



Leadership Styles and Their Effect on Employee Engagement in Academic Libraries

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Abstract

This research investigates the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement inside academic libraries. Effective leadership is essential for cultivating a happy and inclusive workplace, promoting open communication, and enabling people to assume responsibility for their tasks. Transformational and servant leadership styles are seen as particularly successful in enhancing employee engagement. Transformational leadership promotes critical thinking, collaboration, and employee empowerment, whereas servant leadership emphasizes employees' needs and well-being, cultivates trust and respect, and facilitates open communication. The research delineates essential employee engagement tactics, encompassing consistent feedback and coaching, recognition and rewards, autonomy, professional growth opportunities, and work-life balance. Through the application of these leadership styles and methods, academic libraries may cultivate a good and inclusive workplace that enhances employee engagement and job satisfaction, hence resulting in increased organizational performance and success.

Keywords: Leadership, Academic Library, Employee Satisfaction, Employee Engagement, Leadership Style

1. Introduction

The classic concept that describes a library as the “heart of a university” is becoming less and less popular. A contemporary academic library might resemble a crossroads community where users are encouraged to examine what they already understand (Fowler, 2016). How can academic librarians encourage their institutions to become dynamic, embarked, and convergence communities” rather than static, collection-centric organizations?The overview of libraries and librarians today face an unprecedented breadth and complexity of difficulties. Most libraries are moving toward digital collections, or at the very least, hybrid print and digital collections. The spread of information technologies has undoubtedly had a significant impact on how libraries deliver their services and content, as well as the format of that content, very fast. Users' expectations for quality, accuracy, and prompt response to their demands are also rising in these circumstances (Sidorko, 2007). Competent library executives must possess the ability to mentor and cultivate people to realize their maximum potential and to establish seamless productive team members to provide efficient library services.

2. Leadership Style

Leadership styles are defined as the methods by which leaders use to guide, inspire, and affect their employees. A leader's style determines how they carry out strategies and plans to achieve certain goals while taking into consideration the expectations of participants and the safety and well-being of their team (C. Team, 2024).

The way a leader directs and inspires their team members toward a shared goal is reflected in their leadership style. A leader's approach to planning and executing strategies while meeting deadlines and emphasizing the development of the team is also determined by their leadership style (Sanyal, 2024).

A lot of literature has been produced regarding typical approaches to leadership and how to determine whether style—transformational or transactional, bureaucratic or laissez-faire—is best for you. However, “being a great leader means recognizing that different circumstances may call for different approaches,” says psychologist Daniel Goleman, who is best known for his work on emotional intelligence (Knight, 2024).

Any leader's chosen leadership style is typically a result of a convergence of their personality, experiences in life, emotional intelligence, upbringing, and thought process (C. Team, 2024b).



Figure 1: Leadership Styles

Source: <https://corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/leadership-styles/>

2.1. Democratic Leadership

A democratic leadership style entails a leader making decisions informed by the contributions of team members. It is a collaborative and consultative leadership approach that allows each team member to influence the direction of current activities. But ultimately, the decision-making depends on the leader.

2.2. Autocratic Leadership

The exact opposite of democratic leadership is autocratic leadership. In this scenario, the team's leader acts as their representative and makes all decisions without consulting them. The leader is in charge and has all authority. They determine all that has to be done and have total authority. There is no consultation with employees before making a decision. After the leader has made a decision, everyone is required to support it. Most of the time, the team has some degree of fear towards the leaders.

2.3. Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership is defined as a hands-off or passive style of leadership. However, leaders ensure that their team members have the requisite tools, information, and resources to complete their job roles. The "let them be" leadership style involves a leader taking a step back and allowing team members to plan, organize, make decisions, solve problems, and finish their tasks without supervision.

2.4. Transformational Leadership

The main goal of transformational leadership is to inspire team members to continuously raise the standard and accomplish goals they never would have imagined. This can be applied to organizations or groups. Transformational leaders hold their team members to a high standard and persistently push them until they achieve significant improvement or a change in their work, life, and organizations.

