

## The Nexus between Laissez-faire Leadership Style and Work Performance of Librarians

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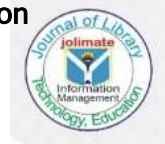
### Abstract

**Background:** It is believed that leadership philosophies in an organization to a large extent affect the organization in terms of performance measurement. The study focused on Laissez-faire leadership style and Work Performances of librarians. To guide the study, two (2) research questions were posed, and a null hypothesis was also observed at a 0.5 level of significance.

**Method** The study adopted a correlational research design. A total of ninety-eight (98) librarians in six Federal universities spread across six states in South- South geo-political zone of Nigeria was used. No sampling was done because the population was small enough to be managed by the researcher. The researcher-created "Laissez-faire Leadership Styles as correlate of work Performance Questionnaire" (LLSQ) as the tool for data collection which was face- validated by three research experts. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient got a reliability score of 0.92 for the instrument. Regression analysis was used to test the null hypothesis that matched the data collected through the questionnaire and to analyse the results using linear regression.

**Findings/results:** The study's findings indicate that laissez-faire of leadership style does not impact positively on the work performance of librarians.

**Implications:** It has been sufficiently proven by this study that laissez-faire leadership style is a weak style of leadership that does not induce high job performance. Therefore, the researchers' advice against the use of laissez-faire leadership style if leaders want to induce high job performance in their staff.



**Conclusion/recommendations:** As revealed in the study, heads of libraries and librarians as management staff of the library should be cautious in the use of laissez-faire leadership style if need be. This is because it is not very productive in terms of work performance.

**Keywords:** leadership style, Laissez-faire, work performance, librarians, university library

## Introduction

Leadership is as old as humankind. It is the process of using different philosophies to guide, manage, and control followers toward the accomplishment of set goals and objectives of an organization. According to Nanjudeswaras and Swamy (2014), leadership is a social influence process in which the leader seeks the consent of subordinates in an endeavour to accomplish organizational objectives. According to Jeremy and Ciller (2012), the course of influencing workers to realizing their full potentials in accomplishing objectives and realizing a vision with passion and integrity is known as leadership and the person exercising leadership is known as a Leader.

He or she directs and guides the group's activities toward a common objective. He or she is an individual who is in-charge of assigning responsibilities to followers in order to achieve set goals. Leadership entails the ability to efficiently organize and direct the people and material resources at the disposal of a leader. This action of a leader determines whether the organization succeeds or fails in the achievement of set goals. It is of this view that, Nwokocho and Iheriohanma, (2015) posited that leadership facilitates the achievement of the objectives and goals of an organization.

Work performance is any action taken with the intention of achieving predetermined objectives. It is an action taken by an individual or group to help an organization realize its aims and objectives. Abdel-Razek (2011) defined, work performance as the efforts made by any worker within an organization to utilize the resources made available to him or her to achieve desired results. Work performance specifically includes activities and acts that support the social environment for in-role development and provide high and effective workforce. According to Robbins and Coutler (2013), an employee's performance at work is the culmination of all the tasks they undertake. It includes an employee's actions at work, the achievement of the organization's goals, and such measurable outcomes of the different actions.

However, the leadership of the library and the leadership styles employed by librarians will determine, to a large extent, how the library is able to meet up with its goals and objectives. This brings about the issue of laissez-faire leadership style as it affects work



performance in the library. Nwachukwu (2004) stated the following as characteristics of a laissez-faire leader: (i.) He is not confident in his capacity to lead. (ii.) He fails to set group objectives. (iii.) Whoever in the group is willing to assume the responsibility makes the decisions. (iv.) Work is typically shoddy and productivity is low. (v.) The subordinates show little enthusiasm for their jobs. (vi.) Morale and teamwork tend to be low.

Singh (2015), submitted that quite a number of studies have revealed that leadership philosophies have great impact on workers' drive to work. Nevertheless, there is still a knowledge gap on how laissez-faire leadership style impacts work performance of librarians in the selected universities, this is the gap that this study intended to fill.

