

LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES AND SERVICE DELIVERY AMONG REFERENCE LIBRARIANS IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria. The study adopted a correlational research design. The population comprised of 209 reference librarians in federal, state, and private universities in Southern Nigeria. A total enumeration sampling technique was adopted because the population was manageable. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Reference Librarians' Leadership Competencies and Service Delivery Questionnaire (RLLCSDQ). Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation and linear regression. Findings revealed that reference librarians possessed leadership competencies to a great extent ($\bar{x} = 4.23$) and demonstrated a high level of service delivery ($\bar{x} = 4.08$). The study further established a significant positive relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery ($r = .549$, $p < .05$). Leadership competencies significantly influenced service delivery, accounting for 30.1% of the variance in service delivery ($R^2 = .301$, $\beta = .549$, $p < .05$). The study concluded that leadership competencies are critical determinants of effective service delivery among reference librarians in university libraries. The study recommended regular leadership development programmes active participation in professional development activities and strengthened leadership capacity building initiatives by professional associations.

Keywords: Leadership competencies, service delivery, reference librarians, university libraries, Southern Nigeria.

Introduction

Service delivery remains a fundamental indicator of effectiveness in university libraries because it determines the extent to which libraries support teaching, learning, research and community service. Reference librarians occupy a strategic position in this regard as they serve as the principal link between information resources and users through reference services, information literacy instruction, bibliographic assistance, current awareness services and research support. Consequently, the quality of service delivery provided by reference librarians significantly influences user satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of university libraries.

Service delivery refers to the provision of information services that effectively meet users information needs and expectations. Parasuraman et al. (1988) described service delivery in terms of reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy and service quality while Aina (2004), viewed it as the effective provision of information resources and services that facilitate access to information and promote user satisfaction. Effective service delivery is therefore essential for improving library utilisation, supporting academic activities and enhancing institutional relevance.

The quality of service delivery depends on several organisational, professional and personal factors among which leadership competencies have become increasingly important. The rapidly changing information environment characterised by technological advancements evolving user expectations and increasing demands for accountability requires reference librarians to possess not only professional expertise but also leadership competencies that enable them to respond effectively to emerging challenges. Northouse (2022), defined leadership competencies as the knowledge, skills, abilities and behaviours required to influence others and achieve organisational goals while Mumford et al. (2007) described them as competencies that contribute to effective leadership performance across organisational settings. Within university libraries,

these competencies include communication skills, teamwork, strategic thinking, problem solving, decision making, adaptability and emotional intelligence.

Leadership competencies have become increasingly relevant in librarianship because they enhance librarians' ability to coordinate services, manage resources, communicate effectively, foster collaboration and respond to users changing information needs (Young et al., 2003; Saunders, 2015). Empirical evidence also indicates that leadership competencies contribute positively to employee effectiveness, organisational performance, innovation and service quality (Mumford et al., 2007; Saunders, 2015). Librarians who possess strong leadership competencies are therefore better positioned to provide efficient, user centred services and improve overall library performance.

Despite the recognised importance of leadership competencies, variations in the quality of service delivery among reference librarians continue to be observed. While previous studies have examined leadership and organisational effectiveness in libraries, limited empirical evidence exists on the relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria. This gap in the literature necessitated the present study which examined leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Service delivery remains a critical function of university libraries because it determines the extent to which users information needs are satisfied and institutional goals are achieved. Reference librarians play a central role in this process by providing information assistance, research support, user education and access to relevant information resources. However, the rapidly changing information environment characterised by technological advancements, increasing user expectations, information overload and evolving modes of information access has

made effective service delivery more challenging. As a result, university libraries are increasingly expected to provide timely, accurate, innovative and user centred services that respond to the diverse needs of their users.

Despite these expectations, observations and reports from the literature suggest that variations still exist in the quality of service delivery provided by reference librarians. The ability of reference librarians to deliver quality services may be influenced by several factors, one of which is leadership competence. Leadership competencies such as communication skills, problem solving ability, decision making capacity, teamwork, adaptability, strategic thinking and interpersonal effectiveness are increasingly recognised as essential attributes for professional success in contemporary libraries. Consequently, there is insufficient empirical evidence regarding the extent to which leadership competencies influence the quality of services provided by reference librarians in the Southern Nigeria. It is this gap in knowledge that necessitated this study on leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are answered in this study:

1. what is the extent of leadership competencies possessed by reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?
2. what is the extent of service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?
3. what relationship exists between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?

