, promotes a higher level of motivation and productivity. He cautions, however, that democratic leadership delays decisions and may in turn lead to missed deadlines and opportunities.

Delegative (laissez-faire) leadership assumes that people are unpredictable and uncontrollable and that a leader's job is to do just enough to get by, keep a low profile, stay out of trouble and leave people alone as much as possible (Cherry, 2013; Warrick, 1981). Morgan (2013) adds that delegative leadership is a relaxed leadership style giving complete decision-making control to the staff. Delegative leaders make it clear to staff that it is up to them to manage their workload while the leaders neither get in the way nor closely oversee what they are doing. Although a delegative leadership style grants independence to the group members, it may jeopardise productivity as people lack shared vision and direction (Obiwuru *et al.*, 2011). Table I compares and contrasts the three styles of leadership.

The style of leadership a leader adopts has a remarkable impact on the performance and satisfaction of the people he or she leads (Warrick, 1981). Warrick further argues that the style shapes employee behaviour and influences their performance, motivation and attitude. He adds that a leader's style can affect the employee's self-image and can have a positive or negative impact on the extent to which an employee feels supported, encouraged or criticised. Leadership styles also define the basic attributes of the work environment leaders create which can be perceived by the employees as either being safe and stimulating or being filled with tension and fear. Morgan (2013) concurs with Warrick (1981) and concludes that the influence of a leader's style escalates as the effects on individuals create a cumulative effect on group performance. Consequently, an organisation's success or failure is largely determined by the successes or failures of its leaders. Nonetheless, Warrick (1981) cautions that the effect of a leadership style on performance and effectiveness should neither be underestimated nor overrated. He points out that there is no doubt that there may be several other variables such as job challenge, opportunities for professional growth and advancement, and peer relations, which influence employee satisfaction and performance. However, the impact of leadership styles is perceived to be remarkable (Morgan, 2013; Obiwuru *et al.*, 2011; Warrick, 1981).

Academic and research libraries are perceived in this study as the libraries which are owned by universities and are used to support the research and academic activities in the parent institutions. Research and academic libraries are distinguished from the other library types by their unique collection development policies which require them to hold or

Attribute	Autocratic	Democratic	Delegative
Decision making	The leader	Participative	None in particular
Contribution of staff	None	As much as necessary	Maximum
Supervision	Close	Moderate	Low
Control	High	Moderate	Low
Perception of staff	Lazy, irresponsible	Honest, hard working	Unpredictable, uncontrollable
Work environment	Manipulative	Challenging/facilitative	Relaxed
Approach to get results	Authority	Motivation/challenge	Freedom
Communication	One way, structured	Multidirectional	Unstructured
Credit for results	All	Shared	None
Flexibility	Low	Moderate	Maximum

Table I.
Comparison of the three leadership styles

offer access to information resources which cover their subject areas in greater depth than other libraries. Their collections generally include scientific literature and historical collections as well as special literature collections (Railiene, 2005). Another distinguishing characteristic of an academic and research library is direct involvement in research activities. Research libraries perform research in librarianship and other congener sciences. As the keepers of valuable collections, librarians also analyse them and publish their findings (Kwanya, 2011). Scientific activities in academic and research libraries are either performed by special research departments, or by the entire staff. Traue (2009) asserts that the purpose of an academic and research library is to enable researchers to immerse themselves in the available documentary evidence and then to make the product of their investment of time, judgement and skill available to the public through a book, article, thesis, film, television (TV) production, website or blog. Thus, an academic and research library is an active partner with authors and publishers in creating the next generation of public knowledge.