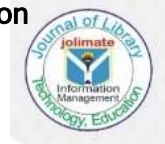
### Statement of Problem

Many schools of thought agree that leadership efficacy is determined by the style of leadership employed by the leader, subordinate's cooperation and the current situational variable. Win (2016), posits that the same members of staff will exert different behaviours to work depending on the leadership style employed by the leader. Leaders are known to be key players in instilling discipline and commitment to work among workers hence establishing organizational high impact in terms of work performance within the system. However, leaders who use laissez-faire style of leadership erode the belief that leaders have a role to play to ensure high job performance of staff under their leadership. Close supervision, direction and control of subordinates by leaders in the course of carrying out assigned duties is believed to have a positive impact in ensuring that followers work at an optimal level of performance, but this belief is contrary to laissez-faire leadership practice. Based on this premise, this study aims to investigate the connection between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in the selected university libraries in South-South Nigeria.

### Purposes of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to find out the nexus between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians. And the specific purposes are:

1. determine the degree of relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in Nigeria; and
2. examine the effect of Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in Nigeria



## Hypothesis

Ho<sub>1</sub>: There is no significant degree of relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in Nigeria.

## Literature Review

### *Relationship between leadership styles and job performance*

It has been discovered through literature that various issues impact the work performance of employees in work settings of which university libraries are included. Some of these issues include: incentive, demographic factors, training and retraining, condition of working infrastructure, work environment, qualifications, work experience, and job security but the most influential of all, according to Urhefe-Okotie (2022), is leadership styles. Barchiesi and LaBella (2007), measured the leadership effectiveness and leadership role and its influence on performance, leadership behaviours, attitudes, and the study reveals that good leadership is not an indicator to former performance records but related to both higher possibilities of enhanced work performance and to boost the reputation of the organizations, pointing in the direction of a meaningful influence of behavioural complexity and dynamics on the leadership perceived level.

The leaders' personalities reflect the leadership philosophies that the university library, like any other organization, employs. With time, the manager-librarian's attitude toward his staff becomes progressively more reflective of his leadership style. According to Drucker (2006), an effective manager inspires others to perform at their highest level. A manager is an individual who takes on and maintains decision-making authority, and who has the capacity to make a substantial impact on the performance and outcomes of the organization. According to Drucker, managers who carry out their duties effectively have a greater chance of responding appropriately and adaptable to the circumstances at hand and producing the best possible results.

### *Effect of Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance*

Laissez-faire leadership style is a style of leadership in which superiors exert little to no control over their subordinates. The French phrase "laissez-faire" means "let it be." It is a leadership style that believes in self-capability, self-direction and self-control. This leadership style does not believe in external intervention from the leader, by way of giving order, direction or control. According to Batiste-Brazile (2022), these types of leaders do not get involved or give much guidance; instead, they let the personnel use their initiative,

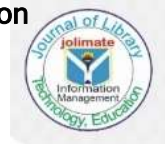


ability, and creativity to work toward and accomplish the desired results. Broyles (2022), stated the optimistic side of laissez-faire; it can lead to improvement self-esteem by encouraging self-direction and control among followers based on their knowledge and skills. Breevaart and Zacher, (2019) stated that laissez-faire leadership style is a reflexive and unproductive leadership style because the leaders do not get involved or related with their subordinates thereby avoiding their responsibilities as leaders.

Similarly, Einarsen, Aasland and Skogstad (2007), affirm that laissez-faire leadership is a type of negative leadership that undermines the workforce's and the organization's benefits by ignoring the goals of the organization and the welfare of its subordinates. According to the Canadian Association of Student Activity Advisers (2004), laissez-faire can be used provided that employees are highly skilled, educated, and knowledgeable. They should also be willing to receive compensation for their work and have the drive to complete it successfully without outside expert supervision.

