

**Leadership Style, Digital Competence and Reference Service Quality by Librarians
in Private Universities, Ogun State, Nigeria**

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Faculty of Communication & Information Sciences,
Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria**

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Certification

This is to certify that this thesis was carried out by **Olatunji Sanmi ADEDIRAN** with Matriculation Number **LCU/PG/003875** in the Department of Information Management under my supervision in the Faculty of Communication and Information Science, Lead City University, Ibadan, Nigeria and that the work has not been previously submitted.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God Almighty for His sufficient grace over my life.

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Acknowledgment

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Even though the above-mentioned institutions and persons have assisted in the process of this research work, I alone stand responsible for the errors, if any, found in the work.

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Abstract

With the rise of digital technology, the attention of researchers have mainly been on the digital aspects without focusing on the strategic. In line with this, the study investigates the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on effective reference services delivery among academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The study adopted a descriptive research survey design of the correlation type. The population of the study consists of one hundred and twenty-three (123) library personnel. Total enumeration method was used for the study. The research instrument was a questionnaire adapted from various studies. Data analysis was done using inferential and descriptive statistics. The study found a high level of reference service quality (Mean = 3.31) but a moderate level of digital competence (Mean = 2.92). It was also found that library managers adopt various leadership styles with the Laissez-faire leadership styles being the most prevalent. The test of hypotheses revealed a moderate positive correlation between leadership styles and reference service quality ($r = 0.333$) and a weak correlation between digital competence and reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities ($r = 0.212$). In addition, the combination leadership styles and digital competence significantly influence reference service quality (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.135$; $p = 0.000$). The study concludes that both leadership styles and digital competence have a substantial combined impact on the overall quality of reference services in these academic libraries. It was recommended that academic libraries of private universities in Ogun State should continue to foster a culture of innovation and user-centred service delivery, incorporating continuous assessment to maintain and enhance service quality.

Keywords: Digital Competence, Leadership Styles, Private Universities, Reader Services, Reference Services.

Word Count: 267

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

Reference services offer a lot of opportunities for academic libraries to meet the expectations of their patrons but this may be difficult to achieve with appropriate leadership styles and digital competence of library personnel. Reference service is a customised service designed to meet the unique information needs of each library user, thereby fostering a sense of inclusion and connection among library patrons. Furthermore, Reference services are a cornerstone of academic libraries, crucially supporting the information needs of students, faculty, and researchers. These services help users navigate the extensive resources available within the library and beyond, ensuring effective information retrieval and utilization¹.

Academic libraries offer various reference services to cater to the diverse needs of their users. Traditionally, in-person assistance at the reference desk provides immediate help in finding books, journal articles, and other resources. With technological advancements, virtual reference services, including email, chat, and video consultations, have become increasingly popular, offering flexible and convenient support, especially for remote or distance learning students². Instructional services, such as workshops and information literacy sessions, teach users how to search databases, evaluate sources, and manage citations effectively, fostering independent research skills. One-on-one research consultations offer more in-depth assistance, helping users develop research questions, refine search strategies, and identify key resources. Specialized subject support from

librarians with expertise in specific academic disciplines provides tailored guidance, especially for complex or specialized resources³.

Reference services are vital for academic success. They guide students to relevant resources, teach effective research skills, and help produce high-quality assignments and research projects. In addition, lecturers, non-teaching and researchers benefit from these services by staying current in their fields, developing new courses, and conducting scholarly research, with librarians assisting in literature reviews, data management, and publication strategies⁴. Promoting information literacy is a key role of reference services, empowering users to navigate the vast and complex information landscape. Additionally, these services ensure equitable access to information, assisting users from diverse backgrounds and varying levels of research experience, bridging the gap between novice and expert researchers⁵.

Reference services in academic libraries are essential for supporting the information needs of the academic community. By offering a range of services from in-person assistance to virtual consultations, librarians play a vital role in helping users navigate the complex information landscape⁶. This is why the quality of reference service in academic libraries is often a subject of interest, for library managements, researchers and professional alike. In line with this, researcher often examine the quality of reference services along the line of affect of service, and information control and library as a place⁷.

The affect of service dimension as it relates to reference service quality in academic libraries focuses on the human aspects of service delivery, including the courtesy, professionalism, and knowledge of library personnel. Reference services are integral to this dimension as they involve direct interactions between librarians and users. Model or

the highest quality of reference services are characterized by knowledgeable and approachable staff who can easily meet the information needs of library patrons of all categories. Positive scores in this area indicate that users feel supported and confident in the assistance they receive, highlighting the importance of continuous training and professional development for reference librarians⁸. The ability of reference librarians to demonstrate knowledge depends on the level of information control they create or is available in the library.

Information control is all about the users' perceptions of the accessibility, reliability, and comprehensiveness of library resources in general and reference sources in particular. Reference services are vital in helping users navigate these resources, ensuring they can locate and access the information they need. High scores in this area suggest that users find the reference services effective in guiding them to the right resources, demonstrating the importance of librarians' expertise in search strategies, resource knowledge, and information retrieval. Reference services enhance the perception of information control by creating information search and retrieval tools such as online public access catalogues (OPACs), indexes, bibliographies, reading lists and creating searchable online databases⁹. In addition to information control, the library as a place must be conducive for reference interactions.

Library as a place in the content of reference service quality refers to the contribution of the library architecture and layout to the effectiveness of the reference services. For instance, the library section should be situated away from noisy sections of the library so that patrons can converse with library without interference. Being some kind of consulting room, the reference section should also be appropriately furnished to cater for

those who are being attended to as well as those who are waiting to be attended to by reference librarians. It also goes without saying that the reference section of the library should be aesthetically pleasing to the patrons so that they feel comfortable in asking their questions.

Despite challenges such as budget constraints and technological advancements, academic libraries continue to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of their users. Through these efforts, reference services significantly contribute to the academic success and information literacy of students, faculty, and researchers, reinforcing the library's role as a pivotal academic support system¹⁰. However, much more still need to be done by academic libraries and librarians in Nigeria to provide the ideal reference services to their patrons. Certain factors may be responsible for this scenario. Some of them include competence of library personnel, leadership style, economic situation, continuous professional development, institutional support and digital competence of librarians. The focus of the current study is on leadership styles and digital competence of librarians

The quality reference services can be greatly impacted by the leadership style existing in the library¹¹. Leadership is about listening to people, supporting and encouraging them and involving them in the decision-making and problem-solving processing. It is about building teams and developing their ability to make accurate decisions¹². A leader is a person who takes the central roles in interactions and who influences the behaviour of other members of the group. The leader is an individual who has authority over others and is responsible for guiding their actions. He/she is a person engaged in the traditional management practices, such as planning, organizing, decision-making, and controlling,

and whose performance is almost often measured by their ability to achieve the goals and objectives of the organization¹³.

Leadership theories describe leaders based on traits or how the influence and power are used to achieve objectives of the organization, using trait-based descriptions, leaders may be classified as autocratic, democratic, bureaucratic, charismatic or laissez-faire. But when leadership is viewed from the perspective of the exchange of power and its utilization to secure outcomes, leaders are situational, transactional or transformational¹⁴. Consequently, leadership styles are important for effective discharge of duties by employees.

Hence, heads of libraries should adopt leadership styles that are appropriate for leading and managing their organizations. The adoption and application of the right leadership style will guarantee employees' satisfaction and it also portends that the application of a better leadership style might lead employees to work even more effectively. Leadership styles have different effects on the emotions of targeted followers and the most effective style a leader can use is a good mix that is customized to the situation. In line with this statement, leadership style adopted by any librarian should be guided by the beliefs, values and preferences, culture, norms, the dos and the don'ts of the organization or parent institution¹⁵.

Leadership style is perceived as the manner and approach of providing direction, implementing plans and motivating people. Leadership styles refer to a manager's behaviour and altitude of governance and supervision. It is the result of personality traits, experience, attitude and philosophy of the managers. 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 styles¹⁶. However, for the purpose of this study, the classical categorization approach which groups the leadership styles into three broad categories of authoritarian (autocratic) democratic (participative) and Laissez-Faire (delegative) shall be adopted.

In 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. An authoritarian leader assumes the other members of staff are lazy, irresponsible and untrustworthy; such leader relies on authority, control, power, manipulation and hard work to get the job done. However, authoritarian leadership style may work best where quick decision making is necessary as there might not be adequate time to consult with or involve. On the negative side, authoritarian leadership discourages innovation, experimentation and learning¹⁷.

Democratic leadership, on the other hand, gives some decision-making powers to the group members although the leader still has the final say. Democratic leaders assume that most people are honest, trustworthy and hard working. As a result, 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. Librarians 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. In turn, this style of leadership may promote a higher level of motivation and productivity. However,

democratic leadership delays decisions and may in turn lead to missed deadlines and opportunities¹⁸.

Lastly, laissez-faire leadership is a relaxed leadership style giving complete decision-making control to the staff. Laissez-faire 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 laissez-faire leadership style grants independence to the group members, it may jeopardise productivity especially in a situation where the employees lack shared vision and direction¹⁸. Laissez-faire may however be attractive to librarians as they work in a knowledge environment in which each situation throws up a new and unique challenge¹⁹.

Academic libraries as organised formal institutions, have laid down leadership patterns headed by a University Librarian, who is the pivot around which all major library functions revolve. This means that the approach the university librarians adopt in directing, guiding and controlling the staff under them, determine the pace of progress in their library²⁰. That is, when the library manager directs or guides the staff under them properly by adopting the most appropriate leadership style, the outcome will be effectiveness in services such as references²¹. However, leaders can only work with what they have. This means, apart from leadership adopted by the library managers, without some certain skills such as digital competencies, from the employees, the leadership may not achieve the desired goal of quality reference services in academic libraries.

Digital competence is essential for librarians in today's increasingly digital world. Digital competence encompasses a broad set of competencies to effectively support their

communities, manage digital resources, and navigate the complexities of digital information²². Digital competence is characterised by five key areas such as information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving. Each area is subdivided into specific competencies, offering a detailed roadmap for digital skill development. For librarians, mastering these competencies is crucial for delivering high-quality services in a digital environment.

This area is fundamental for librarians, as it involves the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use digital information. Librarians must be adept at navigating online databases, evaluating the credibility of sources, and guiding patrons in information retrieval processes. In the context of reference services, developing strong information and data literacy skills enables librarians to support research activities, manage digital collections, and promote information literacy among library users²².

Digital competence in communication and collaboration involves using digital tools to interact, share information, and work collaboratively. For librarians, this includes using social media to engage with the community, managing online library services, and facilitating virtual teamwork. Scholars have emphasised the importance of these skills in creating a connected and collaborative digital environment, which is essential for modern libraries that offer both in-person and online services.

Librarians must be proficient in creating and managing digital content, from developing online tutorials and guides to digitizing physical collections. Experts on digital competence also outlines competencies such as creating digital content, integrating information into digital environments, and understanding copyright and licensing issues.

Mastery of these skills enables librarians to expand their digital offerings, enhance accessibility, and support the educational needs of their users.

The safety component of digital competence covers aspects such as protecting personal data, understanding digital identity, and ensuring cybersecurity. Librarians must be knowledgeable about these issues to protect both their own and their patrons' digital identities and data. This competence also involves educating users about safe online practices and implementing robust data protection measures within the library.

Problem solving in a digital context involves using technology to solve technical issues, continuously improving digital skills, and staying updated with technological advancements. Librarians need to be proactive in troubleshooting digital systems, adapting to new technologies, and guiding users through technological challenges. The emphasis on problem solving ensures that librarians remain effective and resilient in the face of rapidly evolving digital landscapes²².

While developing digital competence presents challenges, such as keeping pace with technological advancements and addressing diverse user needs, it also offers significant opportunities. Enhanced digital skills enable librarians to innovate in service delivery, improve user experiences, and expand the library's role as a digital hub in the community. Continuous professional development and training are essential for librarians to stay relevant and effective in their digital competence.

Digital competencies are the essential skills and knowledge that professionals such as librarians must have to effectively use Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in their work environment. Digital competence in the modern day is made of

different interrelated skills such as information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving²³. Each area is subdivided into specific competencies, offering a detailed roadmap for digital skill development. For librarians, mastering these competencies is crucial for delivering high-quality services in a digital environment²⁴.

This area is fundamental for librarians, as it involves the ability to locate, evaluate, and effectively use digital information. Librarians must be adept at navigating online databases, evaluating the credibility of sources, and guiding patrons in information retrieval processes. Developing strong information and data literacy skills enables librarians to render various reference services such as supporting research activities, managing digital collections, and promoting information literacy among library users²⁵. This will also enhance librarians' digital communication and collaboration skills.

Digital competence in communication and collaboration involves using digital tools to interact, share information, and work collaboratively, all of which are requirements for effective digital reference services. For librarians, this includes using social media to engage with the library user community, managing online library services, and facilitating virtual reference services. Scholars have emphasized the importance of these skills in creating a connected and collaborative digital environment, which is essential for modern libraries that offer both in-person and online services²⁶.

In addition, librarians must be proficient in creating and managing digital content, from developing online tutorials and guides to digitizing physical collections. Digital competence for modern librarians therefore encompasses competencies such as creating

digital content, integrating information into digital environments, and understanding copyright and licensing issues especially when providing information for users during reference services. Mastery of these skills enables librarians to expand their reference services, enhance accessibility, and support the educational needs of their users²⁴.

The safety component of digital competence covers aspects such as protecting personal data of library patrons, understanding digital identity and maintain online etiquettes when rendering virtual library services, and ensuring cybersecurity for themselves and their clients. Librarians must be knowledgeable about these issues to protect both their own and their patrons' digital identities and data. This competence also involves educating users about safe online practices and implementing robust data protection measures within the library.

Problem solving in a digital context involves using technology to solve technical issues, continuously improving digital skills, and staying updated with technological advancements. Librarians need to be proactive in troubleshooting digital systems, adapting to new technologies, and guiding users through technological challenges. Digital competence in problem solving ensures that librarians remain effective and resilient in the face of rapidly evolving digital landscapes.

Overall, the dynamic nature of reference services in the modern era has called for the creation of the right environment and mindset in which librarians can render both the traditional (physical) and virtual reference services to their patrons. This means that academic libraries need to get the leadership right just as librarians must update their skills and be vast in digital competence. In Nigerian academic libraries, reference is not

being rendered at the level it could be given the potentials available to librarians. In line with this, the study examines the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries Ogun State

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Reference services is essential in academic libraries as it ensures the library collection and the global information resources are effectively utilised by library patrons. With effective library services, academic library's patrons can easily access the depth of information resources offered by the library. They can also learn useful information and knowledge they might otherwise find difficult to access on their own. Without access to professional reference services, information users would be unable to make maximum use of available resources. This therefore makes it important for regular evaluation of reference services and factors that can affect reference services quality.

Consequently, researchers have shown interest in finding ways to ensure effective reference services in Nigerian academic libraries. However, majority of studies on reference services have focused on public-funded university and most often focused on variables such as ICT skills, motivation, and emotional intelligence of librarians as it relates to digital reference services, Therefore, this study examines the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on effective reference services delivery among academic libraries in Ogun State private universities with the aim of proffering relevant solutions and boosting the quality of reference services in the institutions.

1.3 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on effective reference services delivery among academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The specific objectives are to;

- i. identify the level of reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- ii. identify the prevalent leadership styles in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- iii. identify the level of digital competence among academic librarians in Ogun State private universities
- iv. ascertain the influence of leadership styles on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- v. determine the influence of digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- vi. ascertain the combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;

1.4 Research Questions

The study will be guided by the following research questions;

1. What is the level of reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities?
2. What is the prevalent leadership style in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities?

3. What is the level of digital competence among academic librarians in Ogun State private universities

1.5 Hypotheses

The following Hypotheses will be tested as 0.05 level of significance

- H₀₁. There will be no significant influence of leadership styles on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- H₀₂ There will be no significant influence of digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;
- H₀₃ there will be no significant combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is highly significant as its findings can have far-reaching implications for various stakeholders. This study will be of significant benefit to administrators, librarians, students, faculty, policy makers, researchers, and the general society. University administrators and library managers stand to benefit significantly from this study, as it offers insights into how different leadership styles impact the effectiveness of reference service quality in libraries. By understanding which leadership styles foster the highest levels of digital competence among librarians, administrators can implement more effective management practices. This, in turn, can lead to improved library services, better resource utilization, and enhanced academic support for students and faculty. The findings can inform leadership development programs and guide the selection and

training of library managers to ensure that they possess the necessary skills to lead in a digital age.

Librarians and library staff are direct beneficiaries of this study, as it highlights the importance of digital competence in providing high-quality reference services. The study can lead to targeted professional development opportunities, helping librarians to acquire and improve digital skills essential for their roles. By emphasizing the link between leadership styles and digital competence, the study can also advocate for a supportive and empowering work environment that encourages continuous learning and innovation. This empowerment can boost job satisfaction, professional growth, and the overall efficiency of library operations.

Students and faculty members at private universities in Ogun State will benefit from enhanced reference services resulting from the implementation of findings from this study. Improved digital competence among librarians can lead to more efficient and effective support for academic research and learning. Students will have better access to digital resources, and faculty members will receive more robust assistance in their research endeavours. The study's outcomes can contribute to a more resourceful and supportive academic environment, ultimately leading to better academic performance and satisfaction among the university community.

Policy makers and educational planners can use the insights from this study to shape policies and strategies that enhance library services across private universities. Understanding the critical role of leadership style and digital competence in reference service quality can lead to the development of standards and guidelines that promote best practices in library management and staff training. This can result in a more standardized

and high-quality reference service quality across institutions, ensuring that all students and faculty have access to the necessary resources and support.

Researchers and academics in the field of library science will find this study valuable for its contribution to the existing body of knowledge on the intersection of leadership, digital competence, and library service quality. The findings can stimulate further research and discussions on best practices for library management in the digital age. Additionally, the study can serve as a basis for curriculum development in library and information science programs, ensuring that future librarians are equipped with the leadership and digital skills necessary to excel in their profession.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study scope encompasses subject, population, and geographical scope. In term of subject scope, the study covers three variables, namely; reference services provision, leadership styles, and digital competence. The independent variable is reference services quality and it is measured by metrics such as affect of service, information control, and library as a place. There are two independent variables, the first independent variable is leadership styles which is measured by autocratic style, democratic style, and laissez faire. The second independent variable is digital competence of librarians. This variable is measured by metrics such as data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving. The population scope is library personnel from private universities in Ogun State Nigeria, The population is selected because few research have examined reference services in private universities in Nigeria, particularly in Ogun State. The geographical scope covers all private universities in Ogun state.

1.8 Limitation to the Study

The study faced a few limitations chief of which is the slow response to the questionnaire among the librarians. This delay in the data collection process was often as result of some bureaucracy in the surveyed institutions. However, the researchers was able to get around this red tapes after several personals visits and intervention from the research supervisor.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Reference Services Quality: This encompasses the assistance provided by librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to help users locate, understand, and use information resources effectively.

Affect of Service: This refers to the emotional and interpersonal aspects of library services, including the friendliness, empathy, and responsiveness of librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State in assisting users.

Information Control: This pertains to users' ability to find, access, and manage information effectively within the library, including the organization of resources by librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State, ease of navigation, and availability of necessary materials.

Library as a Place: This involves the physical environment of private university libraries in Ogun State, encompassing the facility's ambiance, comfort, functionality, and the suitability of the space for various user activities such as studying, socializing, and accessing resources.

Leadership Style: Leadership styles refer to management behaviour and altitude (Autocratic, Democratic or Liberal) of governance and supervision adopted by library managers in private university libraries in Ogun State.