Academic and research libraries currently face a major relevance challenge in the face of the information revolution exemplified by the internet which has changed how people seek, find, use and share information. In fact, some studies have revealed that an increasing number of potential library users find it easier to "Google" than drive to a library (Aiken, 2006; Online Computer Library Center, 2005). Some studies have also revealed that a growing number of current library users are likely to reduce their usage of the facilities in the near future (Campbell, 2006; Chad and Miller, 2005). Consequently, academic and research libraries are under immense pressure to demonstrate their effectiveness in supporting their parent organisations to meet their goals. Therefore, academic and research libraries have designed diverse strategies to cope with this pressure. Some of these strategies include extensive resource mobilisation; increased budget controls and accountability; restructuring and staff rationalisation; automation of library services and procedures; and reengineering of library service design and delivery encompassing user empowerment, self-service and reduced librarian-mediation (Crawford, 2006; Casey and Savastinuk, 2007). While these efforts which academic and research libraries are making are laudable and are yielding some results, the aspect of leadership seems to be given minimal consideration. This is exemplified by the dearth of literature on leadership in libraries (Awan and Mahmood, 2010; Stephens and Russell, 2004; Riggs, 1997; Phipps, 1993). The role of university librarians as leaders and the impact of their leadership on the effectiveness of their institutions have not caught the attention of many information scientists. Similarly, the determinants of the effectiveness of academic and research library leaders, including leadership styles, have also received minimal attention from scholars. Therefore, academic and research library leaders continue to grapple in the dark while experimenting with different styles with disastrous results. This study investigated the impact of the leadership styles of academic and research librarians on the effectiveness of their institutions. The study also compared the academic and research library leadership scenarios in South Africa with Kenya and makes recommendations on how to enhance leadership effectiveness in academic and research libraries through the appropriate leadership styles. The following questions sets out the empirical research questions of the study:

RQ1. What are the demographic characteristics of the managers in the academic and research libraries in Kenya and South Africa?

RQ2. What leadership style(s) do the academic and research library managers in Kenya and South Africa apply?

RQ3. How do the library managers' leadership style(s) impact the effectiveness of the libraries?

RQ4. With which leadership styles would the academic librarians in Kenya and South
Africa be most comfortable?

RQ5. How do the academic and research library leadership scenarios in South Africa
compare with those in Kenya?

Literature review

Chow and Rich (2013) argue that there is a surprisingly small amount of literature written
about leadership and management in libraries, particularly compared to other professions.
Gilstrap (2009) also decries the dearth of literature on library leadership. Hernon and Ole
Pors (2013) explain that literature on library leadership is rare; where available, it is usually
in conjunction with management. In fact, Bell (2013) reported that only two articles on
library leadership had been published in 2012. There is no evidence in literature that the
situation has changed.

Existing literature on library leadership have focussed on the attributes and competencies
the leaders need as well as how to build them. Jordan (2012) conducted a study which revealed
that vision, communication skills, customer service, credibility, interpersonal skills and
creativity are the most important competencies library leaders should have. The other
competencies included political understanding, maturity, accounting, diplomacy, risk taking,
empathy, problem solving, commitment to the profession, tenacity, emotional intelligence,
time management, resource management, sense of humour and advocacy skills. Hopper (2005)
explains that the most commonly mentioned competency required by library leaders is vision.
Thus, library leaders are expected to proactively identify, understand and respond to
emerging trends and expectations from their users, parent institutions and other stakeholders.
The other traits librarians are expected to have included ability to motivate people; flexibility;
and the ability to manage change.

Ammons-Stephens *et al.* (2009) argued that library leaders should exhibit three sets of
competencies. These include cognitive ability, vision, interpersonal skills and managerial
effectiveness. de Boer *et al.* (2012) argue that library leaders need to think proactively and
innovatively so as to cope with the opportunities and threats brought about by the growing
ubiquity of information and communication technologies in the design and provision of
information services. As Nicholas and Rowlands (2008) explain, librarians must now find
their space in the new information landscape built around connected, multiple and always
available devices and users. The responsibilities of leaders in a library include developing a
vision of the future; developing and motivating staff; planning and budgeting; managing
operations; engaging with the community; as well as fundraising and resource mobilisation
(Dawes, 2015). Schirer-Suter (2008), who investigated job advertisements for academic
library directors in 2002 and 2003, found three roles of leaders ranked in the top 20 job
expectations. These were maintaining effective working relationships with multiple/diverse
constituencies; liaison with academic departments and administration; and building a
shared vision for the library.