Hypothesis

The following null hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria.

Literature Review

Leadership Competencies of Reference Librarians

Leadership is an essential component of organisational effectiveness and has become increasingly important in librarianship because of the dynamic nature of information services. Northouse (2022), defined leadership as a process through which an individual influences others to achieve common goals while Oketunji (2017), described it as the ability to inspire, motivate and guide others toward organisational success.

Leadership competencies refer to the knowledge, skills, abilities and personal attributes that enable individuals to perform leadership functions effectively (Wong, 2017). In the library profession, these competencies include communication skills, teamwork, decision making, strategic thinking, problem solving, adaptability, ethical conduct and emotional intelligence. The American Association of Law Libraries (AALL, 2010) identified leadership, collaboration, communication, professionalism and commitment to quality service as essential competencies for librarians.

Contemporary scholars classify leadership competencies into competencies for leading oneself, leading others and leading organisations (Verlinden, 2024). These competencies enable librarians to manage change, motivate colleagues, solve problems, build effective relationships and promote innovation. Similarly, Stewart (2017); Narang and Kumar (2016) observed that strategic thinking, creativity, advocacy, communication, flexibility and ethical behaviour are indispensable leadership competencies for librarians in the twenty first century.

Service Delivery among Reference Librarians

Service delivery refers to the provision of information services that effectively satisfy users information needs and expectations. According to Omotoso (2023), it involves interactions between service providers and users that ensure effective solutions to users information needs while Olanlokun (as cited in Oladipo & Soyemi, 2021) viewed it as librarians ability to utilise available resources to satisfy users.

Reference librarians provide a wide range of services including reference services, bibliographic assistance, current awareness services, selective dissemination of information, literature searching, user education and digital reference services (Igwela & Nsirim, 2018; Oden & Owolabi, 2021; Lawal, 2022). Effective service delivery enhances user satisfaction, increases library utilisation and supports institutional teaching, learning and research objectives (Amanullah et al., 2021; Igbinovia, 2022). Empirical evidence also indicates that quality service delivery remains a major determinant of users satisfaction and loyalty to academic library services (Oh, 2020; Oden & Owolabi, 2021).

Relationship between Leadership Competencies and Service Delivery

Leadership competencies have been recognised as important predictors of service delivery because they enhance communication, teamwork, innovation, problem solving and decision making. Winston and Dunkley (2002), argued that leadership competencies improve organisational performance by facilitating goal attainment and effective management practices. Within libraries, leadership competencies enable librarians to coordinate services, manage resources effectively and respond promptly to users information needs (Stewart, 2017).

Similarly, Verlinden (2024), maintained that competent leaders inspire others, build productive relationships and successfully manage organisational change while Narang and Kumar (2016) observed that leadership competencies enable librarians to improve service quality through effective communication, motivation and collaboration. Consequently, reference librarians

who possess strong leadership competencies are more likely to provide efficient, user centred and high quality information services in university libraries.

Methodology

This study adopted a correlational research design to examine the relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria. The population of the study comprised of 209 reference librarians drawn from 141 federal, state and private university libraries in Southern Nigeria.

The universities are; Abia State University, Uturu, Abia State, Achievers University, Owo, Ondo State, Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Akungba, Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State Adeyemi University of Education, Ondo, Ondo State, Admiralty University, Ibusa, Delta State, and Afe Babalola University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State. Others include: Ajayi Crowther University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Akwa Ibom State University of Technology, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Aletheia University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Alex Ekwueme University, Ndufu-Alike, Ebonyi State, and Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Imo State. The list also include: Ambrose Ali University, Ekpoma, Edo State, Anchor University, Ayoba, Lagos State, Arthur Jaris University Akpoyobo, Cross River State, Atiba University Oyo, Oyo State, Augustine University, Lagos, Lagos State, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, and Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Ekiti State.