Autocratic Leadership Style: the refers to any leadership approach of library managers in private university libraries in Ogun State which does not allow for the inputs of subordinates.

Democratic Leadership Style: the refers to any leadership approach by library managers in private university libraries in Ogun State which is open to the inputs of subordinates.

Liberal Leadership Style: the refers to any leadership approach by library managers in private university libraries in Ogun State which gives the subordinates free hands to make decision and rarely interfere in collection development processes.

Digital Competence: The ability of librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to use digital technology effectively, responsibly, and safely in various contexts, encompassing skills such as information literacy, communication, content creation, and problem-solving.

Information and Data Literacy: The skills required of librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to locate, evaluate, and use information and data effectively, ensuring accurate and efficient retrieval and application of digital resources.

Communication and Collaboration: The ability of librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to interact, share, and collaborate with others through digital

technologies, utilizing various platforms and tools to work together and exchange information.

Digital Content Creation: The skills needed by librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to create, edit, and manage digital content, including text, images, audio, and video, ensuring originality and proper use of digital tools and platforms.

Safety: The knowledge and skills by librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to protect themselves and library patrons from digital threats, including understanding privacy settings, managing data security, and practicing responsible digital behaviour.

Problem Solving: The capacity of librarians in private university libraries in Ogun State to identify, analyse, and resolve issues using digital tools and technologies, including the ability to troubleshoot technical problems and apply digital solutions creatively and effectively.

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Chapter Two

Literature Review

This section deals with the review of related materials of the study. The literature review is organized under the following subheadings;

2.1 Conceptual review

2.1.1 Concept of Reference Service Quality

2.1.2 Review of Digital Competence

2.1.3 Concept of Leadership Styles

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 LIBQUAL

2.2.2 The Full Range Leadership Model

2.2.3 UNESCO's Digital Literacy Global Framework (2018)

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Leadership Style and Reference Service Quality

2.3.2 Digital Competence and Reference Service Quality

2.3.3 Leadership Styles, Digital Competence and Reference Service Quality

2.4 Conceptual Framework of the Study.

2.5 Summary of Gaps in Literature Reviewed

Endnotes

2.1 Conceptual review

2.1.1 Concept of Reference Service Quality

The various definitions that have been given to reference services shows the evolution of the service that has been an integral part of librarianship and library services for centuries.

The conceptualisations reveal the 'humble' origins of reference services and highlight how far this aspect of library services has evolved over the years. Reference services in academic libraries encompass a range of activities aimed at assisting users in finding information, conducting research, and utilizing library resources.

Reference services involve personal assistance to library users in finding needed information. Library reference service typically includes several components, including a reference desk, online resources, and specialized collections of materials. The reference desk is often the central hub of a library's reference service, where users can receive assistance from a librarian or other trained staff member¹. This includes direct assistance, such as answering specific questions or providing guidance on the use of library resources, as well as indirect assistance, such as creating guides and tutorials to aid users in their research. This definition is also reflected in the submission of another scholar who also submitted that reference services are personal assistance eagerly given to library users in pursuit of information by a librarian or information services provider². These definitions capture the essence of reference services but not its true dimensions.

Reference services are as old as librarianship itself and it was usually delivered manually. However, scholars suggested that reference services have grown in scope. Reference services in academic libraries now encompass a range of activities designed to assist patrons in finding, evaluating, and using information resources effectively³. These services aim to support the research, learning, and teaching needs of students, faculty, and staff. Modern reference services now encompass in-person assistance in which professional librarians provide guidance at a physical reference desk or through

scheduled appointments. It also includes virtual assistance in which academic libraries offer reference services via email, chat, video calls, and screen-sharing platforms⁴.

In the digital era, Libraries also curate and provide access to online databases, research guides, tutorials, and other digital tools. Furthermore, giving the increasing complexity of information environment, Librarians in academic libraries now conduct workshops and classes to teach information literacy skills, such as searching for and evaluating information⁵. In many academic libraries, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria, the reference section headed by a reference librarian is an important section that houses and takes care of important information resources that cannot be given to users on loan. The services rendered to users include information services, bibliographic verification and documentation services, inter-library loan and document delivery services, user education, and selective dissemination of information (SDI) among others⁶.

Information services can also be called referral service. This is the process of identifying resources and agencies with special services or information needed by library users or information seekers, and the ability of the libraries, from time to time, to refer these users to these agencies or organizations for the purpose of satisfying their information need. Libraries from time to time receive a good number of reference and information enquiries whose range is usually very long i.e. from general to specific. Majority of reference and information queries by users received at the reference desk can be answered through ready reference tools such as dictionaries, directories, encyclopaedias, handbooks and manuals, atlases and gazetteers, indexes and bibliographies etc. In organizing reference services, bibliography and documentation services should also be made available⁷.

Bibliographic verification is the use of bibliographic tools for purpose of verifying the correctness and completeness of the used information. These verifications provide information about publications, and to achieve this reference librarian consults and searches both manual and electronic versions of standard bibliographic works. Some bibliographic tools may include abstracts and indexes, gazettes, encyclopaedias, almanacs, catalogues, bibliographies etc. while documentation services may include monthly list of additions, reading lists, documentation list, subject bibliographies etc. on the topics of seminars, conferences, research projects etc; and documentation list of contents⁸.

Inter-library loan and document delivery services are important services due to the rising document prices and budgetary constraints on libraries, which makes them unable to purchase more and new documents. This service is closely related to the bibliographic verification and documentation service. A library that does not have certain required documents among its collection may borrow, through the inter-library loan, from other libraries in the neighbourhood and supply or make available to the users at the earliest and required time. In other words, no single library or information centre can boast of having in its collection all the resources that can be demanded⁹.

Another task expected of reference librarian is Current Awareness Services (CAS). This is a service provided for researchers to acquaint them with recent publications that might help them in their research work. The reference librarian's duty is to make its users aware of latest information relating to their areas of specialization. Current Awareness Services (CAS) can be repackaged to suit the information needs of the users/clientele. Its services can be introduced in the routing of periodicals, abstracting or indexing of documents,

circulation of accession lists of newly acquired documents, library bulletin containing all types of useful information etc¹⁰.

User education is another form of reference services mostly offered by academic libraries. The basic objective of this service is to infuse information seeking habit among the users, especially students, so they can independently search the information sources in the library. User education in the modern day has also expanded to cover information literacy training in view of modern advances in the information environment. The training now encompasses how to search various databases, citation styles, evaluating information, ethical use of information, dissemination of scholarly outputs. In the age of social media and cyber threats, information literacy programmes have also been expanded to include detecting fake news and netiquette among others¹¹.

While user education is mostly focused on students, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services is mainly for lecturers, researchers and professionals within the community served by the library. This is another form of reference service provided in the library. In some cases, it can be referred to as Current Awareness Services (CAS). It is a user packaged reference services that keeps users abreast of latest information. Many libraries use computerize service methods for disseminating the selective information for the users so as to keep them well informed. SDI alerts a user that a document/material of his interest has been received in the library or information centre¹².

The manner in which reference services in academic libraries are rendered has changed as a result of technological advancements. In addition, the format and sources of information libraries employ to provide reference service have also been transformed. The majority of library materials and services are now accessible online. As a result, library patrons are no

longer restricted to using the library itself to access our materials. Many libraries and library cooperatives are introducing virtual reference services to better serve clients who remotely access the library services and collections from their computers¹³.

Due to advancements in technology, reference services have been transformed from a static service in a corner of the library to a ubiquitous service that can be rendered without time and space restrictions. Virtual reference, as defined by the Reference and Users Services Association (RUSA), is any reference service provided via electronic means (computers, Internet, etc.) such as chat, videoconferencing, co-browsing, IM, VOIP, or email¹⁴. Synchronous real-time communication is used by the vast majority of VRS. Telephone, fax, and postal reference services are not examples of virtual reference. Reference service initiated electronically, often in real-time, where patrons employ computers or other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff, without physically being present¹⁵.

Virtual reference services conversations may be synchronous or asynchronous. A user can submit a query at any time, from any location, using an asynchronous service like email or a web form quiz, and the librarian can respond when they have time and have thought through the answer. In contrast, synchronous services facilitate the user's interaction with a reference librarian in real time. Although the term "virtual reference service" (VRS) has been used to describe both asynchronous and synchronous Internet-based communication services, it is more usually used to describe the former. Users don't even need to be in the library itself to have a live chat with a librarian. In addition, co-browsing and "escorting" (when the librarian guides the patron through the web, such as when they are learning to use the online catalog) are possible with certain Virtual reference services (VRS)¹⁶.

Virtual reference services are a type of library service that allows users to ask reference questions and receive assistance from librarians through online or digital channels, such as email, chat, or video conferencing. Some of the tools used for virtual reference services include chat software, email reference services where users can send their questions and receive answers via email, and video conferencing software like Zoom or Skype to provide face-to-face assistance to users remotely. Virtual reference is a reference service initiated electronically, often in real-time, where patrons employ computers or other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff without being physically present¹⁶.

Reference services is rendered by mechanisms otherwise known as tools. However, it is very clear that technology in all its forms and formats to the librarians are just a means to an end, they assist the wellgrounded librarian in offering services efficiently and effectively¹⁷. Therefore, to the librarians every means of reaching the library users and satisfying their information needs without a physical contact could be regarded as virtual reference tool. Virtual reference services are divided majorly into duo of synchronous and Asynchronous.

In an asynchronous reference transaction, a client poses a query and receives a response at a later time. It entails asking a question of a trained information specialist but not counting on an instantaneous answer. A researcher observes that there is a lag in this transaction between the question and the response. The listed channels are all viable options for delivering asynchronous virtual reference services (VRS). Users have the option of utilizing the library's provided email address on the website, which will launch

the appropriate email client software, or of using their own email client software to submit questions to the library.

Due to its widespread adoption and lack of system requirements, e-mail has quickly become the de facto standard for electronic communication. A scholar points out that using email for references service is simple, inexpensive, and widely available. The reference librarian has the option of using email to transmit data files to the end users. E-mail reference also has the added benefit of allowing questions and their responses to be saved in a database for later use. argue that improved responses can be obtained by e-mail reference since staff members have more time to think through their responses. There are three main drawbacks to using email as a reference. One, it is more challenging to conduct the reference interview; two, it takes longer to receive a response; and three, non-verbal communication is lost¹⁵.

Another form of asynchronous reference service is web form. With web forms, users can fill out a web form on the library's homepage or reference page and submit it for processing. Inquiries from users are normally answered by the reference librarian by phone, email, fax, or ordinary mail. Online forms sometimes have fields that users must fill out in order to submit their answers. For example, these fields may request the user's email address or name. Additionally, users are asked to provide additional, voluntary information through web forms so that their information needs can be better understood. Web forms that enable users to provide more detailed information help reference staff better identify information needs. Online forms can assist users in the question-asking process since they provide an organised structure¹⁸.

Significant changes have also resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic's devastation of the world economy. Today, users of libraries can submit reference inquiries at any time, from anywhere in the world, and obtain answers. Virtual reference meets the requirement for easily accessible reference materials. Reference services have traditionally been provided by a single institution's library. Due to the widespread use of the Internet, libraries have created virtual (or "digital") reference services (VRS) in order to better serve its users, both within and outside of the building, as well as those who are not among their typical user base¹⁹.

Available literature indicates that librarians have always been early adopters of innovative tools. In order to better serve their remote patrons, reference librarians have increasingly turned to state-of-the-art hardware, software, and services. When a new piece of technology or piece of software becomes widely used and accessible, librarians jump on it immediately^{20, 21}. In the 1970s and 1980s, academic libraries set up free phone and fax lines for reference inquiries; in the 1990s, the volume of reference questions sent by email to American libraries skyrocketed. Since 1987, librarians have begun offering reference information online. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, several libraries started utilising synchronous video chat services. By 1999, well-known chat programmes like QuestionPoint, LivePerson, and Library Systems & Services (now Tutor.com) had appeared with helpful new features including co-browsing and usage tracking. The use of chat reference increased during this time, and library consortia worked together to extend the duration of virtual reference^{22,23}.

An expert asserted that the importance of providing library services in a digital setting grew during the Covid-19 epidemic. Virtual reference services have been provided by

academic libraries for many years. Live chat, email, and text reference are all common services provided by academic libraries. Virtual reference inquiries can be answered by librarians, employees, or even librarians, and the services can be accessed in a number of different ways. It may be challenging for staff and librarians to adapt to the virtual environment if they have spent their entire careers fielding questions at a physical reference desk²².

Virtual reference is reference service initiated electronically, often in real-time, where patrons employ computers or other Internet technology to communicate with reference staff, without being physically present. Communication channels used frequently in virtual reference include chat, videoconferencing, Voice over IP (VoIP), co-browsing, e-mail, and instant messaging. Reference services requested and provided over the Internet, usually via e-mail, instant messaging ("chat"), or Web-based submission forms, usually answered by librarians in the reference department of a library, sometimes by the participants in a collaborative reference system serving more than one institution. Synonymous with chat reference, e-reference, online reference, real-time reference, and virtual reference²³.

Synchronous reference service is a reference transaction that takes place at exactly the same moment between the information professional and information user. It entails instantaneous interaction between both participants. In this reference transaction, the user and librarian work together in real time to provide a prompt response to the user's inquiry. Live reference, or realtime reference, is another name for this concept. Types of synchronous services includes webchat, instant messaging, video conferencing, social media tools among others.

Web chat is an online chatting tool which facilitates immediate, textual communication between information users and reference librarian. The librarian and the user are both accessible online and able to communicate with one another in real time. A separate window displays on the computer screen for entering and sending written communications. The chat was deemed useful for the reference service since it allowed users to engage with the reference librarian in real time despite their geographical location. It "has potential as an intermediate step between electronic mail reference and real time audio and video conferencing," they write. In order to contact the reference librarian, the user must follow the instructions provided on the library's website. Online reference checking is made easier using chat reference²⁴.

After the user's reference has been processed, they can be sent a copy of the entire conversation. A second copy of the text can be kept in an archive database for statistical data pertaining to the reference procedure (e.g., conversation length, discussion subjects, user locations, etc.). However, there are a few drawbacks to using chat references. Some inquiries or users may find the process of typing messages to be cumbersome or unnatural. The chat-referenced transaction likewise lacks any examples of non-verbal communication. Before web chat there was instant messaging in which librarians used simple tools such as SMS to communicate with users²⁵.

These days, a lot of people use a chat service called instant messaging (IM). IM has been widely adopted by libraries for VRS purposes. Due to its widespread adoption, IM is a valuable resource for DRS. Through the use of specialised text-based software, IM facilitates online communication between the user and the librarian. In order to complete the IM transaction, you'll need to use a split web screen. Reference librarians utilise one

screen to search the web or other electronic sources for requested information while users submit inquiries and view the librarian's response on the other. Instant messaging (IM) allows for the transfer of files, and some IM programs even include VoIP calling options.

Using specialised digital reference software like QuestionPoint or VRLplus, you may combine IM/chat with advanced functionality like co-browsing and page pushing. The librarian can "push" a static web page (essentially a screen capture of the user's browser) from the library's browser to the user's browser²⁶. When a librarian and a user cobrowse, they both take part in the search at the same time. Librarians and patrons alike can manage their access to the internet and electronic resources. Librarian actions in the co-browse window are visible to the user, and user actions are also visible to the librarian. The co-browsing capability of an IM/chat reference software has excellent potential as a tool for educating librarians about the importance of information literacy.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) allows for the transmission of both voice calls and data using the same Internet protocol. For users to be able to hear and be heard by one another, microphones and speakers must be set up on both computers. It is widely used these days as a means of communication.

Webcam or video conferencing is an improvement over the VoIP. It has the advantage of incorporating a visual component which helps in avoiding the misunderstandings common to voice only applications. Referencing transactions can be conducted verbally or in writing via videoconferencing. A video chat window opens on the screen, allowing the librarian and the user to interact in real time. Additionally, it enables the rerouting of web or electronic content to another window. Distance learning, study, and research are all aided by videoconferencing. Aside the asynchronous and synchronous means is the

collaborative mode of virtual referencing services. Collaborative Digital Reference Service (CDRS)' which involves collaboration between two or more libraries to offer DRS using any of the above asynchronous and synchronous tools.

When combined with in-person assistance, the virtual reference service is invaluable. Both aim to provide answers to people's questions and address their concerns, but they use different approaches to accomplish these ends. Unlike the traditional reference system, which placed a premium on the librarian's upbeat demeanour and eagerness to help the patron with any question, the virtual service, in which the patron is not physically present but instead communicates with librarians through email or a chat service, will place less weight on these factors.

Since e-mail and web-based forms are the two most convenient options for a virtual reference service, they are being adopted by all academic libraries. Users prefer e-mail since they can do it from the convenience of their own homes, rather than needing to travel to the library to submit their questions²⁷. Users can always utilise e-mail to reach a librarian and ask any question, even if the library hasn't set up a formal virtual reference desk. Similarly, web-based forms are a more complex method than e-mail, but they give the library an opportunity to passively initiate the reference interview with the user. These forms typically have blank boxes or areas for users to fill up and are connected to the library's frequently asked questions database.

A cataclysmic factor that really left academics and libraries with no other option than to embrace virtual references is the outbreak of the coronavirus. During Covid-19 onslaught libraries who have not engaged in virtual services were forced to start. This is known as extrinsic motivation triggered by a force that necessitated the library to start using

technology as a tool that it is to render quality services even without the user coming to the library. For example, a study was conducted in Pakistan, on University libraries response to COVID-19 pandemic²⁸. From the interview, the study discussed that like other academic libraries, when it comes to Pakistan's academic libraries, university libraries are by far the most advanced. The academic semester was well underway when COVID-19 struck the country, forcing the closure of all schools²⁷.

Universities' responses varied, however, from outright shutdowns to the introduction of online alternatives. It was reported that most schools in Nigeria implemented online education, and libraries were called upon to support faculty and librarians. While some universities did cancel classes, others kept their libraries open so that librarians and faculty could still access the resources they needed to complete their work. Since prior to the epidemic only a small number of colleges offered online education, and most teaching was done in person, the library's position in online education was novel.

The low use of digital reference platforms during a critical period such as the pandemic indicates the need for rethinking the library and information services with the use of such instruments that may have a wider audience and more significant influence. Additionally, it underlines the necessity of high-speed internet connectivity in rural areas in addition to big cities and towns. Therefore, poor internet access and speed, especially in small towns and villages, may be a significant barrier to expanded usage of university or library portals and online library services.

On the need to engage in virtual or digital reference services, a scholar found that academic libraries play an important role in supporting e-learning in higher education institutions by providing electronic information resources, which are key in research,

learning and teaching. Moreso, libraries provide a one-stop shop for accessing electronic resources through the digital library. Furthermore, patrons have benefitted by accessing and using digital library services during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Scholars also opined that libraries should ensure that they are prepared to always offer their services despite the closure of physical building²⁹. The pandemic played a great role in library acceptance of virtual services especially in the developing countries of the world.

2.1.2 Leadership Styles

Leadership as a concept has been viewed from various angles such as philosophical, practical, functional, idealistic and behavioural. This means that there would be various definitions of leadership arising from the particular viewpoint of the author³⁰. Indeed, the concept of leadership is among the most studied subjects in human management literature. Leadership is also considered by social scientists as one of the most critical issues that determines the growth and development of societies³¹. This interest of researchers on leadership is borne out of the perceived roles and impact of leaders in human societies, especially in organisational settings. As a result, the focus of research on leadership is often centered on determining leadership effectiveness and factors that can influence it; the characteristics of effective leaders, theories of leadership, and methods for cultivating leaders. The point of take-off in leadership study is usually the definition of leadership.