Young *et al.* (2003) investigated the attributes of library leaders. They concluded that
managerial attributes tend to emphasise the director's ability to work with other groups and
individuals (library boards, library staff, community and governmental agencies, friends
groups and public officials). So not surprisingly, communication skills are deemed
important. Integrity tops the list of personal attributes, but vision and communication skills
also get a high rating. A theme on the areas of knowledge is not apparent. Highly rated
attributes include knowledge of trends and innovations, current library practices, long-term
planning, financial management and intellectual freedom. Brey-Casiano (2008) proposes ten
steps to being a great library leader. These are find or be a good mentor; learn how to follow
first; be visionary; be a good servant; take risks; take care of yourself; maintain a positive

attitude; never turn down a leadership position; learn how to motivate people effectively; and keep your sense of humour.

The skills and competencies desired of library leaders have also changed with time. Earlier expectations focussed on technical and managerial skills. Lately, new sets of skills have emerged. In a study of job requirements for directors of academic libraries in 1992 and 1997, Lin (2000) found that the emphasis on management skills had decreased between 1992 and 1997 by 11 per cent while the emphasis on written and oral communications skills during this time increased 15.6 per cent. Lin (2000, p. 150) also found that new characteristics appeared in 1997 that were absent in job advertisements of 1992, such as "consensus building, presentation skills, community outreach, and collective bargaining".

Methodology

The study focussed on professional academic and research librarians in Kenya and South Africa. Using the goal approach which measures the degree to which an organisation is achieving its goals or purposes, the effectiveness of the libraries was perceived as a measure of how well the libraries, as rational organisations, fulfil the objectives of their establishment. This effectiveness was defined by the outputs of the academic and research libraries as well as the impact of their activities as proposed by Du Mont and Du Mont (1981).

This was a descriptive study which applied the cross-sectional survey research method. As Fink (2012) explains, a cross-sectional survey provides a snap-shot of the views of the respondents at a specific point in time. According to Luepker (2004), cross-sectional surveys are useful to unravel associations and causal connections between variables. In the context of this study and as explained by Shaughnessy *et al.* (2011), a survey consists of a pre-determined set of questions given to a sample population to solicit their views on the subject of the study. This study used this method to assess the opinions, thoughts and feelings of the librarians about the leadership styles their managers applied and how effective they were in facilitating the staff to meet their individual and organisational goals. Primary data were collected through key informant interviews with academic librarians from South Africa and from Kenya.

According to Kumar (1989), key informant interviews involve interviewing a select group of individuals who are likely to provide needed information, ideas and insights on a particular subject. He adds that two characteristics of key informant interviews need special mention. First, only a small number of informants are interviewed. Such informants are selected because they possess information or ideas that can be solicited by the investigator. Second, key informant interviews are essentially qualitative interviews which are conducted using interview guides that list the topics and issues to be covered during a session.

A total of 20 respondents were interviewed during this study. Of these, 9 were from the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa while the remaining 11 were from the Technical University of Kenya in Nairobi, Kenya. The respondents were identified through information-oriented purposive sampling. Using this technique, the respondents were selected based on their capacity to contribute the needed information. The number of the respondents per country was determined by data saturation. As recommended by Mason (2010) as well as Fusch and Ness (2015), the authors stopped interviewing more respondents when it became apparent that no new information was emerging. The saturation point indicated that adequate data had been collected for analysis (Brod *et al.*, 2009). Nonetheless, this sample size is within the threshold recommended for key informant interviews. According to Nastasi (2004), the sample size of respondents in key informant interviews is "approximately five people". On his part, Kumar (1989) suggests that 15-35 key informants are able to generate adequate data for key informant interviews.

The key informant interviews were conducted in July 2014. All the interviews were conducted personally by the authors in the respondents' offices. The interview schedule

used in the study appears after the reference list. Secondary data about leadership styles as well as their influence on the effectiveness of managers in motivating subordinates to achieve personal and organisational goals were collected through documentary analysis of relevant scholarly literature. The data were analysed through content analysis. The authors sought and were granted ethical clearance to conduct the research by the two universities.