However, Pagewise (2002) states that a laissez-faire approach should not be used in situations where a manager's lack of availability makes staff members feel insecure, when a manager is unable to provide regular feedback to let staff members know how well they are doing, when a manager is unable to express gratitude to staff members for their hard work, or when a manager is relying on staff members to fill in for them because they are unsure of their own responsibilities. This leadership style, which is associated with organizational trust, is effective for individuals who can be productive with little to no control. Supporting this view, Burris, Deter and Chiaburu (2008), claims that, leaders that practice laissez-faire leadership avoid taking an active leadership and that maintaining that negative feelings toward the leader could have a ripple effect on the organization, and this will lead to a negative outcome on the organizational performance.

This claim could be logical because workers see their leader as the representative of their organization; therefore, they generalize conclusion of the negative feeling to be the organization fault. Similarly, working with naive, or destructive leaders may lead to a perception among employees that the organization does not have interest of workers at heart, according to Schyns and Schilling (2013). Such negative feelings have the potentials to erode public confidence in organizations over time. According to Gillespie and Mann (2004), there are drawbacks to laissez-faire leadership, which aligns with the perspective of Schyns and Schilling. They both maintained that because laissez-faire leadership is ineffective and causes trust to erode over time, it misses opportunities to develop followers' dependency or even trust.



## Douglas McGregor's theory X and Y

McGregor with his leadership theory X and Y presented two contrasts types of management philosophies with presumptions based on human nature and beliefs. McGregor put forward two different outlooks of how workers perceive work activities generally in organizations. These two conflicting views described the behaviours people tend to exhibit at work and in the organizational life. This study adopted theory Y assumption, which states that management's role is to grow the capacities in personnel in order to work towards the realization of organizational goals.

### *Features of McGregor's theory X and Y to the study*

#### *Theory X assumptions is as follows:*

Members of staff consider work to be just as normal as leisure and play. And they will put in the same level of mental and physical effort in their personal life as they do in their jobs. If employees are inspired, they will be self-reliant in achieving the aims of the organization. Because coercion is not the only method to cause employees to work optimally.

Staff members are obedient and will take and seek responsibility. This means workers are capable of doing their job without being control by their supervisor. Workers are inventive and are inspired to work. And they will use their inventiveness to find solution to challenges in the organization. However, theory Y assumed that people work naturally and would exercise self-control and self-direction to achieve organizational goals in the absence of outside supervision. Workers will be dedicated to ensuring that the organizational goals and objectives are achievable using their initiative in finding and resolving managerial challenges.

## Methodology

The study adopted a Correlational design. This is because the researchers are interested in investigating the relationship between the independent variable "laissez-faire leadership style" and the dependent variable "job performance of librarians" using a total of ninety-eight (98) Librarians in all the six federal universities located in South- South, Nigeria. A self-developed questionnaire was used as instrument of data collection alongside interview schedule to validate the responses from the questionnaire. The data obtained were analysed using regression analysis. South-South, Nigeria is a region made up of six states, and each of the states has a federal university attached to it. The six



states that made up the region are Akwa-Ibom, Delta, Edo, Bayelsa, Cross Rivers, and Rivers State.

**Presentation of Results /Discussion of findings**

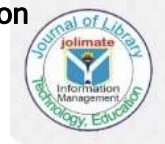
**Table 1: Degree of correlation between laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in Southern Nigeria using Regression Analysis**

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
Laissez-faire Leadership Style and Job Performance	0.11	0.01	0.00	6.31

**(R<sup>2</sup>) = Coefficient of Determination**

Research purpose 1: The result in the table above show that there is a 0.11 degree of relationship between the work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South-South Nigeria and the laissez-faire leadership style. This means that, there is a negative relationship between laissez-faire leadership style and work output of librarians.

Research purpose 2: Additionally, the outcome demonstrated that the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was 0.01 when compared to the correlation coefficient of 0.11. The determinant coefficient (R<sup>2</sup>) indicates that a laissez-faire leadership style accounts for merely 1% of the variance in librarians' work performance. This shows that variables other than leadership style account for 99% of the variation in librarians' work performance. This means there is a weak effect of laissez-faire leadership style on job performance of librarians.