Leadership is defined as the practice of persuading others to work tirelessly toward the achievement of organizational goals. Leadership is also seen as the process of influencing others' commitment to fulfill their full potential in pursuit of a value-added, shared vision with passion and integrity³². There have been widespread assumption and suggestions that the defining characteristic of leadership is winning the hearts of the subordinates.

The nature of this influence is such that team members willingly participate in order to achieve the leader's goals for each individual as well as the group. There are however, ample evidence that effective leaders often have to use unpopular, coercive and other methods to get subordinates to contribute their quotas to the achievement of common objectives.

The concept of leadership in literature is often subjective, giving the indication that leadership is all about creating harmony among the workforce so that organisational objectives can be consistently achieved. This is why leadership is defined by some scholars as a critical managerial skill that comprises the ability to persuade a group of individuals to collaborate toward a common goal. Leadership is the process by which an individual exerts influence over another's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours. The leaders establish the firm's direction; they assist in seeing what lies ahead; they envisage what they might do and how they might accomplish it; and they motivate and inspire their employees". Thus, leadership, defined as the capacity to guide followers toward common goals, to influence others through inspiration and charisma or through the use of power, is a byword for dedication, hard work, and excellence³³.

Further, a leader is described as someone who promotes, guides, and motivates others to complete certain tasks, as well as inspires his subordinates to execute efficiently in order to achieve stated organizational objectives. Scholars argued that leadership is concerned with the growth and expectations of followers. Effective leaders are seen as those who prioritize the development of their employees' value systems, motivation levels, and morality in addition to their skill development³⁴. It simply helps followers achieve their goals while working in an organizational setting; it encourages followers to be

communicative and adaptive to new and improved approaches and environmental changes³⁵. However, there are indications that not all leaders are charismatic. Leadership, in some instances, is not benevolent and it does not lessen the effectiveness of the leader in any form. Indeed, considerate leaders have not been shown to be the only effective leaders³⁶.

What is clear from the definitions of leadership is the fact that the main role of leaders is to ensure that subordinates work to achieve the objective of the organisation. Various studies have shown that the kind of leadership in an organisation has a direct causal relationship with organizational success^{37,38}. Leaders have the ability to shape values, culture, change tolerance, and determine employee motivation in an organisation. They have an impact on institutional strategies, their execution, and their effectiveness. In addition, leadership is not restricted to the overall head of an organisation. There are employees at various level of an organization who play leadership roles daily in their jobs. What is common to leaders, wherever they may be found is that ability to use their influence or power over others to optimize the organization's resources, particularly its most vital and costly ones³⁹.

Therefore, leadership research has mostly focused on leader effectiveness and the elements that contribute to optimal performance. However, how each leader achieves this all-important task of guiding subordinates to work together to achieve a common goal differs. Leaders are human, and there are different in temperament, orientation, worldview and general background. In addition, employees are also different in character, attitude and ability. So, there are different strategies that can be applied to achieve the desired result. These different strategies are collectively known as leadership style.

Leadership style can be defined as a synthesis of three key ingredients; personal characteristics, leadership philosophy, and a set of management abilities that are characteristic of each style. The emphasis on performance and people is defined by leadership style, whereas the function of the leader and his or her ideas about people are defined by leadership philosophy⁴⁰. Another author defined leadership style as a set of consistent behavioural patterns exhibited by a leader. He proposed two dimensions for leaders' behaviours: structure initiation, which includes task-oriented leaders, and consideration, which includes relational-oriented leaders. Task oriented relates to how a leader deal with tasks to be achieved. It focuses on whether the leader pile tasks on subordinates, makes it easier or find ways of ensuring that subordinates are not overburden with task. Relation orientation refers to how the leader relates with the employee in official and unofficial capacities. The extent to which a leader exhibit each of these dimensions have been used to categorized various leadership style to include autocratic, democratic and liberal leadership styles⁴¹.

The democratic leadership style is also known as participative leadership style. This is because it involves incorporating all members of an organisation in making decisions. In democratic leadership, the decision-making process is decentralized and shared by subordinates. several studies have demonstrated how effective and efficient this management style is at inspiring employees to use their maximum abilities while also increasing output in such a way that they put forth their greatest effort and work in order to achieve the goals of the organisation.

With democratic leadership, individuals are encouraged to share ideas, information, and knowledge under democratic leadership. In addition, all members of the organisation are

reassured of their safety and well-being. It is not just the workers who benefit when a democratic leader takes charge; the entire organisation feels the impact. In the case of academic libraries, the impact is felt by the users and the entire university community, particularly when the leadership results in the development of a balanced and responsive collection capable of adding quality to the teaching, learning and research activities in tertiary institutions⁴².

Leadership also involves listening to the thoughts and ideas of others. Additionally, the employees are encouraged to come up with new ideas based on the concept of rewards, and the leader exhibits empathy to encourage them to work harder and give more information. It is one of the advantages of employees being motivated to share ideas with their boss to move the organisation forward. As a result, the leader has access to the finest ideas and may choose the best of those ideas to come up with the best solution to any problem. This ensures the continue flow innovation and progress in the organisation. Democratic leadership style is also reported to create an environment in which subordinates are highly motivated by their leader to focus on the results and goals of their jobs. Individuals work together to accomplish such aims. However, no good thing can exist without a bad side⁴³.

While democratic leadership sounds good in theory, it often is bogged down in its own slow process, and workable results usually require an enormous amount of effort. The potential for poor decision-making and weak execution is, however, significant here. The biggest problem with democratic leadership is its underlying assumption that everyone has an equal stake in an outcome as well as shared levels of expertise with regard to decisions. That is rarely the case.

In some cases, leaders have to deal with inexperienced or under-educated staff. When this is the case, the Democratic leadership style could be ineffective in involving them in decision-making and taking their views into consideration. Furthermore, democratic leadership may not be effective in making relationships in situations where positions are not clearly defined or where time is a key priority. When people are better educated and have more experience sharing their information, democratic leadership works better. In order to ensure that all of his employees have a voice, the leader must schedule a time that allows them to participate, grow, and set goals. At its best, democratic leadership is highly needed in ensuring collection development practices⁴⁴.

Putting in place the most relevant information resources would not only require the input of key librarians but also the students and faculties. Library managers cannot afford to play the role of omniscient by assuming that they know all the needs of their users simply through basic profiling. Some library patrons may have other interests apart from what their roles in the institution require. However, it is also essential to understand the limit of popular participation. The library definitely cannot incorporate every shade of opinion or else it will lose focus and become unrecognizable. To forestall this, each organisation has stated objectives and this guides their libraries. Occasionally, the library manager may have to demonstrate autocratic tendencies to ensure that they library does not derail from its objectives⁴⁵.

It is also known as authoritarian leadership, and it is based on managing individuals so that they do not participate in decision-making and only allowing specific people to have power in decision-making⁴⁶. Autocratic leaders are the quintessential "do as I say" leaders. In some cases, these leaders lack experience and are propelled into leadership roles as a

result of a new post or assignment that requires people management. Autocratic leaders retain decision-making authority⁴⁷. However, this is not always the case as studies have shown that some accomplished professional who are quite versed in their areas of expertise including university librarians also display autocratic tendencies³⁵. They have the potential to irrevocably harm any business or organisation by compelling their subordinates to execute plans and services in a very narrow manner, based on their personal, subjective definition of success. Furthermore, this leader uses the authority he has been given to force his subordinates to perform their duties in accordance with his wishes, regardless of what they think⁴⁸.

When it comes to making decisions and governing, autocratic leaders rely heavily on their own preferences. In addition, leaders who adopt this leader leadership style often prevent any form of collaboration among their subordinates. In the same vein, they take no counsel from the subordinates. There is no unifying vision or motivation except from force. In order to get employee to complete assigned tasks or continue to obey the leader, they frequently rely on threats and penalties⁴⁸. This type of leadership focuses more on getting the task done than on the humane side of leading Autocratic leadership often lead to reduction in employee commitment, creativity, and innovation. Indeed, the majority of followers of authoritarian leaders might be characterized as biding their time, anticipating the inevitable breakdown of this leadership and the subsequent removal of the leader.

Among the major characteristics that have been associated with autocratic leadership include the inability of leaders to put their faith in their subordinates. In the library context this can prompt some university librarians to also act as acquisition librarians. It may be because they do not trust their subordinate with the acquisition fund or they doubt

the professional competence or business acumen of their subordinates. Whatever the motivation, combining the role of library management with acquisition duties would certainly affect the quality of outcome in one or both roles. In addition, the librarians who have been sidelined could also sabotage the leader by not being through enough in carrying out other tasks in the collection management process such as processing, organisation and dissemination of information³⁵.

Another key feature of the autocratic leader is centralized decision-making. Autocratic managers habitually not only set policy guidelines but also assign work to library personnel without consulting them. An autocratic leader would come up with a solution for the team members singlehandedly when presented with the necessity to make a decision. By making judgments based on their own perceptions of what the group needs or wants at any given time, an autocratic leader is more likely to solve problems without consulting the group as a whole. For each day, the group's leaders would decide when work should start and how much ground must be covered, irrespective of any intervening situation.

Authoritarian leadership is also characterized by the breakup of humanitarian ties among employees. Due to the atmosphere of fear and coercion created by the leader, it is often difficult for subordinates to collaborate or help each other because any form of collaboration may be deemed a gang-up by the leader. As a result, each employee works on his/her own⁴⁵ this sort of atmosphere may not be the most appropriate in organisations such as academic libraries that depend so much on knowledge sharing and collaborative work. It is also not likely to enhance the effectiveness of the collection development which depends on information sharing and collaboration.

Some situations, even in the library environment, however may call for an autocratic leadership style. Leaders who have to make a lot of decisions without consulting their employees, or who have to complete large projects with many people working on them quickly, would emphasize speed and the position of each employee so that they could complete the work as quickly and effectively as possible, for example. Another example shows that this type of leadership is effective as the deadline approaches and there is a large quantity of work still to be completed. Notwithstanding, authoritarian style should be employed only on exceptional situations. When there is minimal time for collaborative decision making or when the leader is the most knowledgeable member of the group, authoritarian leadership is most effective. An autocratic leader assigns tasks and timetables to employees and instills a strong focus on a goal. The leadership style could be especially useful for a team with inexperienced and/or unskilled individuals. This is not often the case in academic libraries⁴⁹.

The adoption of autocratic leadership style by librarians therefore is likely to have some drawbacks, including the perception that the leader is a dictator. In addition, this could rise to resentment and hostility between groups and individuals and between the boss and his subordinates. As a result, the employees may assume that the boss sees them in a negative light and does not include them in decision-making, which may result in incomplete jobs and assignments. It may also affect the self-confidence of the subordinates who may come to believe that they are unqualified and that their views are incorrect. From what has been discussed concerning autocratic leadership, it can be seen that its impact on effective collection development would depend on a number of factors which may be unique to individual libraries or situations.

This leadership is popular known as Laissez-faire leadership style. It is a leadership styles in which leaders all their staff wide latitude to take decision on their own without consulting their leader. Laissez-faire is a French expression that translates as "leave it." When the term liberal is used in reference to leadership, it refers to leaders who allow people to work at their own pace and without elaborate direction from leaders. Liberal leaders abstain from making decisions and abdicate all duties⁵⁰. They allow their subordinates to make their own decisions about how to solve problems or accomplish organisations goals⁵¹.

The idea of this leadership style was put forward by Kurt Lewin. The style is used to relate to managers who delegated decision-making authority to employees and free them from contacting the boss before each decision is made⁵². According to this approach, the employee is given complete freedom and authority to make decisions. Experts believe that lessens the burden on the leader and improve innovation among employees. The leader defers to the employee's judgment in determining the most effective means of achieving organizational goals. Others are however of the opinion that liberal leaders are often aloof to their employees and may be unresponsive to their needs.

In situations or organisations with complex or dynamic procedures such as academic libraries or where the employee lacks the capacity to determine the most effective method for achieving the desired objective, Laissez-faire leadership may become problematic because no one is taking responsibility. Laissez-faire leaders are therefore perceived as passive and may be an excuse for the leader to high his/her inadequacies which have led some to submit that it is not suitable for organisations with complex procedures⁵³. Other shortcomings attributed to Laissez-faire leaders is that they usually postpone making

decisions, allow minor issues in the workplace to degenerate into bigger problems, and fail to demonstrate proper leadership behaviors⁵⁴.

Adopting Laissez-faire philosophy mean staff must overcome obstacles on their own, which frequently results in the problem remaining unresolved. The Laissez-faire leader is disengaged from the employee and demonstrates unsupportive, hands-off actions. The result is that employees develop insecurity and uncertainty about the next measures necessary to remedy the issue, which produces stress. The liberal leadership style avoids decision-making and provides no assistance for problem-solving. In addition, Laissez-faire leaders are accused of not providing direction to their workforce. Leaders that are laissez-faire are hands-off and outsource duties to employees without providing direction. According to the study, if an employee reports to a supervisor who is laissez-faire, the employee's performance may reflect a lack of productivity, cohesion, and contentment⁵⁵.

Additionally, other scholars argued that liberal leaders are defined by their non-involvement and absence when necessary. However, this often means that the leader is likely to disregard employees' accomplishments and challenges. This can have a detrimental effect on employee performance, leader effectiveness, and organizational performance⁵⁶. Other studies indicate that liberal leaders are hesitant to take required precautions and avoid potentially dangerous circumstances. Leaders who practice liberalism are often accused of doing little or nothing in term of employee motivation. As a result, liberal bosses may have inefficient, unproductive, and preside over a dissatisfied workforce.

Laissez-faire leader's lack of leadership may result in low performance and job satisfaction for the employee. Some employees may be unsure of their function and lack the necessary knowledge to accomplish responsibilities. As a result, employees' performance and job satisfaction may suffer. The liberal leader provides little advice to the employee, which may result in employee frustration, decreased performance, and decreased job satisfaction.

In some quarter, Laissez-faire leadership is frequently referred to as "non-leadership." This type of leadership is the most passive and ineffectual, as employees lack knowledge and feedback necessary to perform adequately in their professions. When an employee refuses to take direction from a laissez-faire leader, the employee must make judgments using their own judgment⁵⁷. This theme of absence and non-existence of leadership was also found in a related study. The scholar is of the view that the liberal leader abdicates decision-making and abdicates all responsibility. As a result, the leader lets people to carry out their responsibilities without regard for the outcome. According to the researchers, there is ample evidence indicated that liberal leadership had a detrimental effect on organizational outcomes⁵⁸.

The employee lacks the necessary information or experience to make sound business judgments. Laissez-faire leaders do not provide the necessary guidance to improve employee work satisfaction, leader satisfaction, and leader effectiveness. However, the leadership has its own advantages and areas where it is applicable. When a boss is hands-off and lets people to make decisions, this is referred to as laissez-faire leadership. These personnel have complete discretion over how they achieve performance. This style of leadership creates an environment in which employees can thrive. However, the

employee must specifically request instruction and support from the boss in order to meet performance targets. Otherwise, the management is completely uninvolved. The liberal leadership style might be beneficial if the leader closely watches the employee's performance and provides frequent feedback to the individual. When this is the case, liberal leadership style empowers employees to make decisions independently of the leader, which can result in higher job satisfaction and productivity⁴⁶.

To buttress this, other scholars also asserted that a liberal leadership style is favourably associated with staff commitment. Due to the leader's allowance for employees to work freely, a liberal leader can create confidence and motivate employees to accomplish a goal or target. According to the experts, an individual who is self-motivated, highly talented, experienced, and educated can thrive and succeed in a laissez-faire environment⁵⁹.

What can be deduced from the various viewpoints on liberal leaderships style is that it has both advantages and disadvantages. The implication of this is that, when applied appropriately, the leadership style can yield good results. In collection development for instance, it is possible for the library management to allow the acquisition librarian(s) be guided by the collection development policy when selecting and acquiring books. However, the library manager must demand reports of how the allocated fund is being spent and ensure that the collection is balanced. Also, there may be instances where the collection is criticized by some stakeholders. The library manager as a leader has to step in and respond appropriately. It is therefore suggested that the level of liberal leadership traits exhibited by library managers may have an effect on the collection development process.

2.1.3 Overview of Digital Competence

Since digital technology is ingrained in every aspect of life, people must acquire the digital competencies and abilities necessary to successfully engage in the range of roles that they may play (e.g. citizens, learners, employees etc.). Early preparation can lay the groundwork for involvement in the digital world. Therefore, it is expected of education systems to provide youth with the necessary digital skills to carry out their duties⁶⁰. For professional and other already in the world of work, continuous professional development in the area of digital resources is essential. Nonetheless, the swift progression of digital technology necessitates frequent modifications to curricula, educational resources, and continuous professional development. As a result, it is important to constantly evaluate what skills are necessary in order for one to be regarded as digitally competent and to ensure that people are acquiring the desired skills as well as guarantee the timeliness of digital skills teaching techniques and materials is a difficulty⁶¹.

However, while concepts such as computer literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy have been easily defined and understood, digital competency is a concept that has remain fluid and hard to pin down with a definition that encompasses all its components. This is because it has not only integrated individual skills such as computer literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy, it has redefined and them and then added more metrics⁶². Scholars have identified other words that are closely linked to or used interchangeably with digital literacy. They also pointed out that there is lack of a widely agreed-upon definition of digital competence, so they offered a broad definition that is still being worked out that incorporates a lot of the things⁶³.

Some researchers consider the concept of digital concept as nebulous as they found it elusive to properly define. In line with this they have suggested that existing definition of digital literacy should be re-examined in light of modern exigencies. However, this has created its won conundrum. Neither digital literacy, information literacy or media skills has a definition on which all authors agree. For example, a study revealed that there are nearly two hundred different definitions of digital literacy, more than hundred definitions of information literacy, seventy-five definitions of media literacy and seventy different definitions of digital competence. However, all these attempts to define digital competence have been instructive as they have guided experts in developing a framework to define and measure the concept of digital competence⁶⁴.

The definition of digital literacy that is most frequently used is one by a scholar who uses it as a catch-all phrase for a variety of literacies combined, such as media literacy (socio-emotional component), computer literacy (technical component), and information literacy (cognitive component)⁶⁵. Digital literacy is also seen as a collection of different literacies, such as information literacy, photo-visual literacy, socio-emotional literacy, and branching literacy⁶⁶. Furthermore, another scholar defined digital literacy as the capacity to understand and use knowledge from diverse digital sources in a variety of circumstances⁶⁷. Although that definition is vague and wide, a lot of studies also use other definition of digital literacy, which essentially builds on this definition⁶⁸.

According to another expert, digital literacy is a set of competences underpinned by basic skills, complemented by background knowledge and rounded off by attitudes⁶⁹. The central competences of digital literacy relate to reading and understanding digital and non-digital formats, assembling, communicating and creating digital information as well

as finding and critically evaluating information from digital sources. Other relatively common definitions include either the multi-literacy definition according to which digital literacy 'is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship'⁷⁰.

Another scholar based their own definition of digital literacy on a previous conceptualization of digital literacy as awareness, attitude and ability of individuals to appropriately use digital tools and facilities to identify, access, manage, integrate, evaluate, analyze and synthesize digital resources, construct new knowledge, create media expressions, and communicate with others, in the context of specific life situations, in order to enable constructive social action; and to reflect upon this process⁷¹.

The most common definition of information literacy follows the publications of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). Accordingly, information literacy 'is the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning'⁷². Other frequent definitions are based directly on the ALA, which defines information literacy as a set of skills that enable people to recognise when there is a need for information and to locate, evaluate and use that information as needed.