Theoretical framework

The authors used the path-goal theory of leader effectiveness proposed in 1971 and revised in 1996 by Robert House. The theory states that a leader's behaviour is contingent on the satisfaction, motivation and performance of her or his subordinates. The revised version particularly argues that the leader engages in behaviours that complement the subordinates' abilities and compensate for their deficiencies. According to the theory, the manager's job is viewed as that of guiding the workers to choose the best paths to reach their individual as well as the organisational goals. The theory further indicates that it is the leader's job to assist the followers in attaining goals and to provide the direction and support needed to ensure that these goals are compatible with the organisation's goals (House, 1996). House and Mitchell (1974) explain that leaders have to create an environment which is conducive for their subordinates to work in so as to become productive. Martin (2009) argues that the path-goal theory of leadership was anchored on goal setting theory and expectancy theory which state that subordinates can be motivated to set and achieve challenging but realistic goals if that leads to a reward they value. He adds that leaders have a responsibility to help their subordinates to achieve their goals by helping them to identify and take appropriate paths to the goals as well as by removing obstacles which may hamper their progress. Figure 1 shows the major components of the path-goal theory.

The path-goal theory of effective leadership implies that leaders should embrace behaviours and leadership styles which best meet the performance needs of their subordinates. The authors, therefore, argue that the leadership style a leader embraces determines the productivity of his or her subordinates and influences the effectiveness of the
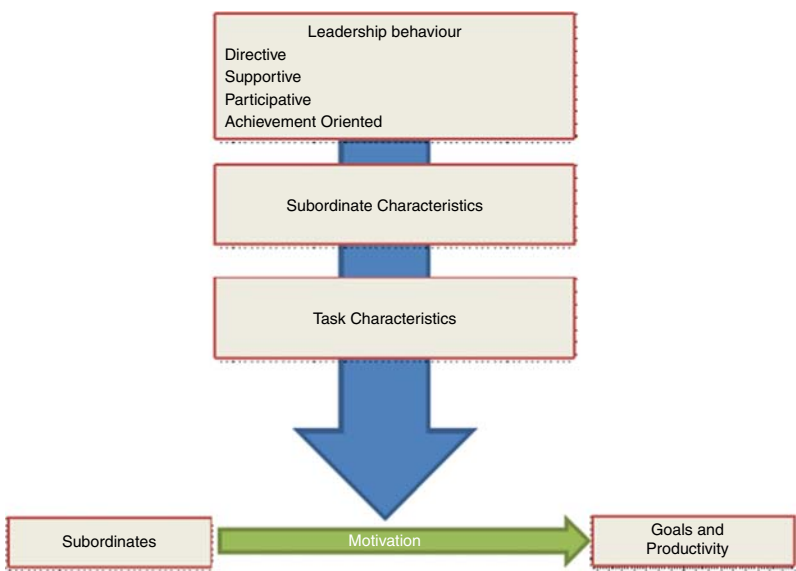

Figure 1.
The major components of the path-goal theory of leadership

Source: Abolrous (2010)

organisation in meeting its mission and vision. Academic and research librarians, as leaders, have a responsibility to adopt leadership styles which best support their subordinates to attain their goals and, ultimately, the goals of their parent institutions.

Findings and discussion
The findings of the study are presented and discussed in this section according to the themes of the study.

Demography of the respondents
Of the 20 participants in the study, only four were male while the rest were female. While it may seem that this gender finding lends credence to the perception that most academic and research librarians are female, the sample size was not big enough to validate this conclusion. Nonetheless, it seems to suggest that most academic and research librarians in South Africa and Kenya are female but there is need for further studies to confirm it. The findings also showed that all the library managers were at least 50 years old and had a Master's degree. Both the age and educational attributes of the managers indicated that they were mature and experienced individuals capable of offering competent leadership to their subordinates. Although the authors did not ask for the exact age of the leaders, the findings imply that the current leaders would be retiring from their positions within a decade. This demographic attribute may have influenced the leadership styles demonstrated by the leaders. For instance, the prevalent use of democratic leadership may have been based on the need to involve the other staff more effectively in decision making as part of succession planning and empowerment. The use of autocratic leadership style, on the other hand, may have emanated from a paternalistic notion since the leaders were more experienced than their subordinates.