Other universities include: Bells University of Technology, Otta, Ogun State, Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Edo State, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State, Caleb University, Imota, Lagos State Caritas University, Enugu, Enugu State, Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Christopher University Mowe, Ogun State, and Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukhwa University, Uli, Anambra State. There are still Claretian University of Nigeria, Nekede, Imo State

Clifford University, Owerri, Abia State, Coal City University Enugu, Enugu State, Covenant University Ota, Ogun State, Crawford University, Igbesa, Ogun State, Crescent University, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Cross River State University of Science and Technology, Calabar, Cross River State, David Umahi Federal University of Health Science Uburu, Ebonyi State, Delta State University, Abraka, Delta State, and Dennis Osadebe University, Asaba, Delta State. Others include: Dominican University Ibadan, Oyo State, Dominion University Ibadan, Oyo State, Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Ebonyi State, Edo University Iyambo, Edo State, Edwin Clark University, Kigbodo, Delta State, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Eko University of Medicine and Health Sciences, Ijanikin, Lagos State, Elizade University, Ilara-Mokin, Ondo State, Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Oyo State, Enugu State University of Medical and Applied Sciences, Igbo-Eno, and Enugu State, Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu, Enugu State. Others include: Evangel University, Akaeze, Ebonyi State, Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Federal University of Health Sciences, Ila Orangun, Osun State, Federal University of Petroleum Resources, Effurun, Delta State, Federal University of Technology, Akure, Ondo State, Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Imo State, Federal University Otuoke, Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Federal University, Oye-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Fountain University, Oshogbo, Osun State, Gerar University of Medical Science Imoju Ijebu, Ogun State, Glorious Vision University, Ogwa, Enugu State, Godfrey Okoye University, Ugwuomu-Nike, Abia State, Gregory University, Uturu, Abia State, Hallmark University, Ijebu Itelu, Ogun State, Havilla University Nde-Ikom, Cross River State, Hensard University, Sagbama, Bayelsa State, Hezekiah University, Umudi, Imo State, Hillside University of Science and Technology, Okemisi, Ekiti State, Igbenedion University, Okada, Edo State, Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Rumuolumeni, Rivers State, Imo State University, Owerri, Imo State, James Hope University, Lagos, Lagos State, Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji-Arakeji,

Osun State, Kings University, Ode Omu, Osun State, Kingsley Ozumba Mbadiwe University Ogboko, Imo State, Kola Daisi University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Ladoke Akintola University of Technology, Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Lagos State University, Alasia, Lagos State, and Lagos State University of Education, Ojo, Lagos State, Lagos State University of Science and Technology, Ikorodu, Lagos State, Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Legacy University, Okija, Anambra State, Light Hour University Evbobanosa, Edo State, Madonna University, Okija, Anambra State, Maranathan University, Mgbidi, Imo State, Mcpherson University, Seriki Sotayo, Ajebo, Ogun State, Mercy Medical University, Iwo, Osun State, Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Abia State, Micheal and Cecila Ibru University, Agbarotor, Delta State, Moshood Abiola University of Science and Technology, Abeokuta, Ogun State, Mountain Top University, Ibafo, Ogun State, Mudiname University Irua, Edo State, National Open University of Nigeria, Vivtoria Island, Lagos State, Niger Delta University. Yenegoa, Bayelsa State, Nigerian Maritime University, Okerenkoko, Delta State, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Novena University Ogume, Delta State, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, Obong University ObongNtaka, Akwa Ibom State, Oduduwa University, Ipetumodu, Osun State, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago Iwoye, Ogun State, Ondo State University of Medical Sciences, Ondo, Ondo State, Ondo State University of Science and Technology, Okitipupa, Ondo State, Osun State University Osogbo, Osun State, Oyo State Technical University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Pan-Atlantic University, Lekki, Lagos State, Paul University, Awka, Anambra State, Precious Cornerstone University, Oyo, Oyo State, Redeemer's University, Ede, Osun State, Renaissance University, Enugu, Enugu State, Rhema University, Obeama-Asa, Rivers State, Ritman University Ikot-Ekpene, Akwa Ibom State, Rivers State University of Science and Technology, Nkpolu, Rivers State, Sam Maris University, Ondo, Supare-Akoko, Ondo State, Samuel Adegboyeda University, Ogwa, Edo State, Southern Delta University, Ozoro, Delta State, Southwestern University, Oku Owa, Ogun