Thus, the key components of information literacy are to recognise the need for information, identify what information would address a particular problem, find the

information needed, evaluate the information found, organise the information and use it effectively in addressing the specified problem⁷³. While earlier definitions of information literacy by the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals comprised similar aspects, the organisation now defines digital competence as ‘the ability to think critically and make balanced judgements about any information we find and use’, enabling us to develop and express informed opinions and engage fully with society⁷⁴.

Common definitions of media literacy are much aligned with each other. Media literacy is often defined as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and produce/create information/messages for specific outcomes in various forms across a variety of contexts⁷⁵. The U.S. National Association for Media Literacy Education adds to this definition the ability to act using all forms of communication⁷⁶. Another scholar adopted the key elements to further clarify that individuals require the ability to ‘critically evaluate media⁷⁷.

Furthermore scholars have also used the terms ‘media literacy’, ‘digital literacy’ and ‘digital and media literacy’, referring to a range of skills and competences required to use digital tools and technologies (access); critically evaluate digital information (analyse); creatively compose digital products (create); engage in reflection and ethical thinking (reflect); as well as actively participate through digital technologies and collaborate with others⁷⁸.

Finally, a range of studies references one of the DigComp definitions of digital competence. Accordingly, digital competence refers to ‘the confident, critical and creative use of ICT to achieve goals related to work, employability, learning, leisure,

inclusion, and/or participation in society'⁷⁹. The DigComp framework specifies five competence areas: information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety and problem-solving⁸⁰.

UNESCO and UNICEF consider this conceptual framework particularly suitable⁸¹. Additionally, the World Bank identified DigComp as the 'most comprehensive and widely used framework for general digital skills', noting that the DLGF/DigComp framework is also suitable for professionals who are non-ICT specialists⁸². Finally, the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission which developed the DigComp framework has also developed related digital competence frameworks focusing on more specific audiences, such as educators, consumers or educational organizations⁸³.

An example of such a specific framework is the Digital Competence Framework for Educators. DigCompEdu specifies six areas in which specifically educators should build their skills and competences⁸⁴. These areas include professional engagement (using digital technologies for communication, collaboration and professional development), digital resources (sourcing, creating and sharing digital resources), teaching and learning (managing and orchestrating the use of digital technologies in teaching and learning), assessment (using digital technologies and strategies to enhance assessment), empowering learners (using digital technologies to enhance inclusion, personalization and learners' active engagement) and facilitating learners' digital competence (enabling learners to creatively and responsibly use digital technologies for information, communication, content creation, well-being and problem-solving).

Notably, computer and information literacy (CIL) as well as information and computer technology (ICT) literacy are rarely-used terms. When adopted, they often build on definitions from large-scale empirical studies, such as the International Computer and Information Literacy Study (ICILS). In this framework, CIL is a multidimensional construct capturing both computer literacy and information literacy, defined as the ability to access, investigate, create and communicate information, solve problems and work collaboratively to participate effectively at home, at school, in the workplace and society⁸⁵. The main difference between both concepts is the focus on personal computers in the definition of CIL, whereas ICT literacy encompasses the broader context of all digital tools⁸⁵.

Following the exploration of literature, it is possible to categorise the aspects described in the most common concepts into three domains: cognitive, socio-emotional and technical involvement. Frameworks labelled by the terms ‘digital literacy’, ‘digital competence’ or ‘CIL/ICT literacy’ tend to conceptualise skills and competences required in the digital age along all three domains. These perspectives also emphasise participation in all aspects and areas of life and society (self-empowerment and societal participation) as the outcome of digitally competent/literate individuals⁸⁶. On the other hand, frameworks on ‘media literacy’ overwhelmingly stress the cognitive domain, such as critical thinking, analysis and reflection, and pay much less attention to other aspects. These frameworks also view self-empowerment developed by dealing with messages in diverse forms as the main outcome, with little or no emphasis on societal participation. Similarly, ‘information literacy’ frameworks highlight cognitive involvement. Moreover, these conceptualizations appear to disregard socio-emotional involvement in their

conceptualizations, even though the desired objective is to enable individuals to develop and voice their informed views and engage with their communities⁸⁷.

This is shown by the development of the Digital Competence Framework (DigComp) by the European Union and its subsequent enhance by UNESCO to guide its evaluation of digital competence across the world ⁷⁹. The framework, nicknamed DigComp outlines the knowledge, skills and attitudes that constitute digital competence. The framework outlines five comprehensive constructs. These constructs include information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, digital safety, and problem solving⁸⁸. Each of the five constructs have applicable metrics to measure the exact skills expected of a digital literate person. In addition, each of the metrics is measured in three dimensions representing the level of competence with dimension be the lowest.

For instance, information and data literacy dimension include the ability to properly state information needs, locate and retrieve online information resources in various formats, evaluate information sources and contents. It also includes the ability to store, manage, and organise online information resources⁸⁹. The second construct is communication and collaboration. It involves using digital technologies for interaction, communication, and cooperation while taking into account generational and cultural differences participation in society through both public and private digital services, as well as active citizenship to control one's online reputation, identity, and presence

The third construct is digital content creation. The skills here include the ability to produce and edit digital contents; to enhance and incorporate data and content into a body

of already existing knowledge while being aware of relevant copyright and licensing laws and the ability to use appropriate keywords and commands when using a computer system. Safety is the fourth construct. It covers the ability of information users to protect their privacy while using digital devices and interacting on networked systems; the ability to create safe passwords and other data/information protection protocols as well as the presence of mind to avoid cyber bullying but to use digital tools in ways that might promote inclusion and social well-being⁸⁹.

The last construct is problem solving. It involves the ability to trouble shoot computer and information systems. Detecting problems and proffering useful resolution, are all aspects. Problem solving also include the ability to keep up with development in the digital world in order to anticipate and be ready to change. Most importantly, problem solving involves being able to use digital systems to create innovative solutions to personal and societal challenges. It involves the creation of services and products that can meet particular needs⁸⁹. All these are in the first dimension with more advanced skills included in the second dimensions. The third dimension also incorporate attitude which is considered in the framework as an important element in sustained, lifelong learning.

Although it is believed by European scholars that the DigComp framework can applied to everyone around the world due to its comprehensiveness, the UNICEF was of the opinion that the competencies listed and the expected skills are more suitable for developed Western countries with appreciable level of technological advancement. Although the EU data in 2016 showed that forty percent of European adults lack digital literacy, the opportunity available to acquire digital competencies cannot be compared what is being by people in the developing world such as Africa and Asian. In line with this, the

UNICEF built on the DigComp to create a digital literacy framework that can be applied to all citizen globally⁹⁰.

The Digital Literacy Global Framework (DLGF) took all the constructs itemized in the DigComp, i.e.; information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, digital safety, and problem solving and added a new one; devices and software operations¹⁰². It added career related competencies to measure the ability of individuals to used technologies in the contest of their chosen professions. The DLGF recognized that some people, especially in the developing lack access to basic amenities and lack even the basic skills. So, it designed a framework that will provide a sense of belonging to everyone. This is done by showing that even the most basic or marginal increase in digital literacy is to be acknowledged.

The capacity to use fundamental computer hardware and software is adequately demonstrated by the construct, devices, and software activities. In essence, the construct assesses a person's aptitude for recognising and utilizing hardware instruments and technology. to locate the digital content, data, and information required to use software applications and technologies The capacity to recognize and comprehend the data, information, and/or digital material required to use software tools and technologies is also included. In essence the construct measures basic computer skills. The importance of this can be seen in studies conducted in Nigeria and other African countries.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The following theories are adopted to provide a framework for the study; Libqual+, Kurt Lewin's Leadership Styles Framework and UNESCO's Digital Literacy Global Framework

2.2.1 Libqual+

LibQUAL™, designed by Academic and Research Libraries (ARL) in partnership with Texas A&M University Libraries, is one measurement activity that has been developed to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' opinions of library service quality. It has emerged as both a process and a tool that enables institutions to address service quality gaps between their expectations and their perceived service delivery program.

It is an internationally recognized web-delivered survey that now includes hundreds of libraries of all sizes throughout the world and pioneering the use of large-scale, web-based survey applications in a digital library environment. It is a tool that attempts to measure library users' perceptions of service quality along four dimensions such as: access to information (AI) personal control (PC), library as place (LP), and affect of service (AS) and identifies gaps between desired, perceived, and minimum expectations of service⁹¹. The survey instrument is designed to be useful to the library administration on several levels: identifying deficits in service performance at an individual library, allowing comparisons with cohort libraries from multiple perspectives, identifying best practices, and responding to pressures for accountability.

Customer satisfaction, on the other hand, is defined as the post-consumption evaluation of a product or service. It is essential to successful marketing of services because satisfied customers are more likely to show loyalty and to spread positive word-of-mouth

recommendations⁹². Consideration of satisfaction should be an important part of the evaluation of library services. Satisfaction depends, to some extent, on patron expectations of services. Satisfaction appeared to be related to student perceptions of information accessibility, staff competence and helpfulness, computer usefulness and ease of use, and skill level for using libraries⁹⁰.

LibQUAL+ is a well-known tool for libraries to “identify best practices, analyze deficits, and effectively allocate resources”. It was developed to capture a multi-dimensional service model and the corresponding user satisfaction⁹⁰. The LibQUAL+ instrument has been available to libraries for implementation since 2004. This evaluation package comprises of three dimensions, Affect of Service (AS), Information Control (IC), and Library as Place (LP), broadly evaluating the information and advice provided by librarians, content/ collection quality and accessibility, and space quality and availability.

The LibQual+ instrument is a universally accepted tool for evaluating the quality of all types of libraries. To date, there have been 3,987 institutional surveys, which have been implemented across 3,213 institutions in over 32 countries, 21 language translations, and over 3.5 million respondents⁹³.

The validity and reliability of the LibQUAL+ instrument has been repeatedly ascertained⁹⁴. It is currently adopted by more than three thousand institutions globally to identify best practices, analyze deficits, and effectively allocate library resources⁹⁵. With a gap analysis based on survey data for each of the three service dimensions and their components, libraries can invest resources to reduce any service adequacy gap (difference between perceived service level and the minimum acceptance level) or extend service superiority (difference between perceived and desired service levels) pinpointedly.

While LibQUAL+ provides rich and differentiated data on a range of variables, it appears to leave two major questions unanswered. First, research on LibQUAL+ has not provided empirical evidence that user satisfaction is related to academic performance (Perceived Academic Success) or behavior (Intention to Use Library More in future). Both of these success measures are becoming increasingly important as libraries need to justify their resource commitments in tangible terms⁹³.

Second, LibQUAL+ does not reveal the relative importance of different service dimensions of user satisfaction. In other words, it does not tell librarians whether a unit of improvement in Information Control is more important for user satisfaction than a unit of improvement in Library as Place. Only with this information being known, librarians can make the best resource allocations.

2.2.2 The Kurt Lewin's Leadership Styles Framework

The Lewin's leadership styles frameworks were developed by a group of researchers led by an American Psychologist named Kurt Lewin in 1939. The framework was developed from the pioneering work of the researchers who conducted several studies to identify various leadership styles⁹⁶. While subsequent research has discovered more specific varieties of leadership, this early study established three broad leadership styles and was highly influential. The study allocated students to one of three groups led by an authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire leader. The youngsters were then guided through an arts and crafts project while researchers watched their behaviour in response to the various leadership styles. The framework states that, when it comes to the leader-follower relationship, group performance and morale, group risk-taking, group problem-solving tactics, and interpersonal relationships depends on the leadership style adopted

which can be one or combination of democratic, autocratic and Laissez-faire (Figure 2.2)⁹⁷

Autocratic leadership exercise individual authority over all decisions with minimal group participation. Autocratic leaders make judgments primarily on their own thoughts and tendencies-imposed work procedures, made unilateral decisions, and restricted their subordinates from being involved in decision making process. This type of leadership is less innovative, resulting in conflict, dissatisfaction, resistance, and diminished subordinate interest. Authoritarians are often seen as tyrannical by their subordinates because they rarely try to justify their actions. They are often isolated from the group and they try to achieve their leadership objectives through the use of punishment, threat, demands, and restrictions⁹⁸. The responsibilities of authoritarian followers include blind obedience to the leader's commands.

Authoritarian leadership is appropriate in organisations with high employee turnover, limited time or resources for decision-making, and the need for large-scale coordination. Autocratic leadership can be advantageous for making prompt decisions without consulting a large group. Some initiatives require strong leadership for efficient completion. When they are the most knowledgeable, autocratic leaders can make swift, effective decisions. In settings such as academic libraries where employees desire to share ideas and make decisions, authoritarian leadership is not optimal. Critics assert that authoritarian leadership results in high employee dissatisfaction, attrition, and absenteeism⁹⁹.

The Democratic leadership style is a style of leadership that involves individuals in the decision-making process, but allows the leader to execute the decision after facilitating group consensus. Group discussions facilitate policy adoption and task completion. Both criticism and appreciation are permitted in this setting. The democratic leader encourages subordinates to identify problems and suggest solutions. Democratic leaders are characterized by communal decision-making, friendship, active member or follower engagement, fair praise, and restrained criticism; they facilitate communal decision-making.

Democratic leaders provide options and support to their constituents. Democratic leadership, also known as participative leadership, embodies democratic principles and practices such as inclusiveness, autonomy, and equal participation. Nevertheless, democratic leaders and elected officials should not be confused. Frequently, democratic leaders lack established official responsibilities and obligations. Delegating authority to group members and facilitating group discussions are functions of democratic leadership. The responsibilities of democratic followers include the willingness to assume personal responsibility for the group or organisation, the willingness to be held accountable for their actions and decisions, the willingness to maintain the autonomy and freedom of their group, the willingness to assume the role of leader when necessary or appropriate, and the willingness to collaborate with their leaders.

Democratic leadership is acceptable in specific settings, such as an international association, a democratic nation, a worker-owner firm, a public institution, a close-knit community, or a cooperative social group or organisation. In groups and organisations whose roles, duties, and procedures are well-defined and unchanging, democratic

leadership is neither advantageous nor required. In an ideal situation, democratic leadership is often among the members of a group or organisation. In a democratic leadership climate or environment, there will be multiple leaders, and each member will serve as a leader at some point.

Everyone is permitted to contribute, free expression of opinions is permitted, and conversation is encouraged. Despite the fact that the democratic method emphasizes group equality and the free flow of ideas, the group's leader continues to give direction and control. It is the responsibility of the democratic leader to determine group membership and involvement in decision-making. Researchers have determined that democratic leadership is one of the most effective types since it results in higher productivity, enhanced group member contributions, and enhanced group morale and resilience. This strengthens the leadership's authority and ensures active participation, cooperation, and responsibility allocation⁹¹

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style is characterized as a leadership style in which leaders refuse to make decisions, are unavailable when needed, and opt to absolve themselves of responsibility for their lack of leadership capacity. Laissez-faire leaders do not use their authority and avoid taking action; this style of leadership is regarded passive and ineffective. This style encourages the establishment of a casual working environment, which lowers morale and decreases the group's productivity. In truth, laissez-faire leadership means the absence of any leadership style. This type of leader makes no policy or group-related decisions. Instead, members of the group are accountable for all objectives, choices, and problem-solving. The leaders of a laissez-faire organisation have little to no authority. The functions of laissez-faire leadership include entrusting members

or followers to make proper decisions and recruiting highly trained and dependable individuals into the group or organisation. Followers of laissez-faire are responsible for self-monitoring, problem-solving, and achieving effective outcomes. The most successful workplaces for laissez-faire leaders are those with highly trained and self-directed subordinates.



Figure 2.3: Kurt Lewin's Leadership Styles Framework

2.2.3 UNESCO's Digital Literacy Global Framework (2018)

The Digital Literacy Global Framework (DLGF) was developed by the United Nation's Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 2018 as a tool to measure digital literacy worldwide. It built on the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens that was developed by the European Commission (DigComp 2.0)¹⁰⁰. The Digicomp identified the constructs to include information and data literacy, communication and

collaboration, safety, and problem solving. Because the DigiComp was developed for European countries with advanced technology and better opportunities for citizens compared to the rest of the world, it was considered inadequate as a global measurement. The DLGF was therefore designed to be customization framework for defining digital literacy worldwide¹⁰¹..

The DLGF retained all of the constructs of the DigiComp but in a simplified manner. It also adds “Devices and software operations” which basically focuses on basic ICT skills and Career-related competences. Therefore, the constructs of digital literacy according to the DLGF are; Devices and software operations, information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, safety, and problem solving, and career related competencies. All of these are meant to be exhaustive and open to adaptation as required by specific situations. The developers of the DLGF are aware that Digital literacy needed to succeed varies according to region and job demands¹⁰¹.

For the current study, the focus will be on metrics such as device and software operation, information and data literacy and digital content creation. All of these are directly related to the subject of the study which is the use of online information resources. As pointed out by a scholar, reference librarians do not have to become tech experts in order to use online information resources. Having the basic and functional skills that helps them to identify, retrieve and use the needed resources are enough.

Device and software operation, according to the DLGF, has to do with the ability to operate the computer and related devices as well as the ability to use relevant software. For reference librarians, the means the ability to use computer desktops, laptops, tablets

and other mobile digital devices to access information systems and use other relevant software to retrieve information resources. It also involves being aware of where to get information to assist in the use of computer hardware and software. Dealing with information however, require information and data literacy.

Information and data literacy covers the ability to clearly communicate information requirements and be able to identify and retrieve digital data, information, and content. It also encompasses the ability to assess the relevance and content of information sources and information resources. Information and data literacy also extent to the storage, managing, and organisation of digital data, information, and material that have been identified and retrieved for use.

The third construct is digital content creation. This involves the ability to develop and refine computer-based media. It also includes proper grasp of copyright and other relevant laws guiding the use of digital information and the ability to create, synthesize and integrating information and content into an existing body of knowledge. This also applies to librarians. It means their ability to create digital content from online information resources and save them in the appropriate format. Reference librarians are expected to be able to bring information together from diverse online information resources and create a coherent, meaningful and useful resources to expand the frontier of knowledge.



Figure 2.2: The Digital Literacy Global Framework (DLGF) (Adapted from UNESCO, 2018)

2.3 Review of Empirical Studies

2.3.1 Leader Style and Reference Service Quality

Academic libraries, academic librarianship, and academic library leadership have all been in a state of continuous transition; more so since the dawn of the new millennium. There has been a shift from a purely traditional manner of librarianship to a more agile, innovative, and digital way of doing things. The ACRL top trends in academic libraries, especially in the current decade, describe a profession in a state of constant change and evolution. The trends include changes in services such as reference services, as well as reshaping and reconfiguration of library spaces. Libraries have had to continually adjust their spaces, services, and collections because of changing user preferences, vendor landscapes, and budgets¹⁰². It is especially important for librarians working in academic

institutions to stay informed about the broader landscape of students, higher education policies, publishers, researchers, and scholarships so that they can actively participate in this change instead of just responding to it (Kern et al., 2019). Overall, there has been an expansion of library services and librarianship processes as libraries have slowly grown, evolved, and learned to recognize and accommodate these changes while trying to move forward.

The library leadership in academic libraries has had to play a key role in managing this transition and keeping the libraries relevant in the current scenario by fostering creativity and vision. A library leader is a engage with their modern users and try to meet their needs. The word 'leadership' is encapsulated by an individual who guides, influences, encourages, empowers, handles change, and sets examples for achieving shared goals¹⁰². It has been observed that the concept of 'headship' has traditionally dominated the concept of leadership in librarianship^{103,104}.