## Hypothesis

H0: There is no significant degree of correlation between Laissez-faire leadership style and job performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South-South, Nigeria.

**Table 2: Regression analysis of degree of correlation between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians in federal university libraries in Southern Nigeria.**

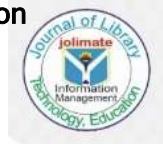
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	45.581	1	45.581	1.146	.001 <sup>a</sup>
	Residual	3737.659	94	39.762		
	Total	3783.240	95			

According to the results above (Table 2), an F-ratio of 1.146 with a probability value of 0.001 was obtained. Since 0.001 is less than 0.05, it was determined to be significant when compared to the criterion value of 0.05 level of significance for testing the hypothesis. As a result, the null hypothesis, which claimed that there was no relationship between Laissez-faire leadership style and work performance of librarians, was rejected. Therefore, the researchers come to the conclusion that there is a strong negative degree of association between the Laissez-faire leadership style and the work performance of librarians in federal universities in South-South geo-political zone of Nigerian.

## Discussion of findings

The major findings of the research showed a negative correlation between a laissez-faire leadership style and the job performance of librarians in Southern Nigeria's federal university libraries. The result shows that because staff are left alone to go about their duties the way and manner they want it, they end up not putting in the required efforts to perform optimally. This means, when there is no supervision by superiors, subordinates do not perform at their best. The results validate the claim put forth by Burris, Deter, and Chiaburu (2008) that laissez-faire leaders refrain from actively leading and that maintaining unfavourable opinions of the leader may have a knock-on effect that is detrimental to the organization's performance.

The result also affirms the view of Breevaart and Zacher, (2019), who opine that this leadership style stands ineffective because it results to low job performance. The results were also supported by Nwachukwu (2004), who noted that a laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by low morale and teamwork, sloppy work and low efficiency, and

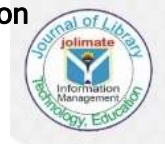


minimal attention from subordinates. In consonance with the result, Gillespie and Mann (2004), opines that, there are drawbacks to laissez-faire leadership, and this also supports the perspective of Schyns and Schilling (2013), that assert that since laissez-faire leadership is unproductive, it will cause distrust over time, and eventually miss the opportunities to develop followers' dependency or even commitment to work. However, the findings from the study is in contrast to McGregor's theory Y which assumes that workers do not need to be coerced or monitored in their discharge of duties, that work is natural and members of staff will work without any external supervision.

The interview held with staff in the various libraries validated this result as majority of them explained that this type of leadership made them to have a feeling of passiveness and lack of engagement to work. In a particular library, some staff confirmed that the present administration at the time of this study, employs laissez-faire leadership style which allowed them to come and go as they pleased and complete their work in the manner, they wanted without being closely supervised. Some staff members also mentioned how a former administration, who employed a transformational leadership style, made them come to work very early and with full devotion, and this produced outstanding performances.

## Conclusion

The study examined the nexus between librarians' work performance and laissez-faire leadership style and it shows that it is negative. This further explains the imperativeness of considering the potential effects of different leadership philosophies, before its application. The researcher draws the following conclusion; there is a weak connexion between the leadership style of laissez-faire and work performance of librarians in Federal University Libraries in South-South, geo-political zone of Nigeria. Practically, the results from the study indicate that laissez-faire leadership have a low or negative impact on work performance, which strongly suggests that given the nature of the work done by librarians, there is need for effective monitoring and supervision and as such, Laissez-faire leadership style should be discouraged. It is also vital to recognise that several styles of leadership could be used in combination as determined by situational variables.



## Recommendation

The following recommendations are made based on the results of the study:

In view of the fact that laissez-faire leadership style does not stimulate effective work performance, librarians as management staff of the library should be discouraged in the use of this leadership style; and

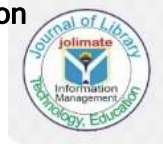
Another recommendation from the study is that, leaders should try as much as possible to have a closed supervision of their subordinates.

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