State, Spiritan University, Nnfochi, Abia State, Tai Solarin University of Education Ijebu Ode, Ogun State, Tansia University, Umuya, Anambra State, The Duke Medical University, Calabar, Cross River State, Topfaith University Mkpatak, Akwa Ibom State, Trinity University, Laloko Ogun State, University of Africa Toru-orua, Bayelsa State, University of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences Umuagwo, Imo State, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, University of Calabar, Calabar, Cross River State, University of Delta, Agbor, Delta State, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Oyo State, University of Ilesa, Isua, Osun State, University of Lagos, Iyaba Lagos State, University of Medical Sciences, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Enugu State, University of Port Harcourt, Choba, Rivers State, University of Uyo, Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, Venite University, Iloro-Ekiti, Ekiti State, Vision University, Ikogbo, Ogun State, and Well Spring University, Evbuobanosa, Edo State. There are also Wesley University of Science & Technology, Ondo, Ondo State, West Midlands Open University, Western Delta University, Oghara, Delta State, Westland University, Iwo Osun State and Wigwe University, Isiokpo, Rivers State. A total of 24 of these universities are owned by the federal government 34 by state government and 83 by private individuals and organisations. The distribution of the universities across states of location are; Abia State (5), Anambra State (6), Awka Ibom State (5), Bayelsa State (4), Cross River State (5), Delta State State (11), Ebonyi (4), Edo State (10), Ekiti State (6), Enugu State (7), Imo State (8), Lagos State (11), Ogun State (19), Ondo State (9), Osun State (13), Oyo State (12) and Rivers State (6). Total enumeration sampling technique was employed because the population size was manageable and all members of the population were included in the study.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled *Reference Librarians' Leadership Competencies and Service Delivery Questionnaire (RLLCSDQ)*. The instrument consisted of items measuring leadership competencies and service delivery. The instrument was subjected to face

and content validation by experts in Library and Information Science and Measurement and Evaluation while its reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding a coefficient of 0.97 which confirmed the instrument's suitability for data collection. A total of 209 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents and 202 were retrieved and found usable representing a response rate of 96.7%. Data collected were analysed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to determine the relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery. The hypothesis was tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Results/ Discussion of Findings

Table 1: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	69	34.2
Female	133	65.8
Total	202	100.0

Table 1 shows that there are 69 (34.2%) male respondents and 133 (65.8%) female respondents. This distribution indicates that female respondents constituted the majority of the study sample.

Table 2: Zone of the Respondents' Institution

Zone	Frequency	Percentage (%)
South-East	37	18.3
South-South	59	29.2
South-West	106	52.5
Total	202	100.0

The distribution of institutions across the three zones reveals that the South-West recorded the highest representation with 52.5% of the total sample. This was followed by the South-South, which accounted for 29.2%, while the South East had the lowest participation at 18.3%. The pattern indicates a greater concentration of the sampled institutions in the South West zone.

Research Question One: What is the extent of leadership competencies possessed by reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?

Table 3: The Extent of Leadership Competencies of Reference Librarians

Num.	Please indicate (√) the option that best expresses the extent of your opinion on each of the following statements:	VGE	GE	ME	LE	NE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
A	Ability to influence							
1	I always try to influence others through direct commands to act in a desired way	109	85	7	1	0	4.50	0.59
2	I listen keenly to others before directing them to act in a desired way	74	108	19	1	0	4.26	0.64
3	I coach others to act in desirable ways	82	100	19	1	0	4.30	0.66
4	I inspire others by acting in a way, as well as delegating in a manner, to enable them to act in my desired way	77	99	23	3	0	4.24	0.71
B	Accountability							
5	I can establish commitment by directly telling people what to do	88	96	18	0	0	4.35	0.64
6	I always direct members of staff to be accountable	75	105	19	1	2	4.24	0.72
C	Achievement Orientation							
7	I can set my own standard and work towards	75	91	34	1	1	4.18	0.76
8	I collaborate with others and then set standards to work towards achieving the desired goals	71	104	26	1	0	4.21	0.68
D	Analytical Thinking							
9	I always understand problems through data	89	84	27	2	0	4.29	0.73
10	I can make deductions and understand potential solutions to problems	75	97	29	1	0	4.22	0.70
E	Applying Expertise							
11	I am well known expert in reference services	69	103	29	1	0	4.19	0.69
12	I can apply firm expertise in coordinating the staff that works in the reference section	74	94	33	1	0	4.19	0.72
G	Collaborating with Others							
13	I can work with my colleagues/others in specific tasks easily	72	101	25	1	2	4.19	0.75
14	I have ability to collaborate with others in taking steps that can enhance the reference services	69	110	21	2	0	4.22	0.66
	Communication							
15	I understand and utilize current technology and maximizes IT as resource for the advancement of reference services	86	95	21	0	0	4.32	0.65