It was reported that, while the academic library heads supported transformational leadership as compared to transactional and laissez-faire styles, they were not fully committed to change due to the possibility of failure¹⁰⁵. This means that, while library managers often proclaim transformational ideologies, their acts often project transactional and laissez-faire styles of leadership. This assertion is based on critical analysis of what it takes to be a transactional or transformational leader. Experts have compared transformational leadership with other forms of leadership such as transactional leadership. There are distinct differences in the two approach to leadership.

A transactional leader sets the goals along with the guidelines and evaluates employees based on their success or failure in achieving those goals. Transactional leadership is synonymous with give-and-take or incentives to encourage employees to achieve set objective. This leadership style outline what is to be done and success depends on to what extent has the employee complied with the set in and there is no support for innovation or change. On the other hand, a transformational leader embraces innovation, motivates staff, develops strategic thinking, and creates a shared vision¹⁰⁶.

A scholar conducted a study investigating the perception of transformative leadership in academic libraries in the United States of America. A total of 465 ALA listserv academic librarians took part in the survey and shared that they considered their representatives to be more transformative than transactional. However, they added that their leaders needed to expand the transformative components to make their libraries more accessible and open to change. They needed to utilize creative strategies to overcome reduced budgets and tackle existing and possible future problems in the organization¹⁰⁶.

According to a related study, library managers were found to be risk-averse and lacked creativity and imagination¹⁰⁷. Indeed, within the evolving organizational landscape, library directors were eternally concerned with their roles and responsibilities and perceived limited support from their institutions as well as senior library leadership. According to Woolf, they felt 'increasingly less valued by, involved with, and aligned strategically with their supervisors and other senior academic leadership'¹⁰⁸. Such sentiments led to feelings of inferiority within the organizational hierarchy and resulted in a lack of commitment to provide effective services¹⁰⁸.

Researchers also investigated the job main requirements for leadership positions based on the criteria gleaned from vacancy advertisements for library directors and deans between 2011 and 2015. The authors reported that conventional library skills were still being actively sought and the transactional management perspective was still being preferred when hiring library professionals¹⁰⁵. However, while this represents the desired leadership styles, researchers rarely examine the effects of a particular leadership style on organisational outcomes in libraries.

As pointed out by a researcher, there have been few studies on academic library leaders and the changing paradigm of librarianship in the new millennium. A few existing studies are from the global north. For instance, a group of researchers evaluated the library leadership programs in Australia, Canada, and the United States of America with regards to their effectiveness and performance. However, they reported that such an evaluation was not possible, as the programs did not clearly state their goals and objectives that could be used for evaluation purposes. Further, the study suggested that there was a need to revise the programs according to the emerging trends and needs of modern users¹⁰⁹.

Another scholar examined the literature on the effectiveness of academic library directors and deans and identified that both positions were intricately connected to the effectiveness of libraries¹¹⁰. This means that effective leadership is essential for the effective of the library as an organisations which also suggests that leadership styles can have an impact on reference service quality in academic libraries. However, experts in the field of librarianship are still looking for a complication of leadership approach that can yield the best result. This is exhibited in a study conducted to evaluate leadership the conceptualization of leadership in LIS curriculum in North America in the last ten

years¹¹¹. Various topics related to leadership were reviewed, including the ambiguity defining leadership, leadership in the LIS curriculum, leadership qualities, organizational change, and the new generation of librarians.

Another scholar conducted a literature review examining the understanding of librarians on leadership and leadership development. The researcher reported that there had been much focus on the headship approach, and topics such as team leadership and emergent leadership had not been adequately explored. Furthermore, the study found that leadership styles development opportunities were scarce at the junior level and were only being arranged for library directors and senior library professionals. Consequently, it was opined that many library managers were not fully prepared for leadership roles before their promotion to directorship¹¹².

There are many instances where all the necessary inputs such as institutional support, skilled employees and demand for quality information resources, yet some libraries would still fail to perform up to expectations. On the other hand, some libraries with few resources and many challenges may be performing well and satisfying their clientele. This paradox has been explained by various factors some of which include the leadership style of the head librarians. Leadership style of the library manager is one of the factors that can affect the effectiveness of collection development process. This is evident on some of the studies that have been conducted especially in the field of library and information science.

Researchers from Pakistan conducted a study to determine how the leadership styles adopted by leaders in the country's tertiary institutions affect the employees'

performances and stimulate innovative work behavior. The study focused on Head of the Departments in Pakistani tertiary institutions. It adopted a survey research method which involved the use of questionnaire being used to collect data from 160 respondents selected from various tertiary institutions in the country. The analysis of the data showed that there is a substantial positive effect of leadership styles on innovative work behaviors of employees¹⁰⁴. The study shows that when employees are encouraged to put in their best through the appropriate leadership styles, the more likely to bring useful idea and be more effective in their job. This has implication for collection development. Choosing from so many available options of information resources requires innovation and solid decision making, the library may not be able to monitor everything all the time which means that employees have to be encouraged or trained to display initiative in dealing with emergent issues in collection development. When the leader is unable to do this, it negatively affects the quality of collection.

Researchers from India also investigated the relationship between leadership and employee performance in a real estate registration organization in Tehran Province in India using three leadership styles. The study measured the impact of transformational, pragmatic and laissez-faire leadership styles against the performance of the organisation. The study found that there was a significant relationship between employee performance and transformational leadership. There was a low positive correlation between pragmatic leadership and employee performance and a negative correlation between laissez-faire and performance¹¹³.

Working from the premises that the degree of management input from the top would inevitably transfer into the library personnel's' performance, Nigerian researchers

examined the influence of leadership style on the performance of academic library employees in Delta State. the study findings indicated that, the most dominant and overwhelming leadership styles were democratic, transformational, autocratic and laissez-faire having a large extent of mean positive influence (\pm SD) of 2.80 (\pm 0.13), 2.60 (\pm 0.28), 2.0 (\pm 0.17) and 1.80 (\pm 0.28) respectively. There was also a low positive ($r = 0.248$) and significant association ($P < 0.05$, 95 percent C.I.) between leadership style and job performance. This study has shown that the leadership style adopted by library managers have a significant effect on the effectiveness of all library services including reference services¹¹⁴. However, the study did not separate which leadership style is more effective or which one is more positively correlated to effective performance.

The influence of leadership style on the job performance of librarians was also examined in another study conducted by researchers from University of Calabar, River State and University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. The study examined how different leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire impact on the performance of academic librarians in the two universities. The study is survey research which made use of a structured questionnaire to collect data from the librarians in the two academic libraries. The finding showed that, overall, leadership style has a significant influence on the job performance of librarians both libraries. Specifically, the study also revealed that democratic leadership style contributed more significantly than the other two which was attributed to its ability in sharing of decision making by both subordinates and leader in the organization¹¹⁵. The finding of this study suggests that apply the wrong leadership style can directly affect the performance of organisation, particularly in the area of collection development

The influence of leadership style on organisational performance is further confirmed in another study conducted among teachers in Kaduna state. The study examined the influence of transformational leadership style teachers and principals in seven selected unity schools in Kaduna State. The findings showed that transformational leadership style of principals had wide ranging effects on performance of teachers, enhances the school curriculum and also brings out professionalism in the teachers¹¹⁶. The findings of these study has implications as it shows that leadership style is relevant to all work environment which goes to show that the adopted leadership style in libraries can affect the effectiveness of the collection development process. Various experts have commented on the efficacy of transformational leadership who are often regarded as democratic, on organisational performance

It is believed that democratic leaders are well positioned to create sustainable change in organisations. They are able to manage the constant changes witnessed in dynamic organisations such as libraries through the characteristic demand for high standards and groundbreaking goals, visions, and leading by example. Democratic leaders gain the trust of their subordinates by inspiring them to believe in visionary ideas. This trust in the leader is a key factor in getting employees to embrace change¹¹⁷.

The influence of leadership on effectiveness of employees such as acquisition librarians was also explored in research which investigated the impact of leadership styles, work environment and job satisfaction on job performance of employees in a tertiary institution. The results of the regression analysis showed that the leadership style significantly influenced the performance of employees, hence this means that leadership style has an impact on employee performance, the work environment also have an impact on

performance, job satisfaction has an impact on performance, and leadership style, work environment and job satisfaction¹¹⁸. This means that acquisition librarians as employees and human beings are also affected by the factors which affect other workers in their immediate environment. Bad leaders who do not motivated workers and other environmental factors can lead to ineffective collection development process and consequentially, imbalanced collection which may fail to meet the needs of the target users.

This is also observed in another study which examined the effects of two leadership styles on the effectiveness public relations activities of an organisation. The researcher linked the prevailing leadership style, employee motivation, and effectiveness of employee efforts. The finding of the study is that democratic leadership style is the best in term of motivating employees to have a positive mindset towards the organisation and give their best to achieve organisational goals. Autocratic leadership on the other hand has a significant negative direct influence on employee's effectiveness. The study also found that democratic leaders are more inclined to give authority to workers and include them in decision making than autocratic leaders¹¹⁹. This can be the difference in organisations such as libraries particularly in the process of collection development where a lot of consultations has to be made before making the final decision

2.3.2 Digital Competence and Reference Service Quality

Reference service is an important library service which has caught the attention of librarians because it is at the heart of librarianship itself. Reference service represents the core philosophy of librarianship which is to help information seekers use the existing information to create new knowledge with as less stress as possible. In line with this,

scholars in the field of library and information science have taken a keen interest in the combination of skills and factors that can ensure the best quality reference service quality in all types of libraries. Most of the studies have related to the role of digital competence and its components on the quality of reference services

A researcher examined the role of librarians' information and communication technology (ICT) skills on the quality library service such as reference services. The study also investigated which ICT skill is the best predictor for better library services. After checking all assumptions, a multiple regression was run to predict the dependent variable from the independent variables. To determine the extent to which each independent variable contributed to library performance, a comparison of the variables was also conducted. A higher degree of ICT proficiency among librarians is crucial for improved library services, as the regression model demonstrates that ICT abilities have a somewhat high explanatory power for improved library services. In addition, the beta coefficient shows that, in comparison to the other three ICT abilities, information retrieval skills contributed relatively more to improved library services. The study comes to the conclusion that ICT proficiency is necessary for improved library services and librarians' professional growth¹²⁰.

Another study focusing on private universities in Nigeria also examined the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) skills of librarians for service delivery in private universities with particular reference to Southern Nigeria. The study's conclusions showed that librarians at private universities in Southern Nigeria provided their patrons with a range of library services. With the exception of programming, the librarians have mastered the fundamentals of ICT and are adept at using it for social media, Microsoft

Office-related tasks, Internet searches, and information retrieval. The majority of librarians learned how to use ICT on their own. The results showed that librarians at private universities in Southern Nigeria who have acquired ICT skills are better able to provide improved library services¹²¹.

Understanding the importance of ICT skills to library services, including reference service quality, researchers have also taken interest in the kind of digital competence training available for librarians. In line with this, a researcher investigated ICT-related training and support programmes for information professionals. The researcher based the motives for this study on the essential role of ICT skills in majority of library tasks. The quantitative approach was survey, using a questionnaire to collect data from respondents in selected university libraries in Africa. Results showed that information professionals' access to ICT-related training and support courses improved current library operations procedures and user service delivery methods. Because of the current phenomenon of pedagogical learning, which results in the generation and harvesting of knowledge among information professionals, reskilling becomes significant. Information professionals can leverage their exposure, experience, knowledge, and abilities to their advantage while applying and using ICT-related gear and software, regardless of the situation. It becomes essential to embrace lifelong learning in order to navigate and maintain workplace dynamism¹²².

Researchers from Kano State, Nigeria reported that ICT facilities in tertiary institutions in Kano state contributed to effective reference and information services. The study examined the application of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities to reference service delivery in some selected tertiary institutions in Kano state. The

findings revealed that the reference sections of the libraries under study offer different types of reference and information services such as current awareness service (CAS), selective dissemination of information Service (SDI), literature searching service, photocopying service, display of new arrival service, user education service, indexing service, abstracting services, referral services, printing services, Library orientation service, group presentation service (Slide display), Video display service, Reference digital desk service, E-mailing service, and up-loading service. The findings further showed that the libraries apply different ICT facilities such as computers, internet service, CD ROM, photocopiers, printers, GSM telephones, online databases, off-line databases, projectors, smart multimedia boards, radio, web blog, e-mail and Library in a flash to provide various reference and information services to users¹²³.

The findings of the previous study is supported by a related study which also found that ICT facilities in Nigerian academic libraries have some impact on reference especially when the staff are properly trained and encouraged to engage in continuous professional development. Reference service has traditionally played a crucial role in the delivery services especially in Academic libraries. The development of ICT has brought about a Revolution in the concept of Reference Services in Nigeria. This researcher examined the impact of ict in the provision of reference services in the academic libraries in Nigeria. The study reveals that libraries provides ICT facilities such as computer, servers, UPS, internet to some an extent but some library staff do not always have interest in using them to provide the necessary reference services to the library patrons. Suggestions have been given to make the service more beneficial by providing trainings and seminars to the library staff¹²⁴.

Digital competence goes beyond ICT skills as it also includes digital literacy skills and information literacy skills. Researchers have also investigated the role of digital literacy skills on reference service quality. One of such studies examined the influence of digital literacy skills of librarians in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria on their services delivery. The correlational design was adopted in studying 112 librarians drawn from 11 academic libraries in Taraba State. A researcher-made questionnaire was used for data collection. 112 copies of the questionnaire were administered but 109 were retrieved. Data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study's conclusions demonstrate the poor level of digital literacy that the librarians possessed, as evidenced by their limited proficiency in Boolean reasoning, website appraisal, and information search and communication on the Internet. Nonetheless, a wide range of services were offered¹²⁵.

Additionally, the hypothesis produced a p-value of 0.08 and the result revealed a correlational value of 0.17. This indicates that the provision of services in academic libraries in Taraba State, Nigeria, and the digital literacy of librarians have a favourable, if weak, link.

The study suggests that library authorities should step up efforts to create awareness of digital literacy abilities, its essence, and applicability to service delivery, given the results of the study's insignificant association between librarians' digital literacy skills and service delivery. The study's findings, which indicate that there is little correlation between librarians' digital literacy abilities and the provision of services, suggest that library authorities step up their efforts to increase public awareness of digital literacy

competencies, including their definition, application, and acquisition. This will allow librarians to carry out their duties with greater proficiency and efficiency.

Researchers also investigated information literacy skills and perceptions of librarians in colleges of education in Nigeria and found that respondents rated their skills lowest on the ability to carry out a search using Boolean operators and the ability to use appropriate presentation software to present information. This is based on the non-provision of facilities needed to apply information and digital literacy skills as well as the inability of the regulatory bodies (in this case, the Librarians' Registration Council of Nigeria) to regulate curriculum on digital literacy skills¹²⁶. Not minding the impediments to possession of digital literacy skills, the study which focused on the information literacy competence of librarians in South West Nigerian university libraries reveal that such skills are practical in the areas of enhancing effect useful for raising productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency at work¹²⁷.

The author also suggested that librarians receive regular training and retraining through professional development workshops, that they have regular access to the Internet, and that the curricula of library schools be revised to include instruction in digital literacy with a focus on the practical aspects. This is similar to the submission made by a researcher who looked into the digital literacy abilities of librarians working in university libraries in Edo and Delta States, Nigeria, in the twenty-first century. She discovered that the main digital literacy abilities of librarians are electronic mail, social networking, PDA use, mobile phone use, and Internet browsing¹²⁸.

Additionally, another researcher also found that although librarians employ digital literacy skills at a low level, they gained these skills through formal education, trial and

error, IT programmes, and the help of colleagues. Based on this, the author suggested that university library management teach librarians to assist them stay current on the use of digital skills, and that hiring practices pay more attention to the competency of digital skills¹²⁹. Nonetheless, with the massive introduction of ICTs into academic libraries, possession of good digital literacy skills becomes very important. Earlier supporting the view, a scholar gave the reason to be the recent takeover of the globe by technological advancements. This has led to the strong influence of ICTs on the ways through which we communicate, interact, read or write¹³⁰.

The authors further note that human beings with capacity to adapt to different environmental conditions, have developed and acquired certain tactics or skills, to fit in, and function in this digital era. Contradictorily, very few individuals possess the required skills to using the digital collection for their varying degrees of information needs¹³¹. Librarians need much more in this digital age to embrace digital literacy skills on their work than ever before. The author further submits that digital literacy will go a long way in helping librarians to develop skills that can add to their economic status and improve their overall job performance and standard of living. Such skills can also help them to progress on their jobs and on their careers. With these skills, librarians will be more equipped for resource sharing, social networking, surfing the net, instant messaging and blogging and host of others digital oriented activities, among other things.

The information and communication technology (ICT) skills and knowledge that librarians need to practise embedded librarianship in Tanzanian academic libraries have been investigated in this study. The study collected data from 166 librarians and 6 library directors using an exploratory cross-sectional design and qualitative and quantitative

methodologies. The data obtained through interviews have been analysed thematically, whereas the data obtained through questionnaires have been analysed using Statistical Product and Service Solutions version 21. According to the report, librarians lack the ICT expertise and understanding necessary to execute embedded librarianship successfully. More precisely, the librarians lack the abilities and know-how required to use complex ICT software, tools, and internet resources¹³². The study provides a variety of sources regarding the methods by which librarians obtained the ICT knowledge and abilities they have. The study suggests that library workers should receive both short-term and long-term ICT training in order to practise embedded librarianship effectively.

Hard skills are central to achieving efficiency and productivity and are critical for demonstrating competency in many socioeconomic setups. The challenge, however, is that there is a plethora of conceptualisations of hard skills depending on the context in which they are considered. Many fields have explicitly itemised the hard skills relevant to success. However, this is not the case with the Information and Knowledge Management (IKM) field due to its multidisciplinary nature. Understanding specific hard skills needed is vital because it facilitates the development and advancement of a given profession. The lack of a clearly understood combination of hard skills means that IKM cannot grow and be at the centre of the 4IR. Consequently, IKM will not adequately contribute to socioeconomic development. This study aimed to understand specific hard skills relevant to contemporary IKM practitioners, especially in the South African and contextually similar contexts. The study used a Delphi study approach where experts shared their opinions in two rounds of data collection. Ninety-seven skills were identified; however, a consensus was reached on 23. This study serves as a stepping stone toward creating a

framework fit to guide IKM practitioners on their journey to success. The framework will also act as a guide for students through identifying the hard skills that need to be developed early while still in their schooling career. Furthermore, the framework can act as a guide for curriculum development.