Leadership style
Six out of nine respondents from South Africa indicated that their leaders used a democratic leadership style while the rest (3) indicated an autocratic style. The finding reveals that most of the academic and research library leaders in South Africa surveyed embrace the democratic leadership style. In Kenya, however, autocratic leadership was the most popular (6 out 11), followed by democratic (3 out of 11) and delegative (2 out of 11). Table II shows these findings.

These findings reveal a sharp difference in the leadership styles embraced by academic and research library leaders in the two countries. This difference may perhaps be explained by the differences in the levels of democracy and the maturity of librarianship as a profession in the two countries. It is generally perceived that the South African society is more democratic, especially after the abolition of apartheid, than Kenya. Therefore, academic and research library leaders embrace a democratic leadership style which echoes the general trend in the society. Kenya, on the other hand, is still democratising so the leaders tend to be more autocratic than democratic. The difference may additionally be attributed to the level of maturity of librarianship as a profession in the two countries. For instance, there were relatively higher levels of training of librarians in South Africa than

Findings	South Africa (%)	Kenya (%)
Autocratic	33	55
Democratic	67	27
Delegative	0	18
Total	100	100

Table II.
Leadership styles of
library leaders

in Kenya where there was generally a big knowledge gap between the librarians and their leaders. This gap may have predisposed the leaders to adopt a less-participative style. The leadership styles in the two countries may also have been influenced by the organisational structures in the two countries. Academic and research libraries in South Africa tend to have fairly flat structures as opposed to the hierarchical ones in Kenya.

The findings also indicate that while academic and research librarians in South Africa surveyed seem not to use delegative leadership style, a few librarians in Kenya were of the view that their leaders used it. This style may not have been attractive to the library leaders because most of the libraries are facing many challenges and so the leaders are more present to provide direction. It was not possible to accurately attribute the difference between the countries from the findings of the study. However, the first author observed that there were some cases where library leaders in Kenya were not confident in their positions. Such less-confident persons tended to compensate for this inadequacy by letting everyone "do their thing" with little or no interference to keep away from trouble or criticism.

Impact of the leadership on the effectiveness of the libraries
All but one of the respondents concurred that the leadership styles of their leaders had an impact on the effectiveness of their libraries. The one respondent who said that the leadership style did not have an impact on the library effectiveness was from South Africa. She explained that libraries are institutions with established systems and do not need to depend on individuals. She explained further that once the library strategies and work plans are developed, individual library employees play their roles using the strategic documents as guidelines. Part of her response is presented verbatim hereunder:

> An academic library is a structured organisation which does not depend entirely on individuals to achieve its objectives. There are systems in place to identify what is to be done and how. This does not depend on individual whims.

Asked to explain the level of impact of the leadership styles on organisational effectiveness, the majority (89 per cent) of the respondents, who had indicated that the style of their leaders had an impact on their libraries, said that the impact was great while the rest (11 per cent) remained neutral. No respondents estimated it as very great. Those who were neutral explained that although they were sure that the styles had an impact on their organisations, they had no means of confirming the degree of the impact empirically. They further explained that it was not easy to isolate the leadership style from the influence of the other factors which may have contributed in one way or another to good or bad performance. The verbatim responses of the two respondents who were neutral are hereunder:

> Success of libraries depends on many factors […] the leadership style may be just one of these. It is difficult to isolate the impact of leadership in this mix.

> I am not able to attribute the success or failure of library programmes to leadership only. There are many factors at play; most of these are actually outside the control of the library leadership.