2.5. Transactional Leadership

The simplest way to characterize transactional leadership is as a "give and take" style of relationship that is more instantaneous. As a result, it's a transaction involving a reward for services delivered, with team members agreeing to follow their leader on job acceptance. Transactional leadership eliminates ambiguity between the leader and the subordinate, as the leader clearly articulates the tasks. It is a more direct style of leadership. However, it may discourage innovation and creativity due to its rigid rules and clear expectations. It might also lead to a high rate of employee turnover and a decline in job satisfaction.

2.6. Bureaucratic Leadership

Bureaucratic leadership is defined as compliance with established procedures and regulations. Policies are followed, with no leeway for interpretation, regarding procedures and rules. Bureaucratic leaders impose strict observance of established protocols, which specify how work is to be done. This leadership style is based on Max Weber's theory of bureaucracy and focuses on a hierarchical structure and a clear chain of command.

2.7. Servant Leadership

Servant leadership involves prioritizing the role of a servant to the team prior to assuming the position of a leader. A servant leader prioritizes the needs of their team over their own. It constitutes a method of exemplifying leadership. Servant leaders seek methods to cultivate, uplift, and motivate individuals under their guidance to attain optimal outcomes. It cultivates a positive organizational culture and generates high morale among team members. Additionally, it establishes an ethical atmosphere that is distinguished by robust values and principles.

3. Leadership Capabilities in the Library Professional

Leadership and leadership development are frequently examined within the discipline of organizational development (OD) in the field of management. As a profession for

practitioners, relatively few studies address leadership and organizational development from a theoretical perspective (Stephens and Russell, 2004). Although the term "leadership" has many different meanings in the context of the library profession, leadership is more about how an individual communicates with others than it is about a particular quality. According to Mierke (2014), leadership at the University of Saskatchewan is described as "using our behaviour to influence others to willingly follow an idea, process, or vision for the common good" in the context of an internal development program. Gilstrap (2009) evaluates relevant research from academic libraries and examines the main theories of OD and leadership. According to him, viewing libraries as complex systems and learning organizations causes us to refocus on conventional organizational and operational models in order to better address the quickly evolving external environment.

Leaders in libraries need to be able to interact and collaborate with a wide range of individuals. Leaders must establish a personal understanding with the library users and staff members. The institutional leaders should show respect to the librarians and staff members working there and provide them the freedom to voice their feelings. Leaders' ought to be personable, relatable, and well-rounded individuals that the library users can identify with as individuals. Leaders in libraries ought to prioritize users and their mission and vision first (Martin, 2020). In professional development, a classification of capacities into skills, knowledge, and abilities is a commonly utilized framework. While subjective listings may provide valuable insights, their systematic application in developing leadership programs and assessing performance. There exists a variance in the conceptualization of leadership skills (Ammons-Stephens et al., 2009; Bell, 2013; Davis, 2015).

4. Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to analyze excellent leadership qualities and styles in relation to job productivity and employee engagement for optimal user service in academic libraries. The specific objectives are:

- What are the specific leadership styles followed by the leader of the academic library?
- Which leadership style is more beneficial for achieving the optimal objectives of the organization?
- To examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement, motivation, commitment, and work satisfaction.
- To provide suggestions to library administrators and leaders regarding the best ways to encourage employee engagement using efficient leadership techniques.

5. Methodology

The proposed study focused on a mixed research approach based on theoretical induction and content analysis. The content was analyzed through various documents and thoroughly studied pertinent papers published in reputable databases. The information will be collected systematically and analysed as per the research objective.

6. Leadership for Employee Engagement in Library

Employee engagement serves as an outcome metric that advantages both organizations and human beings. All employees have a role to play in an organization, but leaders have a special opportunity to motivate staff to perform at the highest level (Energage, 2024). There are some leadership approaches that are helpful for employee engagement in an organization.