2.4 Conceptual Model

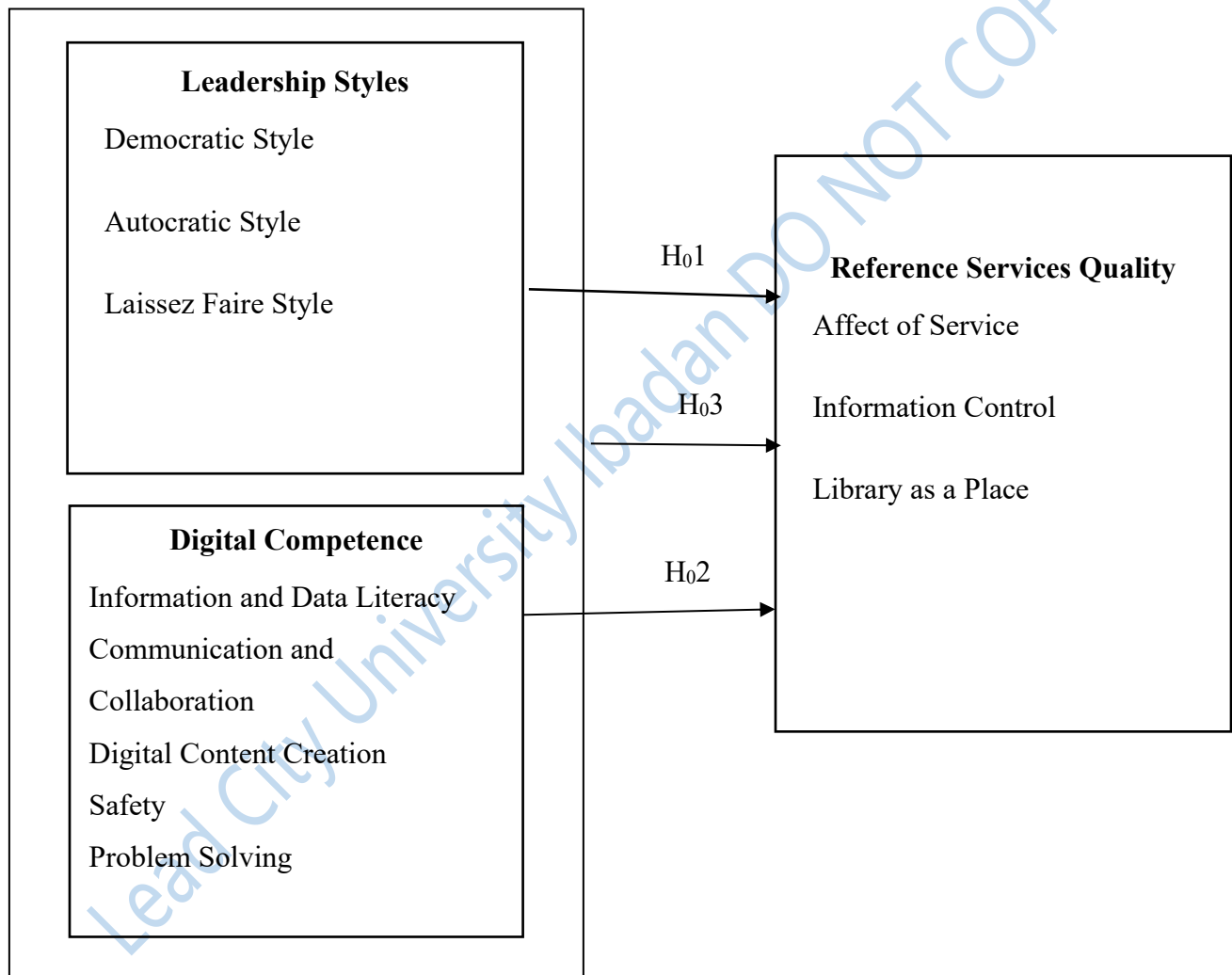


Figure 2.3: Conceptual model on Leadership style, digital and reference services quality in private university libraries in Ogun state, Nigeria.
(Source: Researcher, 2024)

The conceptual model shows the main focus of the study which is to examine the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference services quality in private universities in Ogun state, Nigeria. The independent variable is reference services quality and it is measured by metrics from the Libqual+ theory such as affect of service, information control, and library as a place⁸⁹. There are two independent variables, the first independent variable is leadership styles which is measured by metrics from the Kurt Lewin Leadership Style framework such as autocratic style, democratic style, and laissez faire⁹⁷. The second independent variable is digital competence of librarians. This variable is measured by metrics such as data literacy, communication and collaboration, digital content creation, safety, and problem solving.

The model has graphically shown the assumptions of the study by showing the proposed link between the study variables. On the right-hand side is the dependent variable against which the other variables will be measured. For instance the model shows the first hypothesis is test the influence of leadership styles on reference service quality in the academic libraries. The independent variable is also linked to the dependent variable through the hypothesis which states that there will be no significant influence of digital competence on reference service quality.

2.5 Summary of Gaps in Literature Reviewed

The literature reviewed on leadership style in academic libraries indicates a significant relationship between leadership approaches and the quality of reference services provided. Various studies highlight how transformational leadership fosters innovation, collaboration, and a user-centric approach, which enhances reference service quality. However, gaps remain in understanding the specific impact of different leadership styles,

such as transactional and laissez-faire, on reference service quality. Furthermore, most studies focus on public universities, leaving a gap in knowledge regarding private university settings, particularly in regions like Ogun State.

Research on digital competence among librarians emphasizes the importance of technological skills in delivering effective reference services. Studies show that librarians with high digital competence can efficiently utilize digital tools, databases, and online resources, improving service delivery. Despite this, there is a lack of comprehensive research addressing the extent to which digital competence influences reference services in private universities. Additionally, existing literature often overlooks the specific competencies required to navigate rapidly evolving digital landscapes, such as data literacy, cybersecurity, and advanced content creation.

While the role of institutional support in enhancing librarians' performance is acknowledged, there is insufficient exploration of how different types of support (technical, financial, educational, and moral) specifically impact reference service quality. Studies often generalize institutional support without dissecting its components and their individual effects on librarians' abilities to deliver quality reference services. Moreover, there is limited research on how institutional support mechanisms differ between private and public universities, particularly in the context of developing countries.

The interaction between leadership style and digital competence as joint predictors of reference service quality remains underexplored. While some studies suggest that effective leadership can enhance the digital competence of librarians, leading to better service outcomes, there is a need for empirical evidence demonstrating this relationship in private university settings. Additionally, research often treats leadership style and

digital competence as separate factors, neglecting their potential combined effect on reference services.

Most literature on reference service quality, leadership style, and digital competence is based on studies conducted in public universities or in different geographical regions. There is a notable gap in research focusing specifically on private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The unique challenges and opportunities present in this context are not adequately addressed in existing studies, making it difficult to draw region-specific conclusions and recommendations.

In summary, while there is considerable research on leadership styles, digital competence, and reference service quality, significant gaps remain. These include the need for studies focusing on private university settings, the specific impact of different leadership styles, the detailed influence of various components of institutional support, and the combined effect of leadership and digital competence. Addressing these gaps will provide a more comprehensive understanding of how to enhance reference service quality in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria.

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Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter introduces the research methodology the study will adopt. The chapter discusses all aspect of the research methodology such as the adopted research design, study population, sampling technique and sample size, and the research instruments to be used for data collection. In addition, the validity and reliability of the research instruments will be discussed as well as the data collection procedure and the specific method to be employed for data analysis

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive research survey design of the correlation type. A descriptive survey design aims at collecting data on something and describing it in a systematic manner¹. Similarly, the descriptive survey design of the correlation type best suits this study because the design determines the relationship between the dependent variables.

3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study consists of all library personnel of private universities in Ogun state, Nigeria. According to records from the National University Commission, private university libraries in Ogun State include; Babcock University,, Covenant University, Bells University, Crawford University, Crescent University, Chrisland University, South Western University, Mountain Top University, McPhersons University, Hallmark University, and Christopher University. The population of Librarians in the tertiary institution libraries is 123. The breakdown is shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 Population of the Study

S/N	Names of Tertiary Institutions	No. of Librarians
1	Babcock University	25
2	Covenant University	34
3	Bells University	10
4	Crawford University	13
5	Crescent University	17
6	Chrisland University	2
7	South Western University	2
8	Mountain Top University	13
9	McPhersons University	2
10	Hallmark University	3
11	Christoper University	3
Total		123

Source: Field Observation, 2024

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The sample size of this study is one hundred and twenty-three (123) library personnel. Total enumeration method was used for the study. It is a procedure that involves the collection of information from all the members of a given population. This is often used when the study population is within a manageable range as is the case in the present study. As a result, the entire study population also constituted the sample meaning that the data

collection instrument was administered on one hundred and three librarians as indicated in Table 3.1

3.4 Description of the Research Instrument

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire adapted from various studies. The questionnaire instrument is structured into four (4) sections; the sections dealt with the demographic information and the various variables of the study. The sections and their components are presented as follows:

Section A: the section has items on the demographic information of the respondents. Items in this section include: age, gender, marital status, highest educational qualification, job description of respondents and work experience.

Section B: addressed reference service quality in the academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State, Nigeria. The section is adapted from the Libqual+ theory. The 12 item scale is divided into three sections namely affect of service, information control, library as a place. The items in the section were adapted from a related study⁵. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Agree (3) Strongly Agree (4). Example of items in the section include: “ the management ensures library staff is always ready to respond to users’ questions”

Section C: focused on the Leadership styles adopted in the academic libraries in selected private universities in the Southwest, Nigeria. The section is an adapted version of the classic leadership scale⁶. The 13 item scale was modified and used to measure and identify the type of leadership style adopted in the academic libraries in academic

libraries in Ekiti state, Nigeria. All items are rated using the four-point Likert scale ranging from strongly Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Agree (3) Strongly Agree (4).

Section D: addressed digital competence of librarians in the academic libraries in private universities in the Southwest, Nigeria. The items in the section will be adapted from the assessment of a related study. All items are answered using a 4-point Likert scale format ranging from: Disagree (1) Disagree (2) Agree (3) Strongly Agree (4). Example of items in the section include: “I can identify and use computer and other digital devices (laptops, mobile phones, tablets etc)”.

3.5 Validity of the Research Instrument

In order to ensure validity, the research instrument will be submitted to the supervisor and other research professionals for content and face validity, correction, and approval. Their inputs were considered in ensuring the validity of the instrument.

3.6 Reliability of the Research Instrument

In ascertaining the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted. Twenty (20) copies of the instrument will be administered to librarians from Lead City University, Ibadan Oyo State which was not included in the study. Cronbach’s alpha values will be used to determine the reliability of the research instrument.

3.7 Method of Data Collection

First, a letter of introduction will be collected from the researcher's academic institution to facilitate the smooth exercise of data collection in the selected academic libraries. Consequently, the data for this study will be collected by the researcher with the help of four trained research assistants. The researcher and the research assistants will administer the questionnaire on the respondents at their various offices at the academic libraries of these selected private universities to administer copies of the questionnaire. The data collection exercise will last for three weeks.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, means and standard deviation as well as inferential statistics. All the analyses will be carried out with the aid of IBM Statistic Package for the Social Sciences Statistics. Research questions will be analysed using descriptive analysis while the hypotheses will be analysed using regression analysis. Hypotheses one and two will be analysed using simple linear regression while the third hypothesis will be analysed using multiple regression analysis.

Endnotes

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2. S. Chandra & T. Priyono *The influence of leadership styles, work environment and job satisfaction of employee performance-studies in the school of SMPN 10, Surabaya*. **International Education Studies**, 9(1), 2016. 131 – 140 Available: <http://www.academicjournals.org/IJLIS>.
3. R.M., Ojokuku, T.A. Odetayo, & A.S., Sajuyigbe, *Impact of leadership style on organizational performance: a case study of Nigerian banks*. **American journal of business and management**, 1(4), 2012. pp.202-207.
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Chapter Four

Results and Discussion of Findings

This chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation of the results. The study examined the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on effective reference services delivery among academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The findings were presented, interpreted, and discussed based on the research questions and hypotheses using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Furthermore, the researcher has set the following decision rule for the descriptive analysis: 0: 0.0 - 1.50 = very low; 1.51 - 2.49 – low; 2.50 -3.00 = Moderate; 3.01 – 3.59 = High, 3.60 -4.00 = Very high. Hypothesis will be test at 0.05 level of significance.

4.1 Questionnaire administrative and response rate

Table 4.1 Response Rate of the Respondents

Number of Questionnaire	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Administer	123	100
Returned	120	97.5
Usable	115	93.5

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.1 provided contains information on the response rate of respondents for a questionnaire. From the table, it can be seen that one hundred and twenty-three (123) copies of the questionnaire were administered to potential respondents. However, out of this number, one hundred and twenty (120) were returned. Among the returned questionnaires, only one hundred and fifteen (115) of them were deemed usable. This is

because some of the returned questionnaires were incomplete or improperly filled which rendered them unusable. Thus, the survey had a relatively high response rate of 93.5%

4.2 Demographic Characteristics of The Respondents

Table 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of The Respondents

Name	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	67	58
	Male	48	42
	Total	115	100
Highest Educational qualification	ND/HND	12	10
	BSC/BLIS	54	38
	MSC/MLIS	41	25
	M.Phil	4	3
	PhD	6	5
	Total	115	100
Age	25-30 years	12	10
	31-35 years	12	10
	36-40 years	38	33
	41-49 years	32	28
	50-59 years	17	15
	60 and above	5	4
	Total	115	100
Year of Work Experience	1- 5 years	23	20
	6-10years	32	28
	11-15 years	32	28
	16-20years	24	21
	21-25 years	13	11
	above 25 years	23	13
	Total	115	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Table 4.2 provides an overview of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. In terms of gender, the majority of respondents are female, comprising 58% of the sample, while males account for 42% of the total respondents). Regarding the highest educational qualification, the largest proportion of respondents, 38%, hold a BSC/BLIS degree (54 respondents). This is followed by 25% who possess an MSC/MLIS (41 respondents), while 10% of respondents have an ND/HND (12 respondents). A smaller percentage hold advanced degrees, with 3% having an M.Phil (4 respondents) and 5% possessing a PhD (6 respondents).

In terms of age, most respondents (33%) fall within the 36-40 years age group. This is closely followed by the 41-49 years category, which represents 28% of the sample. Meanwhile, 10% of respondents are aged 25-30 years, and another 10% are between 31-35 years. Those aged 50-59 years make up 15% of the sample, while 4% are 60 years and above.

With respect to years of work experience, 28% of respondents have 6-10 years and another 28% have 11-15 years of experience. Additionally, 20% have worked for 1-5 years, and 21% have 16-20 years of experience. A smaller proportion of respondents, 11%, have 21-25 years of experience, while 13% have more than 25 years of experience.

4.3 Research Questions

Research Question One: What is the Level of Reference Service Quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities?

Table 4.3: Level of Reference Service Quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities

Affect of Service	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
It is mandatory for library staff in my library to instil confidence in users	46 (40.0%)	39 (33.9%)	30 (26.1%)	- -	3.14
The library has enough staff so we can pay individual attention to staff	33 (28.7%)	48 (41.7%)	32 (27.8%)	2 (1.7%)	2.97
Library staff in my library are trained to be consistently courteous to all patrons	28 (24.3%)	64 (55.7%)	15 (13.0%)	8 (7.0%)	2.97
Only library personnel who have demonstrated competence are posted to the reference section	44 (38.3%)	53 (46.1%)	12 (10.4%)	6 (5.2%)	3.17
The library manager deliberate selects even temper employees to work at the reference section	35 (30.4%)	58 (50.4%)	16 (13.9%)	6 (5.2%)	3.06
Average Mean					3.06

Information Control	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
My library provides remote access to electronic resources	43 (37.4%)	58 (50.4%)	10 (8.7%)	4 (3.5%)	3.21
My library has a website which helps user to locate information on their own	48 (41.7%)	61 (53.0%)	6 (5.2%)	- -	3.36
My library has acquired enough print and digital resources to meet the needs of the users	53 (46.1%)	54 (47.0%)	6 (5.2%)	2 (1.7%)	3.37
My library has invested in searchable databases for effective reference services	31 (27.0%)	73 (63.5%)	11 (9.6%)	- -	3.17
My library has created information retrieval tools such as indexes, bibliography reading list etc that allow users find information easily	35 (30.4%)	70 (60.9%)	10 (8.7%)	- -	3.22
Average Mean					3.27
Library as a Place					
Library has space that inspires study and learning	77 (67.0%)	27 (23.5%)	11 (9.6%)	---	3.57
Library has quiet space for individual work	76 (66.1%)	28 (24.3%)	9 (7.8%)	2 (1.7%)	3.54
Library has comfortable and inviting location	81 (70.4%)	26 (22.6%)	8 (7.0%)	---	3.63
Library is secure and peaceful place for study, learning and research	77 (67.0%)	25 (21.7%)	11 (9.6%)	2 (1.7%)	3.53
Library has space for group learning and group study	88 (76.5%)	18 (15.7%)	9 (7.8%)	---	3.68
Average Mean					3.59
Aggregate Mean					3.31

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Decision rule: 0.0 - 1.50 = very low; 1.51 - 2.49 – low; 2.50 -3.00 = Moderate; 3.01 – 3.59 = High, 3.60 -4.00 = Very high

Table 4.3 presents the analysis of the Level of Reference Service Quality in academic libraries in private universities across Ogun State. The assessment of reference service quality is categorized under three dimensions: Affect of Service, Information Control, and Library as a Place.

Affect of Service is measured by various factors related to the behavior and attitude of library staff. The responses show that 40.0% of respondents strongly agreed that it is mandatory for library staff to instill confidence in users, while 33.9% agreed. However, 26.1% disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.14. Regarding whether the library has enough staff to pay individual attention, 28.7% strongly agreed, 41.7% agreed, 27.8% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.97. When asked if library staff are consistently courteous to patrons, 24.3% strongly agreed, 55.7% agreed, 13.0% disagreed, and 7.0% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean score of 2.97. Additionally, 38.3% strongly agreed that only competent staff are posted to the reference section, while 46.1% agreed, 10.4% disagreed, and 5.2% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.17. Finally, 30.4% strongly agreed that the library manager selects even-tempered employees for the reference section, 50.4% agreed, 13.9% disagreed, and 5.2% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 3.06. The average mean score for this dimension is 3.06.

Information Control measures the availability and accessibility of electronic resources and information tools. The data reveals that 37.4% of respondents strongly agreed that their library provides remote access to electronic resources, 50.4% agreed, 8.7% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.21. Additionally, 41.7% strongly agreed that their library has a website to help users locate information, and 53.0% agreed, with a mean score of 3.36. Regarding the acquisition of print and

digital resources, 46.1% strongly agreed, 47.0% agreed, 5.2% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.37. When asked about searchable databases, 27.0% strongly agreed, 63.5% agreed, 9.6% disagreed, and no respondents strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.17. Additionally, 30.4% strongly agreed that the library has created information retrieval tools, 60.9% agreed, and 8.7% disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.22. The average mean score for this dimension is 3.27.

Library as a Place assesses the physical environment and study spaces. The data shows that 67.0% of respondents strongly agreed that their library has space that inspires study and learning, 23.5% agreed, and 9.6% disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.57. Regarding quiet spaces for individual work, 66.1% strongly agreed, 24.3% agreed, 7.8% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.54. Furthermore, 70.4% strongly agreed that the library is a comfortable and inviting location, 22.6% agreed, and 7.0% disagreed, yielding a mean score of 3.63. In terms of security, 67.0% strongly agreed that the library is a secure and peaceful place for study, 21.7% agreed, 9.6% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.53. Lastly, 76.5% strongly agreed that the library has space for group learning, 15.7% agreed, and 7.8% disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.68. The average mean score for this dimension is 3.59.

Overall, the aggregate mean score for the level of reference service quality is 3.31, indicating a generally high level of satisfaction with the quality of reference services in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State.

Research Question Two: What is the prevalent leadership style in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities?