The respondents who were of the view that the styles of their leaders had a great impact on the effectiveness of their libraries explained that library leaders, just like the other leaders, influence the work environment exemplified by organisational values and culture; change tolerance levels within the organisation; employee motivation, guidance and support; as well as the development and implementation of institutional strategies. Some of the responses are reported verbatim hereunder:

> The leadership style of the library director determines the extent of the participation of the subordinate staff in decision making. If the staff are not involved effectively in decision making, their commitment to achieving goals will be superficial.

Academic libraries face many challenges. Library leaders cannot address all the challenges alone. They need the suggestions of all staff to address the challenges and reduce their impact on library performance.

You cannot work effectively under a leader who despises you or treats you unfairly.

Library leaders provide a shared vision and direction for their staff. Having an ineffective leader is like allowing oneself to be led by a blind man or boarding a plane without a pilot. The end result is just one: failure.

The above findings underscore the view that leaders, through their leadership styles, have an impact on the performance of their organisations. This is because leaders have a direct influence on the direction and facilitation of their subordinates to achieve individual and organisational goals. These findings concur with the views of DuBrin (2015) that leaders hold the key to positive organisational performance. He explains further that this is the reason organisational performance of companies generally changes when leaders change. Abiodun (2010) also concurred that leadership affects employee, and ultimately, organisational performance by providing a shared vision and coordination of the individual efforts to achieve the same. The view that leadership has a significant impact on organisational performance is shared by several scholars including Storey *et al.* (2016), Boyatzis *et al.* (2015), Limsila and Ogunlana (2008), Somech (2006) as well as Dulewicz and Higgs (2005), among others. However, the scope and degree of influence of leaders on organisational performance may vary from one context to another. It is also important to point out that the findings of this study disagree with a view held by some other scholars that leadership has no or limited impact on organisational performance. For instance, Nohria and Khurana (2010) argue that the impact of leadership on organisational performance and effectiveness is overhyped and takes the individual initiative and contribution of employees for granted. Furthermore, they emphasise that the performance of organisations is also influenced by many factors. These factors include macroeconomics and the economic sector in which the organisation operates. Therefore, the impact of leadership is just one among the many factors which influence organisational success. This view is shared by Kaier *et al.* (2008), Jaffee (2001) and Collins (2001). These views notwithstanding, the authors conclude that although this study does not provide an empirical evidence of the link between leadership styles and organisational performance, it demonstrates a conceptual linkage which indicates that leaders influence the attitudes and work ethics of individuals; team motivation, effort and cohesion; as well as organisational strategic goals and structures. These ultimately impact the performance and effectiveness of organisations. The impact of leadership styles in academic and research libraries is also augmented by the fact that these institutions are relatively small. Thus, the presence of the leaders is prominent and so is their impact.

The most desired leadership style
The majority (17) of the respondents said that they wished their leaders embraced a democratic leadership style while 3 preferred an autocratic style. Thus, democratic leadership style was the most popular amongst academic and research librarians in the two countries. The respondents gave diverse reasons for the leadership style they wished for. Those who preferred democratic leadership explained their choice as reported in some of their verbatim statements presented hereunder:

Every individual in the organisation has a right to make a contribution to the running of the organisation. This can only be achieved in a democratic leadership environment.

All librarians are competent. The library director has no monopoly over knowledge.

A democratic leadership style promotes creativity and innovation in addressing the challenges the library faces.

Librarians working under a democratic leader feel a greater sense of belonging. Therefore, they form formidable and united teams which achieve better results for the libraries and their parent institutions.

Democratic leadership enhances commitment of the staff by reducing internal wrangles and resistance to ideas.

Those who wished for autocratic leaders explained that this style would enable the leaders to give clear direction; deliver results and meet deadlines; reduce costs of operation by limiting material, financial and other expenses associated with consultations; create a common vision for all staff; and maintain discipline in the team. Some of their responses are reported hereunder verbatim:

An autocratic leader is able to move things when dealing with difficult situations or employees. Furthermore, a good leader must exercise [the] full authority of her position; [and] must refuse every attempt to micromanage her.

Involving all staff in decision making is not only expensive but also delays processes. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to build consensus on issues because individuals sometimes hold extreme positions.