6.1. Build Trust

Engagement involves cultivating relationships, inspiring office colleagues, and collectively acknowledging advancements. Employees are more inclined to trust leaders who promote, consider, and act upon input. Establishing trust is facilitated by being purposeful and transparent, which makes people feel more at ease and assured.

6.2. Set up Goals and Techniques

One of the societal themes that promote engagement is enabling staff members to carry out their responsibilities. Employees perceive leaders as knowledgeable when they communicate significant choices, objectives, and tactics. This openness demonstrates to staff how they fit into your larger business plan and aids teams in setting priorities.

6.3. Encourage Training and Development

Leaders can promote training and development by rewarding employees for nurturing their staff, even if it leads to team transformations. They can also provide supervisors with resources to facilitate staff growth. Studies indicate that Top Workplaces recipients recognize the advantages of training and development.

6.4. Listen to Employee and Follow-Up

Maintaining a channel of open communication makes it easier for employees and supervisors to feel comfortable asking questions and making suggestions to leaders. Great leadership teams are aware that in order to increase productivity and performance, they require employee input. They are also aware that one of the primary causes of employee attrition is a

lack of execution. Pay attention to those around you and pursue conversations. Gaining ideas from individuals closest to the product or user is the ideal approach.

6.5. Implementing Employee Satisfaction

Gratitude and acknowledging employee efforts and accomplishments can significantly increase participation. It is recommended that leaders implement recognition initiatives that honour both minor victories and significant achievements. Financial incentives are just one aspect of effective recognition; other benefits include opportunities for professional advancement and public exposure. Employees are encouraged to sustain great performance when they get regular recognition, which emphasizes their value to the organization.

7. The Future of Library Leadership

According to the study, cooperation, honesty, diversity, and the capacity to adapt to change will be the most significant characteristics organizations need to have in order to be successful and survive in the future. In order to guide these organizations and their employees in the future, leaders will need to establish a clear vision, foster collaboration, nurture future leaders, recognize the value of inclusivity and diversity, communicate, and encourage dedication and involvement across the whole organization (Hesselbein, F., n.d). Over the past 20 years, librarianship has experienced significant transformation. Ten years ago, information was created, stored, and distributed very differently. This means that libraries as places of employment are extremely different now. Future library work environments and the competencies required to run those types of libraries should be considered by academic librarianship (Martin, 2018).

8. Effective Leadership Skills for Library Professionals

According to Aslam, M. (2018), it has been determined that the most important elements for the leaders of the future generation are teamwork, leadership growth, and effective leadership abilities and attributes.

8.1. Collaboration

Leaders and administrators in libraries have an obligation to comprehend the distinctions and balancing acts required in each of their responsibilities in order to be more actively involved in the curriculum of their organization. Leaders need to be well-versed in learning and the educational institution in order to collaborate closely with the faculty, learn about the courses that the institution offers, participate actively in research projects, and solicit input regarding the facilities and resources of the library. They also need to be aware of the results, which

should include the library's impact. Measuring the impact of services and resources might involve complex processes and procedures (Carter, 2014).

8.2. Growing Trend

Library leaders, administrators, and librarians share responsibilities regarding information delivery, licensing and access, building strong collections, retrieving and using information, institutional repositories at all levels of academic libraries, and many other emerging trends and challenges. Leadership is required in academic libraries to create new policies, processes, and strategies to address these problems and challenges in the education system's organization. In the last thirty years, there have been a lot of changes observed in libraries. These changes are a result of new technological trends and how they have affected the way academic libraries are perceived by researchers, students, and faculty members (ACRL Research Planning and Review Committee, 2014).