Table 4.4: Prevalent Leadership Style in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities

Autocratic Leadership Style	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
My leader believe that library personnel need to be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work otherwise	73 (63.5%)	21 (18.3%)	21 (18.3%)	---	3.45
My leader believe that most library personnel are unwilling to work	27 (23.5%)	60 (52.2%)	17 (14.8%)	11 (9.6%)	2.89
My leader believes library personnel feel insecure about their work and need direction	21 (18.3%)	70 (60.9%)	15 (13.0%)	9 (7.8%)	2.89
Our leader believe he/she is the best judge of the staff efficiency	72 (62.6%)	29 (25.2%)	8 (7.0%)	6 (5.2%)	3.45
Average Mean					3.17
Democratic Leadership Style	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
My leader gives order and clarify procedures	73 (63.5%)	22 (19.1%)	16 (13.9%)	4 (3.5%)	3.42
My leader shows that providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader	21 (18.3%)	58 (50.4%)	23 (20.0%)	13 (11.3%)	2.77
I can easily exchange ideas with my leader without fear of sanction.	58 (50.4%)	38 (33.0%)	11 (9.6%)	8 (7.0%)	3.26
My leader allows library personnel to be part of the	18	61 (53.0%)	25	11	2.75

decision-making process	(15.7%)	(21.7%)	(9.6%)	
Average Mean				3.05

Laissez Faire Leadership Style	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
My leader gives employees complete freedom to solve problems on their own.	65 (56.5%)	33 (28.7%)	13 (11.3%)	4 (3.5%)	3.38
In complex situations, my leader let library personnel work out problems on their own	77 (67.0%)	27 (23.5%)	9 (7.8%)	2 (1.7%)	3.56
My leader stays out of the way of employees as they do their work	16 (13.9%)	64 (55.7%)	27 (23.5%)	8 (7.0%)	2.77
My leader rarely make input into the daily running of the library	58 (50.4%)	39 (33.9%)	12 (10.4%)	4 (3.5%)	3.36
My leader believe that library personnel are basically competent and if given a task will do a good job	75 (65.2%)	24 (20.9%)	12 (10.4%)	4 (3.5%)	3.48
Average Mean					3.31
Aggregate Mean					3.17

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Decision rule: 0.0 - 1.50 = very low; 1.51 - 2.49 – low; 2.50 -3.00 = Moderate; 3.01 – 3.59 = High, 3.60 -4.00 = Very high

Table 4.4 presents the analysis of the Prevalent Leadership Style in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State. The leadership styles examined include Autocratic, Democratic, and Laissez-Faire leadership, with the following breakdown:

Autocratic Leadership Style is characterized by a leader's control and strict supervision.

The data reveals that 63.5% of respondents strongly agreed that their leader believes

library personnel need to be closely supervised to ensure they do their work, while 18.3% agreed and another 18.3% disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.45. Additionally, 23.5% strongly agreed that their leader believes most personnel are unwilling to work, 52.2% agreed, 14.8% disagreed, and 9.6% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.89. Regarding the belief that library personnel feel insecure and need direction, 18.3% strongly agreed, 60.9% agreed, 13.0% disagreed, and 7.8% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.89. Lastly, 62.6% strongly agreed that their leader believes they are the best judge of staff efficiency, 25.2% agreed, 7.0% disagreed, and 5.2% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.45. The average mean for this leadership style is 3.17.

Democratic Leadership Style focuses on participation and guidance without pressure. The responses show that 63.5% of respondents strongly agreed that their leader gives orders and clarifies procedures, 19.1% agreed, 13.9% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 3.42. In terms of showing guidance without pressure, 18.3% strongly agreed, 50.4% agreed, 20.0% disagreed, and 11.3% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.77. Furthermore, 50.4% strongly agreed that they can easily exchange ideas with their leader without fear of sanction, 33.0% agreed, 9.6% disagreed, and 7.0% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.26. Finally, 15.7% strongly agreed that their leader allows personnel to participate in decision-making, 53.0% agreed, 21.7% disagreed, and 9.6% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 2.75. The average mean for this leadership style is 3.05.

Laissez-Faire Leadership Style gives employees more freedom and autonomy. The data indicates that 56.5% strongly agreed that their leader gives employees complete freedom

to solve problems, 28.7% agreed, 11.3% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 3.38. In complex situations, 67.0% strongly agreed that their leader lets personnel work out problems independently, 23.5% agreed, 7.8% disagreed, and 1.7% strongly disagreed, leading to a mean score of 3.56. When asked if their leader stays out of the way of employees doing their work, 13.9% strongly agreed, 55.7% agreed, 23.5% disagreed, and 7.0% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.77. Additionally, 50.4% strongly agreed that their leader rarely makes input into the daily running of the library, 33.9% agreed, 10.4% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed, with a mean score of 3.36. Lastly, 65.2% strongly agreed that their leader believes library personnel are competent and will do a good job if given a task, 20.9% agreed, 10.4% disagreed, and 3.5% strongly disagreed, yielding a mean score of 3.48. The average mean for this leadership style is 3.31.

The overall aggregate mean score for leadership styles in academic libraries is 3.17, suggesting that a blend of leadership styles is prevalent, with the Laissez-Faire style being slightly more dominant in these institutions.

Research Question Three: What is Level of Digital Competence Among Academic Librarians In Ogun State Private Universities

Table 4.5: Level of Digital Competence Among Academic Librarians In Ogun State Private Universities

Device and Software skill	Very high extent	High Extent	Low Extent	Very Low Extent	Mean
I can identify and use computer and other digital devices (laptops, mobile phones, tablets etc),	67 (58.3%)	32 (27.8%)	11 (9.6%)	5 (4.3%)	3.73

I can identify and use computer software and mobile applications (MS Word, Adobe Acrobat, WPS, etc),	56 (48.7%)	35 (30.4%)	18 (15.7%)	6 (5.2%)	3.22
I can identify data, information and digital content needed to operate software tools and technologies.	29 (25.2%)	29 (25.2%)	36 (31.3%)	21 (18.3%)	2.57
Average Mean					3.17

Information and data literacy	Very high extent	High Extent	Low Extent	Very Low Extent	Mean
I can clearly state my information needs,	29 (25.2%)	17 (14.8%)	41 (35.7%)	28 (24.3%)	2.41
I can search for data, information and content in digital environments,	52 (45.2%)	38 (33.0%)	18 (15.7%)	7 (6.1%)	3.17
I can analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content.	32 (27.8%)	14 (12.2%)	32 (27.8%)	37 (32.2%)	2.35
I can store, manage and organise digital data, information and content.	73 (63.5%)	23 (20.0%)	19 (16.5%)	---	3.46
Average Mean					2.85

Digital Content Creation

I can create and edit digital contents.	44 (38.3%)	36 (31.3%)	25 (21.7%)	8 (7.0%)	3.06
I can use existing information to create new useful and meaningful information	70 (60.9%)	14 (12.2%)	23 (20.0%)	6 (5.2%)	3.34
I can give understandable instructions to retrieve information from a computer system.	36 (31.3%)	38 (33.0%)	31 (27.0%)	10 (8.7%)	2.93

I understand how copyright and licenses apply to data, information and digital content.	31 (27.0%)	31 (27.0%)	37 (32.2%)	16 (13.9%)	2.66
Average Mean					3.00

Safety					
I am aware of how to recognize phishing emails and avoid them.	30 (26.1%)	17 (14.8%)	52 (45.2%)	14 (12.2%)	2.60
I know how to configure privacy settings on social media platforms.	12 (10.4%)	58 (50.4%)	28 (24.3%)	17 (14.8%)	2.57
I use antivirus software to protect my devices from malware.	15 (13.0%)	66 (57.4%)	22 (19.1%)	12 (10.4%)	2.73
I understand the importance of backing up my data regularly	30 (26.1%)	60 (52.2%)	19 (16.5%)	6 (5.2%)	2.99
I am cautious about the information I share online	20 (17.4%)	74 (64.3%)	11 (9.7%)	--	2.99
Average Mean					2.78
Problem Solving					
I can troubleshoot basic technical issues with my devices.	22 (19.1%)	47 (40.9%)	31 (27.0%)	15 (13.0%)	2.66
I know where to find reliable online resources for solving technical problems.	24 (20.9%)	64 (55.7%)	15 (13.0%)	12 (10.4%)	2.86
I am comfortable using online forums and communities to seek help for digital issues.	23 (20.0%)	61 (53.0%)	22 (19.1%)	9 (7.8%)	2.85
I can effectively use search engines to find solutions to technical problems.	19 (16.5%)	74 (64.3%)	14 (12.2%)	8 (7.0%)	2.90

I can analyze a problem and determine if it requires professional technical support.	18 (15.7%)	62 (53.9%)	27 (23.5%)	8 (7.0%)	2.78
Average Mean					2.81
Aggregate Mean					2.92

Source: Fieldwork, 2024

Decision rule: 0.0 - 1.50 = very low; 1.51 - 2.49 = low; 2.50 - 3.00 = Moderate; 3.01 - 3.59 = High; 3.60 - 4.00 = Very high

Table 4.5 presents the analysis of the Level of Digital Competence Among Academic Librarians in Ogun State Private Universities. Digital competence is measured under metrics such as Device and Software Skill, Information and Data Literacy, Digital Content Creation, Safety, and Problem Solving. The responses under the dimension Device and Software Skill show that The first metric, "I can clearly state my information needs," reveals that 25.2% of respondents strongly agreed, while 14.8% agreed. However, a significant portion, 35.7%, disagreed with this statement, and 24.3% strongly disagreed, resulting in a mean score of 2.41. This indicates that many librarians struggle to articulate their information needs effectively, highlighting an area that may require further training and development.

In contrast, the second metric, "I can search for data, information, and content in digital environments," demonstrates a more positive outcome. Here, 45.2% of respondents rated their abilities to a very high extent, and 33.0% rated it high. Only 15.7% rated it low, and 6.1% rated it very low, leading to a mean score of 3.17. This suggests that academic librarians generally feel competent in navigating digital environments to locate necessary information. The third metric, "I can analyze, compare, and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information, and digital content," reveals a

more concerning trend. While 27.8% of respondents rated their abilities to a very high extent and 12.2% rated it high, a substantial 27.8% rated it low, and 32.2% rated it very low, resulting in a mean score of 2.35. This indicates that many librarians may lack confidence or skills in critically assessing the reliability of information sources.

Lastly, the metric "I can store, manage, and organize digital data, information, and content" shows a stronger performance. An impressive 63.5% of respondents rated their abilities to a very high extent, with 20.0% rating it high. Only 16.5% rated it low, and there were no responses indicating a very low extent. The mean score for this metric is 3.46, highlighting librarians' strengths in managing and organizing digital information effectively. Overall, the average mean for the Information and Data Literacy dimension is 2.85, suggesting a moderate level of proficiency among respondents. While academic librarians demonstrate solid skills in searching for and managing digital content, there are significant challenges in articulating information needs and evaluating the credibility of information sources, indicating areas where additional training and support may be beneficial.

In the dimension of information and data literacy, the responses for I can clearly state my information needs show that 25.2% of the respondents rated this skill to a very high extent, 14.8% rated it high, while 35.7% rated it low, and 24.3% rated it very low, leading to a mean score of 2.41. For I can search for data, information, and content in digital environments, 45.2% of respondents rated themselves very high, 33.0% rated high, while 15.7% rated low, and 6.1% rated very low, resulting in a mean score of 3.17. Under I can analyze, compare, and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data,

information, and digital content, 27.8% rated their ability very high, 12.2% rated high, while 27.8% rated low, and 32.2% rated very low. The mean score for this metric is 2.35.

For I can store, manage, and organize digital data, information, and content, 63.5% rated themselves very high, 20.0% rated high, while 16.5% rated low, with no one indicating a very low extent. This resulted in a mean score of 3.46. The average mean for the Information and Data Literacy dimension is 2.85, suggesting that while the respondents demonstrate moderate proficiency in searching for, managing, and organizing digital data, there is a lower ability to clearly state information needs and evaluate the credibility of sources.

In the Digital Content Creation dimension, the responses for I can create and edit digital contents show that 38.3% of respondents indicated they could do this to a very high extent, while 31.3% rated their ability as high. However, 21.7% said their extent was low, and 7.0% rated it as very low. The mean score for this metric is 3.06. For I can use existing information to create new useful and meaningful information, 60.9% of respondents rated their ability to a very high extent, while 12.2% rated it high. Conversely, 20.0% rated it low, and 5.2% very low, leading to a mean score of 3.34. Under the metric I can give understandable instructions to retrieve information from a computer system, 31.3% of respondents rated themselves very high, while 33.0% rated high. However, 27.0% indicated a low extent, and 8.7% rated very low, resulting in a mean score of 2.93.

Regarding I understand how copyright and licenses apply to data, information, and digital content, 27.0% of respondents rated their understanding as very high, and another 27.0%

rated it high. However, 32.2% rated their extent as low, and 13.9% very low, leading to a mean score of 2.66. The average mean for Digital Content Creation is 3.00, suggesting a moderate level of competence in this area. Respondents generally show stronger skills in using information to create new content and slightly lower competence in understanding copyright and licenses.

The dimension of Safety revealed that the responses for I am aware of how to recognize phishing emails and avoid them show that 26.1% of respondents rated themselves as having this skill to a very high extent, while 14.8% rated it high. However, 45.2% indicated a low extent, and 12.2% rated it very low, with a mean score of 2.60. For I know how to configure privacy settings on social media platforms, 10.4% of respondents rated themselves very high, 50.4% rated high, while 24.3% rated low, and 14.8% rated very low. The mean score for this metric is 2.57.

Under I use antivirus software to protect my devices from malware, 13.0% rated their ability very high, 57.4% rated high, 19.1% rated low, and 10.4% rated very low. The mean score is 2.73. For I understand the importance of backing up my data regularly, 26.1% of respondents rated their understanding very high, 52.2% rated high, while 16.5% rated low, and 5.2% rated very low. The mean score is 2.99. Regarding I am cautious about the information I share online, 17.4% rated their caution very high, 64.3% rated it high, and 9.7% rated it low. This metric has a mean score of 2.99. The average mean for the Safety dimension is 2.78, indicating that while many respondents exhibit moderate awareness and precaution in areas like data backup and online information sharing, there

is a notable need for improvement in recognizing phishing emails and configuring privacy settings.

Finally, the problem-solving dimension, the responses for I can troubleshoot basic technical issues with my devices show that 19.1% of respondents rated themselves as having this skill to a very high extent, while 40.9% rated it high. However, 27.0% indicated a low extent, and 13.0% rated it very low, with a mean score of 2.66. For I know where to find reliable online resources for solving technical problems, 20.9% of respondents rated themselves very high, 55.7% rated high, while 13.0% rated low, and 10.4% rated very low. The mean score for this metric is 2.86. Under I am comfortable using online forums and communities to seek help for digital issues, 20.0% rated their ability very high, 53.0% rated high, 19.1% rated low, and 7.8% rated very low. The mean score is 2.85.

For I can effectively use search engines to find solutions to technical problems, 16.5% of respondents rated their ability very high, 64.3% rated high, while 12.2% rated low, and 7.0% rated very low. The mean score is 2.90. Regarding I can analyse a problem and determine if it requires professional technical support, 15.7% rated their analytical ability very high, 53.9% rated it high, 23.5% rated it low, and 7.0% rated very low. This metric has a mean score of 2.78. The average mean for the Problem-Solving dimension is 2.81, indicating that while the respondents demonstrate a moderate ability to find solutions using online resources, forums, and search engines, there is room for improvement in their ability to troubleshoot and analyze technical issues independently.

The overall aggregate mean for digital competence is 2.92, indicating a moderate level of digital competence among academic librarians in Ogun State private universities. The areas that show room for improvement include information literacy, safety, and problem-solving skills.

4.4. Presentation of Hypotheses

H₀₁. There will be no significant influence of leadership styles on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;

Table 4.6 Influence of Leadership Styles on Reference Service Quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	R	p value	Remark
Leadership Styles	147.0261	17.49960	115	.333**	.000	significant
Reference Service Quality	58.3043	10.52164				

The value of Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of 0.333 suggests a moderate positive correlation between leadership styles and reference service quality. The p-value of .000 indicates that the correlation between leadership styles and reference service quality is statistically significant. Therefore, the correlation between leadership styles and reference service quality is not likely due to random chance. Specifically, it is statistically significant. The positive correlation suggests that the more the leadership style aligns

with the needs of the library, there tends to be an increase in reference service quality in the library. This indicates that adopting the right blend of leadership skills may contribute to more effective reference service delivery in academic libraries. In view of this, the null hypothesis stating that, there will be no significant influence of leadership styles on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities, is rejected .

H₀₂ There will be no significant influence of digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities

Table 4.13 Influence of Digital Competence on Reference Service Quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev	N	R	p value	Remark
Digital Competence	58.3043	10.52164	115	.212*	.023	significant
Reference Service Quality	80.7739	15.89387				

The value of Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) of 0.212 suggests a positive but relatively weak correlation between digital competence and reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The p-value of .023 is less than the typical significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the correlation between digital

competence and reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. Therefore, the correlation between digital competence and reference service quality is statistically significant. This means that the observed correlation is unlikely to be due to random chance. Specifically, the positive but relatively weak and statistically significant correlation suggests that, in this study, there is a modest positive relationship between the level of digital competence and reference service quality. This indicates that higher levels of digital competence are associated with improved reference service quality.

H₀₃ there will be no significant combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities;

Table 4.8: Combined Influence of Leadership Styles and Digital Competence on Reference Service Quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities

	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate		
	.388^a	.151	.135	9.78298		
ANOVA						
Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig. p	Remark
Regression	1901.191	2	950.595	9.932	.000 ^b	significant
Residual	10719.157	112	95.707			
Total	12620.348	114				

a. Dependent Variable: Reference Service Quality

b. predictors: (Constant), Leadership Styles, Digital Competence

Table 4.8 presents the multiple regression analysis on the combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The table shows that the Adjusted R^2 is 0.135 meaning that both leadership styles and digital competence explain 13.5% of the variance in reference service quality can be explained by the combination of leadership styles and digital competence.

On the ANOVA Table 4.8, the regression model is statistically significant with a p-value of .000 which is less than the typical significance level of 0.05.

This means that at least one of the predictors (leadership styles and digital competence) is contributing significantly to the prediction of library promotion. Specifically, the regression model, which includes both leadership styles and digital competence explain as predictors, is statistically significant. This means that the model provides meaningful information about the relationship between these variables and reference service quality. The regression analysis suggests that digital literacy skills and social media use when combined, have a statistically significant influence on reference service quality. This implies that both factors play a role in predicting levels of library promotion.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

This study explores the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities.

The study found a generally high level of quality of reference services in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State. Studies have shown the resurgence of reference services among academic libraries all over the world. Since e-mail and web-based forms are the two most convenient options for a virtual reference service, they are being adopted by all academic libraries. Users prefer e-mail since they can do it from the convenience of their own homes, rather than needing to travel to the library to submit their questions¹. Users can always utilise e-mail to reach a librarian and ask any question, even if the library hasn't set up a formal virtual reference desk. Similarly, web-based forms are a more complex method than e-mail, but they give the library an opportunity to passively initiate the reference interview with the user. These forms typically have blank boxes or areas for users to fill up and are connected to the library's frequently asked questions database.

A cataclysmic factor that really left academics and libraries with no other option than to embrace virtual references is the outbreak of the coronavirus. During Covid-19 onslaught libraries who have not engaged in virtual services were forced to start. This is known as extrinsic motivation triggered by a force that necessitated the library to start using technology as a tool that it is to render quality services even without the user coming to the library. For example, a study was conducted in Pakistan, on University libraries response to COVID-19 pandemic². From the interview, the study discussed that like other academic libraries, when it comes to Pakistan's academic libraries, university libraries are by far the most advanced. The academic semester was well underway when COVID-19 struck the country, forcing the closure of all schools²⁷.

Universities' responses varied, however, from outright shutdowns to the introduction of online alternatives. It was reported that most schools in Nigeria implemented online education, and libraries were called upon to support faculty and librarians. While some universities did cancel classes, others kept their libraries open so that librarians and faculty could still access the resources they needed to complete their work. Since prior to the epidemic only a small number of colleges offered online education, and most teaching was done in person, the library's position in online education was novel.

The low use of digital reference platforms during a critical period such as the pandemic indicates the need for rethinking the library and information services with the use of such instruments that may have a wider audience and more significant influence. Additionally, it underlines the necessity of high-speed internet connectivity in rural areas in addition to big cities and towns. Therefore, poor internet access and speed, especially in small towns and villages, may be a significant barrier to expanded usage of university or library portals and online library services.