The leaders always make the final decision. There is no need to make suggestions since they will not be considered or implemented.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the leadership style of the surveyed academic and research library leaders in South Africa and Kenya have a great impact on the effectiveness of the libraries in meeting their objectives. This is because the leaders, through their leadership styles, influence the organisational work environment, values and culture which in turn affect the performance of the staff. The leadership style also influences the change tolerance levels of the leader thereby influencing the ability of the organisation to innovate and manage both internal and external change. Leadership styles also influence the leader's philosophy on and approach to employee motivation; development and implementation of institutional strategies; as well as the nature of the organisational and reporting structure. Essentially, the leadership style adopted by a leader determines the characteristics of the work environment they create; the organisational values and culture they espouse and promote; how they conceive, perceive and introduce change in the libraries; how they value and motivate the staff; as well as how they involve staff in the development and implementation of organisational strategies. Table III shows these possible impacts.

The findings also indicate that most librarians prefer a democratic style of leadership which they perceive as more participative, stimulates innovation and facilitates an effective user involvement in the design and delivery of library services and products.

| | | Impact | |
Issue	Autocratic	Participative	Delegative
Work environment	Hostile, restrictive	Guided	Free
Values	Leader-centric	Staff-centric	Open
Culture	Top-down	Bottom-up	Flat
Change tolerance	Resistant	Accommodative	Open
Staff motivation	Carrot and stick	Participation	Delegation
Development of strategies	Top-down	Bottom-up	Open
Implementation of strategies	Top-down	Bottom-up	Open

Table III.
Impact of
leadership styles

The respondents also emphasised that the challenges that academic and research libraries currently face require the collective efforts of all the stakeholders to address. Therefore, a leadership style which solicits the input of as many stakeholders as possible stands a better chance of creating the necessary synergy to tackle the challenges. Furthermore, with the increasingly stiff competition which academic and research libraries face from alternative sources of information, an autocratic leadership is likely to isolate the users more and make the libraries even less attractive to them.

The researchers also conclude that leadership styles vary from context to context. This is exemplified by the style differences identified between librarians in South Africa and Kenya. Thus, no leadership style can be applied universally. The authors also recognise the fact that some leaders will use more than one leadership styles simultaneously. Therefore, they conclude that the contexts of the leader dictate the choice and exhibition of a leadership style which stands a better chance of generating appropriate results for the organisation at that point in time. Thus, a leadership style may sometimes be time-bound. The choice of the leadership style may therefore depend on the prevailing circumstances in the organisation.

Implications of findings

The results of this study can be used to recommend the democratic leadership style because it has a higher potential of making a greater impact in the Kenyan and South African academic and research libraries. The results may also be applied in broader perspectives to influence the theory and practice of academic librarianship. Specifically, these findings can be used by library schools to develop curricula which facilitate the effective acquisition of democratic leadership competencies; by libraries and similar institutions to develop participative leadership policies; and by scholars to develop leadership theories and models for libraries and other institutions in Africa and beyond.

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Appendix. Interview schedule

1 What is the gender of your manager?
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2 What is the estimated age of your manager?
□ Under 30   □ 31-40   □ 41-50   □ Above 50

3 What is the highest qualification of your manager?
□ Diploma   □ Bachelor's   □ Master's   □ PhD
□ Other, please specify

4 What leadership style(s) does your manager apply? I will explain any that are not familiar to you.
□ Autocratic   □ Democratic   □ Laissez-Faire

5 Do you think his/her style has an impact on the effectiveness of your library?

No, please explain.
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
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6 If yes, in what way do you think your manager's leadership style has impact on the effectiveness of your library?
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7 How great is the impact of the leadership style of your manager on the effectiveness of your library? Please tick the phrase that best describes your view.
□ Very great   □ Great   □ Neutral

8 What leadership style would you be most comfortable with? Please explain your answer.
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9 Is there anything that you would like to add?
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Corresponding author
Tom Kwanya can be contacted at: tom.kwanya@gmail.com