16	I can communicate the goals of my library and reference decisions clearly	66	114	21	1	0	4.21	0.64
I	Conceptual Thinking							
17	I am creative and apply reference knowledge adeptly.	67	105	26	3	1	4.16	0.74
18	I show some innovation and application of reference knowledge.	71	107	19	5	0	4.21	0.71
J	Dedication							
19	I thrive in challenging circumstances and I can meet set goals	80	91	29	2	0	4.22	0.76
20	I am highly devoted to looking for and taking actions that can advance reference services	70	104	25	3	0	4.19	0.70
K	Directiveness							
21	I am an excellent team leader	82	92	26	1	1	4.25	0.73
22	I am learning to coach a team properly	77	99	26	0	0	4.25	0.67
L	Flexibility							
23	I understand and expertly use situational specific model of management	73	106	19	2	2	4.22	0.73
24	I have been introduced to situational specific model of management and I am practicing methods and use tools	56	100	42	4	0	4.03	0.75
M	Interpersonal Understanding							
25	I am adept at using assessment tools to assess behavioural competencies	100	77	23	1	1	4.36	0.74
N	Networking Ability							
26	I am an expert at communicating information and building relationships with others	69	109	22	1	1	4.21	0.69
27	I use networking to accomplish goals and objectives but could do more	76	93	30	2	1	4.19	0.76
O	Organisational Awareness							
28	I am very conversant with organisational structure of my library	89	84	26	3	0	4.28	0.74
29	I understand culture of my organisation and know how to adapt to each culture influences	78	99	24	1	0	4.26	0.68
30	I know the vision, goals and policies of my library very well	77	96	27	2	0	4.23	0.71
P	Self Regulation							
31	I think very well before responding to colleagues and subordinates	78	92	28	3	1	4.20	0.77
32	I try all I can to avoid conflict with others	92	86	22	1	1	4.32	0.73
33	I know and apply conflict management techniques	69	103	27	2	1	4.17	0.73
34	I try not to be emotional in face of challenging circumstances	65	108	27	1	1	4.16	0.70
Q	Team Leadership							

35	I have the capability to direct group of people	78	98	22	3	1	4.23	0.74
36	I have been in collaborative settings and successfully collaborated	66	97	33	4	2	4.09	0.81
37	I always like to work in a team	77	91	29	3	2	4.18	0.80
38	I have been a team leader where leadership was shared	74	92	30	5	1	4.15	0.80
Grand Mean/Std. Dev.							4.23	0.71

Decision Rule: Very Great Extent = 4.50 - 5.00, Great Extent = 3.50 - 4.49, Moderate Extent = 2.50 - 3.49, Low Extent = 1.50 - 2.49 and Very Low Extent = 1.00 - 1.49

The findings revealed that reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria possessed leadership competencies to a great extent ($\bar{x} = 4.23$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating high levels of competence in influencing others, accountability, communication, collaboration and self regulation. The finding suggests that reference librarians possess the leadership capabilities required for effective service delivery. This finding agrees with Goh and Kiran (2018), who reported that librarians exhibited high levels of leadership competencies that enhance professional performance and service outcomes in academic libraries.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?

Table 4: The Extent of Service Delivery of Reference Librarians

Num.	Please indicate ($\sqrt{}$) the extent of your delivery of each of the following services in your library:	VGE	GE	ME	LE	NE	$\bar{x}$	Std. Dev.
1	Circulating materials to eligible patrons	80	103	11	7	1	4.26	0.76
2	Referral services	73	91	32	5	1	4.14	0.81
3	Indexing and abstracting services to patrons	61	102	35	4	0	4.09	0.74
4	Current awareness services	50	100	47	5	0	3.97	0.76
5	Continued instruction to patrons	68	86	45	3	0	4.08	0.78
6	Interlibrary loans	62	88	44	7	1	4.00	0.84
7	Computer services	63	90	41	7	1	4.02	0.84
8	Displaying newly arrived books in appropriate places	67	83	40	9	3	4.00	0.92
9	Exhibiting books on different themes	78	83	31	6	4	4.11	0.91
10	Reprographic services.	71	93	28	9	1	4.11	0.84