On the need to engage in virtual or digital reference services, a scholar found that academic libraries play an important role in supporting e-learning in higher education institutions by providing electronic information resources, which are key in research, learning and teaching. Moreso, libraries provide a one-stop shop for accessing electronic resources through the digital library. Furthermore, patrons have benefitted by accessing and using digital library services during the COVID-19 lockdown period. Scholars also opined that libraries should ensure that they are prepared to always offer their services despite the closure of physical building³.

It was also found that there is a prevalent adoption of blend of leadership styles with the Laissez-Faire style being slightly more dominant in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State. The study of this finding also correlates with what has been reported in previous studies. According to a related study, library managers were found to be risk-averse and lacked creativity and imagination. Indeed, within the evolving organizational landscape, library directors were eternally concerned with their roles and responsibilities and perceived limited support from their institutions as well as senior library leadership⁴.

The findings raise some issues that should be discussed based on what has been reported on the laissez-faire leadership style in literature. Scholars argued that laissez-faire are defined by their non-involvement and absence when necessary. This often means that the leader is likely to disregard employees' accomplishments and challenges. This can have a detrimental effect on employee performance, leader effectiveness, and organizational performance⁵. Other studies indicate that laissez-faire leaders are hesitant to take required precautions and avoid potentially dangerous circumstances. Leaders who practice laissez-faire are often accused of doing little or nothing in terms of employee motivation. As a result, laissez-faire bosses may have inefficient, unproductive, and preside over a dissatisfied workforce.

Laissez-faire leader's lack of leadership may result in low performance and job satisfaction for the employee. Some employees may be unsure of their function and lack the necessary knowledge to accomplish responsibilities. As a result, employees' performance and job satisfaction may suffer. The laissez-faire leader provides little advice

to the employee, which may result in employee frustration, decreased performance, and decreased job satisfaction.

In some quarter, Laissez-faire leadership is frequently referred to as "non-leadership." This type of leadership is the most passive and ineffectual, as employees lack knowledge and feedback necessary to perform adequately in their professions. When an employee refuses to take direction from a laissez-faire leader, the employee must make judgments using their own judgment ⁶. This theme of absence and non-existence of leadership was also found in a related study. The scholar is of the view that the liberal leader abdicates decision-making and abdicates all responsibility. As a result, the leader lets people to carry out their responsibilities without regard for the outcome. According to the researchers, there is ample evidence indicated that liberal leadership had a detrimental effect on organizational outcomes⁷.

The study also found a moderate level of digital competence among academic librarians in Ogun State private universities. However, there is room for improvement in information literacy, safety, and problem-solving skills. Previous studies have shown that librarians at private universities in Southern Nigeria have mastered the fundamentals of ICT and are adept at using it for social media, Microsoft Office-related tasks, Internet searches, and information retrieval. The majority of librarians learned how to use ICT on their own. The results showed that librarians at private universities in Southern Nigeria who have acquired ICT skills are better able to provide improved library services⁸.

Another researcher investigated ICT-related training and support programmes for information professionals. The researcher based the motives for this study on the essential role of ICT skills in majority of library tasks. Results showed that information

professionals' access to ICT-related training and support courses improved current library operations procedures and user service delivery methods. Because of the current phenomenon of pedagogical learning, which results in the generation and harvesting of knowledge among information professionals, reskilling becomes significant. Information professionals can leverage their exposure, experience, knowledge, and abilities to their advantage while applying and using ICT-related gear and software, regardless of the situation. It becomes essential to embrace lifelong learning in order to navigate and maintain workplace dynamism⁹.

Researchers from Kano State, Nigeria reported that ICT facilities in tertiary institutions in Kano state contributed to effective reference and information services. The findings revealed that the reference sections of the libraries under study offer different types of reference and information services such as current awareness service (CAS), selective dissemination of information Service (SDI), literature searching service, photocopying service, display of new arrival service, user education service, indexing service, abstracting services, referral services, printing services, Library orientation service, group presentation service (Slide display), Video display service, Reference digital desk service, E-mailing service, and up-loading service. The findings further showed that the libraries apply different ICT facilities such as computers, internet service, CD ROM, photocopiers, printers, GSM telephones, online databases, off-line databases, projectors, smart multimedia boards, radio, web blog, e-mail and Library in a flash to provide various reference and information services to users¹⁰.

The findings of the previous study is supported by a related study which also found that libraries provides ICT facilities such as computer, servers, UPS, internet to some an

extent but some library staff do not always have interest in using them to provide the necessary reference services to the library patrons. Suggestions have been given to make the service more beneficial by providing trainings and seminars to the library staff¹¹.

The study found that leadership styles has a moderate but statistically significant influence on reference service quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities. This is affirmed by reports from previous studies. As pointed out by a researcher, there have been few studies on academic library leaders and the changing paradigm of librarianship in the new millennium. A few existing studies are from the global north. For instance, a group of researchers evaluated the library leadership programs in Australia, Canada, and the United States of America with regards to their effectiveness and performance. However, they reported that such an evaluation was not possible, as the programs did not clearly state their goals and objectives that could be used for evaluation purposes. Further, the study suggested that there was a need to revise the programs according to the emerging trends and needs of modern users¹².

Researchers from Pakistan conducted a study to determine how the leadership styles adopted by leaders in the country's tertiary institutions affect the employees' performances and stimulate innovative work behaviour. The analysis of the data showed that there is a substantial positive effect of leadership styles on innovative work behaviours of employees¹⁰⁴. The study shows that when employees are encouraged to put in their best through the appropriate leadership styles, the more likely to bring useful idea and be more effective in their job. Researchers from India also investigated the relationship between leadership and employee performance in a real estate registration

organization in Tehran Province in Iran using three leadership styles. The study measured the impact of transformational, pragmatic and laissez-faire leadership styles against the performance of the organisation. The study found that there was a significant relationship between employee performance and transformational leadership. There was a low positive correlation between pragmatic leadership and employee performance and a negative correlation between laissez-faire and performance¹³.

Working from the premises that the degree of management input from the top would inevitably transfer into the library personnel's' performance, Nigerian researchers examined the influence of leadership style on the performance of academic library employees in Delta State. The study findings indicated that, the most dominant and overwhelming leadership styles were democratic, transformational, autocratic and laissez-faire having a large extent of mean positive. There was also a low positive and significant association between leadership style and job performance. This study has shown that the leadership style adopted by library managers have a significant effect on the effectiveness of all library services including reference services¹⁴. However, the study did not separate which leadership style is more effective or which one is more positively correlated to effective performance.

The influence of leadership style on the job performance of librarians was also examined in another study conducted by researchers from University of Calabar, River State and University of Uyo, Akwa Ibom State Nigeria. The study examined how different leadership styles such as democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire impact on the performance of academic librarians in the two universities. The finding showed that, overall, leadership style has a significant influence on the job performance of librarians

both libraries. Specifically, the study also revealed that democratic leadership style contributed more significantly than the other two which was attributed to its ability in sharing of decision making by both subordinates and leader in the organization¹⁵. The finding of this study suggests that apply the wrong leadership style can directly affect the performance of organisation, particularly in the area of collection development

The influence of leadership style on organisational performance is further confirmed in another study conducted among teachers in Kaduna state. The study examined the influence of transformational leadership style teachers and principals in seven selected unity schools in Kaduna State. The findings showed that transformational leadership style of principals had wide ranging effects on performance of teachers, enhances the school curriculum and also brings out professionalism in the teachers¹⁶. The findings of these study has implications as it shows that leadership style is relevant to all work environment which goes to show that the adopted leadership style in libraries can affect the effectiveness of the collection development process. Various experts have commented on the efficacy of transformational leadership who are often regarded as democratic, on organisational performance

It is believed that democratic leaders are well positioned to create sustainable change in organisations. They are able to manage the constant changes witnessed in dynamic organisations such as libraries through the characteristic demand for high standards and groundbreaking goals, visions, and leading by example. Democratic leaders gain the trust of their subordinates by inspiring them to believe in visionary ideas. This trust in the leader is a key factor in getting employees to embrace change¹⁷.

The study however found that digital competence has a relatively weak but statistically significant influence on reference service quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities. This finding is contrary to what has been reported in previous studies. The findings of a previous study also found that ICT facilities in Nigerian academic libraries have some impact on reference especially when the staff are properly trained and encouraged to engage in continuous professional development. Reference service has traditionally played a crucial role in the delivery services especially in Academic libraries. The development of ICT has brought about a Revolution in the concept of Reference Services in Nigeria. This researcher examined the impact of ict in the provision of reference services in the academic libraries in Nigeria. The study reveals that libraries provides ICT facilities such as computer, servers, UPS, internet to some an extent but some library staff do not always have interest in using them to provide the necessary reference services to the library patrons. Suggestions have been given to make the service more beneficial by providing trainings and seminars to the library staff¹⁸.

Furthermore, it was found that both leadership styles and digital competence have a significant combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities. The results of the regression analysis showed that the leadership style significantly influenced the performance of employees, hence this means that leadership style has an impact on employee performance¹⁹. Bad leaders who do not motivated workers and other environmental factors can lead to ineffective collection development process and consequentially, imbalanced collection which may fail to meet the needs of the target users.

This is also observed in another study which examined the effects of two leadership styles on the effectiveness public relations activities of an organisation. The researcher linked the prevailing leadership style, employee motivation, and effectiveness of employee efforts. The finding of the study is that democratic leadership style is the best in term of motivating employees to have a positive mindset towards the organisation and give their best to achieve organisational goals. Autocratic leadership on the other hand has a significant negative direct influence on employee's effectiveness. The study also found that democratic leaders are more inclined to give authority to workers and include them in decision making than autocratic leaders²⁰.

In addition, the findings of a previous study also found that ICT facilities in Nigerian academic libraries have some impact on reference especially when the staff are properly trained and encouraged to engage in continuous professional development. Reference service has traditionally played a crucial role in the delivery services especially in Academic libraries. The development of ICT has brought about a Revolution in the concept of Reference Services in Nigeria. This researcher examined the impact of ict in the provision of reference services in the academic libraries in Nigeria. The study reveals that libraries provides ICT facilities such as computer, servers, UPS, internet to some an extent but some library staff do not always have interest in using them to provide the necessary reference services to the library patrons. Suggestions have been given to make the service more beneficial by providing trainings and seminars to the library staff²¹.

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Chapter Five

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of Findings

1. The findings of this study on the influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities can be summarised as follows;
2. The study found a generally high level of quality of reference services in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State
3. It was also found that there is a prevalent adoption of blend of leadership styles with the Laissez-Faire style being slightly more dominant in academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State
4. The study also found a moderate level of digital competence among academic librarians in Ogun State private universities. However, there is room for improvement in information literacy, safety, and problem-solving skills.
5. The study found that leadership styles have a moderate but statistically significant influence on reference service quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities
6. The study however found that digital competence has a relatively weak but statistically significant influence on reference service quality in Academic Libraries in Ogun State Private Universities.

7. Furthermore, it was found that both leadership styles and digital competence have a significant combined influence of leadership styles and digital competence on reference service quality in academic libraries in Ogun State private universities.

5.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that academic libraries in private universities in Ogun State provide a generally high level of reference services, supported by a blend of leadership styles, with the Laissez-Faire style being slightly more dominant. Moreover, the digital competence of academic librarians is moderate, with notable strengths in certain areas but also a need for improvement in information literacy, safety, and problem-solving skills. The study further established that leadership styles exert a moderate but statistically significant influence on reference service quality, while digital competence, although relatively weak, also significantly influences reference service quality. Together, both leadership styles and digital competence have a substantial combined impact on the overall quality of reference services in these academic libraries.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are considered relevant;

1. Since the study found a generally high level of reference service quality, it is recommended that academic libraries continue to foster a culture of innovation and user-centered service delivery, incorporating continuous assessment to maintain and enhance service quality.

2. While the Laissez-Faire style is currently more dominant, library administrators should consider integrating elements of transformational leadership to foster more proactive decision-making and engagement among staff, thereby promoting higher quality reference services.
3. Given the moderate digital competence observed, especially in information literacy, safety, and problem-solving skills, training and development programs should be prioritized to elevate these areas. Workshops and certifications on digital literacy could be implemented to ensure librarians remain proficient in these crucial skills.
4. The moderate but significant influence of leadership styles on reference services underscores the need for academic libraries to focus on leadership development programs. Such programs can help librarians adopt more effective leadership practices that will positively impact service quality.
5. Although digital competence has a weaker influence, its statistical significance highlights the need for continuous technological capacity building. Librarians should be encouraged to participate in upskilling programs to improve their digital capabilities, ultimately enhancing reference services.

5.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes conceptually by exploring the interplay between leadership styles, digital competence, and reference service quality in academic libraries. It demonstrates that both leadership and digital competence are integral to delivering high-quality reference services, offering a conceptual framework that combines these elements. Theoretically, the study provides a theoretical contribution by reinforcing and expanding

the transformational leadership theory and digital competence models within the context of academic libraries. It highlights the relevance of adaptive leadership in library environments, where digital competence serves as an important factor influencing service outcomes.

Empirically, this study fills a gap by providing quantitative evidence on the relationship between leadership styles, digital competence, and reference service quality in private university libraries. It offers statistically significant findings on how leadership and digital skills impact reference service quality, making a valuable contribution to the body of literature on academic library services in Nigeria.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

Based on the scope and limitations of the current study, future researchers can explore the following topics.

- i. The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement and Reference Service Delivery in Nigerian Academic Libraries
- ii. An Analysis of Digital Literacy and its Influence on User Satisfaction with Library Services in Private Universities
- iii. The Role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in Enhancing Digital Competence and Reference Service Quality Among Academic Librarians

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Belayhun, S., *Effect of leadership style on employee performance: the case of Blu Water* (Doctoral dissertation, St. Mary's university). 2021.

Linjuan, R.M. *Measuring the impact of leadership style and employee empowerment on perceived organizational reputation*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Miami, Coral Gables, Florida. 2013.<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.86.142>.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

Leadership Styles and Digital Competence as Determinants of Reference service quality in Private University Libraries in Ogun State, Nigeria

Dear Respondents,

This questionnaire is designed to collect data on the above-named. Your response to the questions and statements in this questionnaire is high important to the success of the study. I therefore seek your indulgence to fill the questionnaire as accurately as possible. I assure you that your responses will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and used only for research purposes.

Thanks for anticipated co-operation.

Section A: Demographic data of the respondents:

1. **Name of institution:**.....
2. **Gender** Male [] Female []
3. **Qualifications:** ND [], HND [], B.Sc/BLIS [], MLIS [], M.Phil [], PhD []
4. **Age:** 25-30[], 31-35 [], 36-40 [], 41-49 years [] 50-59 years [] 60 and above []
5. **Work Experience:** 1- 5 [] 6– 10[] 11 15 [] 16 – 20[] 21 -25 [] above 25 []

Section B : Reference Services Provision

Please indicate your opinion using the scale: strongly agree (SA), agree (A) strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D).

	Affect of Service	SA	A	D	SD
1.	It is mandatory for library staff in my library to instil confidence in users				
2.	The library has enough staff so we can pay individual attention to staff				
3.	Library staff in my library are trained to				

	be consistently courteous to all patrons				
4.	Only library personnel who have demonstrated competence are posted to the reference section				
5.	The library manager deliberate selects even temper employees to work at the reference section				
	Information Control				
6.	My library provides remote access to electronic resources				
7.	My library has a website which helps user to locate information on their own				
8.	My library has acquired enough print and digital resources to meet the needs of the users				
9.	My library has invested in searchable databases for effective reference services				
10.	My library has created information retrieval tools such as indexes, bibliography reading list etc that allow users find information easily				
	Library as a Place				
11.	Library has space that inspires study and learning				
12.	Library has quiet space for individual work				
13.	Library has comfortable and inviting location				
14.	Library is secure and peaceful place for study, learning and research				
15.	Library has space for group learning and group study				

Section C: Leadership Styles Scale

Please indicate your opinion using the scale: strongly agree (SA), agree (A) strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D).

S/N	Leadership Styles	SA	A	D	SD
	Autocratic				

1	My leader believe that library personnel need to be supervised closely or they are not likely to do their work otherwise				
2	My leader believe that most library personnel are unwilling to work				
3	My leader believes library personnel feel insecure about their work and need direction				
4	Our leader believe he/she is the best judge of the staff efficiency				
	Democratic				
5	My leader gives order and clarify procedures				
6	My leader shows that providing guidance without pressure is the key to being a good leader				
7	I can easily exchange ideas with my leader without fear of sanction.				
8	My leader allow library personnel to be part of the decision making process				
	Laissez Faire				
9	My leader gives employees complete freedom to solve problems on their own.				
10	In complex situations, my leader let library personnel work out problems on their own				
11	My leader stays out of the way of employees as they do their work				
12	My leader rarely make input into the daily running of the library				
13	My leader believe that library personnel are basically competent and if given a task will do a good job				

Section D: Digital competence of Library Personnel

Please rate your level of digital competence by responding to the following statements

Instruction; Tick the box as appropriate: 4= Very high extent, (VHE) 3= High Extent, (HE)
2= Low Extent (LE) and 1= Very Low Extent (VLE)

S/N	Items	SA	A	SD	D
	Device and Software skill				
1.	I can identify and use computer and other digital devices (laptops, mobile phones, tablets etc),				
2.	I can identify and use computer software and mobile applications (MS Word, Adobe Acrobat, WPS, etc),				
3.	I can identify data, information and digital content needed to operate software tools and technologies.				
4.	Information and data literacy				
5.	I can clearly state my information needs,				
6.	I can search for data, information and content in digital environments,				
7.	I can analyse, compare and critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of sources of data, information and digital content.				
8.	I can store, manage and organise digital data, information and content.				
9.	Digital Content Creation				
10.	I can create and edit digital contents.				
11.	I can use existing information to create new useful and meaningful information				
12.	I can give understandable instructions to retrieve information from a computer system.				
13.	I understand how copyright and licenses apply to data, information and digital content.				
	Safety				

14	I am aware of how to recognize phishing emails and avoid them.				
15	I know how to configure privacy settings on social media platforms.				
16	I use antivirus software to protect my devices from malware.				
17	I understand the importance of backing up my data regularly				
18	I am cautious about the information I share online				
	Problem Solving				
19	I can troubleshoot basic technical issues with my devices.				
20	I know where to find reliable online resources for solving technical problems.				
21	I am comfortable using online forums and communities to seek help for digital issues.				
22	I can effectively use search engines to find solutions to technical problems.				
23	I can analyze a problem and determine if it requires professional technical support.				

Bio-data

A. Personal Data

1. **Full Name:**
2. **Address:**
3. **Email:**
4. **Date and Place of Birth:**
5. **Nationality:** - Nigerian
6. **Name and Address of Next of Kin:**

Add. Same as above

A. Educational Background

Educational Institutions attended with dates and Qualifications:

i. **Primary Education:**

ii. **Secondary Education:**

iii. **Higher Educational Institutions:**

a.

B. Working Experience with Dates

a. **Organisation:**

Role:

Date:

C. Working Experience with Dates

b. **Organisation:**

Role:

Date:

c. **Organisation:**

d. **Role:**

Date:

D. Awards and Fellowships:

i.

Signature

Date

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The University Compliance Certification

This is to certify that this thesis Olatunji Sanmi ADEDIRAN with Matriculation Number LCU/PG/003875 in the Department of Information Management, Lead City University, Ibadan, is in FULL compliance with the approved university format and style.

Signature

Date

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