11	Selective dissemination of information services	62	98	40	1	1	4.08	0.75
12	Literature search services	66	87	40	8	1	4.03	0.85
13	Database peer tutoring service	62	99	33	5	3	4.05	0.84
14	Academic library week services	60	97	34	8	3	4.00	0.87
15	Library adaptive services	61	95	39	5	2	4.03	0.83
16	Project/dissertation/thesis help services	65	98	34	4	1	4.10	0.78
17	Bibliographic services	69	88	39	5	1	4.08	0.82
18	Library without border services using library websites, Facebook, WhatsApp, You Tube etc.	51	112	32	2	5	4.00	0.82
Grand Mean/Std. Dev.							4.08	0.83

Decision Rule: Very Great Extent = 4.50 - 5.00, Great Extent = 3.50 - 4.49, Moderate Extent = 2.50 - 3.49, Low Extent = 1.50 - 2.49 and Very Low Extent = 1.00 - 1.49

The findings revealed that reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria delivered library services to a great extent ($\bar{x} = 4.08$, $SD = 0.83$), with high levels of involvement in circulation, referral, bibliographic, indexing and abstracting selective dissemination of information and research support services. This indicates a strong commitment to meeting users' information needs through effective service delivery. The finding agrees with Adekoya (2019) and Oden and Owolabi (2021), who reported high levels of service delivery in academic libraries, suggesting that quality service provision remains a core responsibility of university librarians.

Research Question Three: What relationship exists between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria?

Table 5: Relationship between Leadership Competencies and Service Delivery among Reference Librarians

		Leadership competencies of reference librarians	Service delivery of reference librarians
Leadership competencies of reference librarians	Pearson Correlation	1	.549**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		.000
	N	202	202
Service delivery of	Pearson Correlation	.549**	1

reference librarians	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	202	202

The findings revealed a moderate positive and statistically significant relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians ($r = 0.549$, $p < 0.05$). This indicates that higher levels of leadership competencies are associated with improved service delivery. The finding suggests that leadership competencies contribute significantly to the quality of services provided by reference librarians in the universities.

Hypothesis

Ho₁: There is no significant relationship between leadership competencies and service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria.

Table 6: Influence of Leadership Competencies on Service Delivery among Reference Librarians

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.549 ^a	.301	.298	.25015

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	5.393	1	5.393	86.185	.000 ^b
Residual	12.515	200	.063		
Total	17.908	201			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	1.113		3.496	.001
Leadership competencies of reference librarians	.698	.549	9.284	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Service delivery of reference librarians

b. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership competencies of reference librarians

The findings revealed that leadership competencies significantly influenced service delivery among reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria ($R = 0.549$, $R^2 = 0.301$, $F = 86.185$, $p < 0.05$). Leadership competencies explained 30.1% of the variation in service delivery, indicating a moderate predictive power. The finding further showed that librarians with stronger leadership competencies were more likely to deliver effective services. This result agrees with Ogbah (2013), Akerele and Elaturoti (2014), Rigii (2017) and Bass (2019), who reported that leadership competencies enhance organisational effectiveness, professional performance and service delivery.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made.

1. University library management should organise regular leadership development programmes to strengthen the leadership competencies of reference librarians.
2. Reference librarians should be encouraged to participate actively in leadership, mentoring and professional development activities to enhance their effectiveness.
3. Library administrators should provide a supportive work environment that promotes teamwork, innovation and effective communication among librarians.
4. Professional library associations should intensify leadership capacity building initiatives through workshops, seminars and continuing professional education programmes.

Conclusion

The study established that reference librarians in universities in Southern Nigeria possess leadership competencies to a great extent and also demonstrate a high level of service delivery. Leadership competencies were found to have a positive and significant influence on service delivery. This suggests that effective service delivery in university libraries is enhanced when

librarians possess strong leadership attributes such as communication skills, problem solving ability, teamwork, innovation and strategic thinking.

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