8.3. Skill and Qualities

According to Cromer (2009), effective leadership abilities and traits have always been seen as having the utmost importance, both from the outside and within the organization. Nobody can assert that they have reached the apex of knowledge and skill development, in terms of skills and competencies. Every organization has a distinct organizational culture, distinct strategic direction, and distinctive planning. As a result, academic libraries must connect professional motivation and organizational strategy planning with skill development. The proliferation of resources, services, and information technology has raised service standards to the point where library leadership now needs to possess new skills and knowledge. The viability of the profession depends on being current with it, and ongoing skill development is also necessary. Nonetheless, library leaders are under pressure to enhance their abilities in addition to their current leadership traits due to the evolving nature of education (Neigel, 2015).

8.4. Opportunities for Leadership Development

For the past few decades, the topic of library leadership has been under constant debate. A small number of academics have studied effective leadership competencies and abilities as well as opportunities for library directors to develop their leadership skills during the modernization of higher education. It is imperative that library and information professionals give attention to the topic of library leadership, with a particular focus on leadership scenarios. Academic libraries have access to a wide range of leadership development programs that support leaders in maintaining their current skill set for future leadership roles (Sears, 2014).

9. Leadership Styles and Job Productivity in Library

The successful achievement of an optimal production level in libraries necessitates the implementation and execution of appropriate leadership styles. Root (2015) asserted that a leader's decision-making, delegation of responsibilities, and interactions with subordinates can significantly influence the organization, either positively or negatively. A leader aspiring to achieve elevated productivity among subordinates must demonstrate wonderful behaviour. A leader's attitude toward his team members plays a critical role in achieving high levels of productivity. The leaders' character reflects the leadership style they are implementing in a library or any other organization; in other words, the leader's attitude toward his subordinates gradually reflects the leadership style (Azhar, 2013).

Thus, in order to attain productivity, academic library administrators need to adopt the proper leadership style. It's also critical to remember that, depending on the subordinate or subordinates in question and the circumstances, a variety of approaches may be used. The librarian or any other member of the library's management team is responsible for using their discretion in these situations.

Using effective leadership styles to manage library operations and activities may also promote creativity and innovation. The effective use of transformational and democratic leadership abilities will encourage creativity and innovation among library professionals in the current era (Chidi Deborah Segun-Adeniran, 2015). According to the Akparobore and Omoosejimi (2020) study, a leader in a library should have the following attributes in order to enable their subordinates to be productive and effective at work. The most important qualities of an effective leader are commitment and enthusiasm for their work, outstanding communication skills, the capacity to make decisions with effectiveness, the ability to delegate authority and empower subordinates, imagination and creativity, bravery, humility, excitement, and honesty.

The researcher conducted a study on the effectiveness of leadership styles among academic libraries; This paper aims to explore the leadership styles used by academic and research librarians and how well they fit the strategic objectives of their respective institutions. Additionally, the study contrasted and compared different leadership philosophies and how those differences affected the efficient provision of academic and research library services.

Kwanya and Stilwell (2018) show that the majority of leaders in academic and research libraries have a democratic leadership style. The findings also indicate that the majority of academic and research librarians believe that their managers' approaches to leadership have a

significant influence on both their own work and the effectiveness of the organization as a whole.

Lo et al. (2020) assert that a conventional management style may hinder effective management practices due to its obsolescence. Traditional leaders exhibit resistance to change, adhering to established methods due to their conviction that effective practices justify no modification. The study indicates that participants in the current study concurred on the degree of uncertainty surrounding the application of transformative leadership approaches in academic libraries. It was a result of not providing an overwhelming recognition of the system. However, participants indicated that they were willing to share best practices and enhance their own work procedures (Kunene and Mapulanga, 2023).

Through initiatives to increase capacity, library governance transactional leadership approaches may also boost productivity. Positive performance may be rewarded by the chance to increase one's capacity through additional coursework, retraining, conferences, and other events. If implemented by the library's leaders, this type of reward scheme will encourage high levels of productivity from the employees.

In order for the librarians to carry out their responsibilities, the leaders will periodically rearrange and modify the librarians' tasks to accommodate the technological advancements of 21st-century library services. Items such as installing good computers, internet connectivity to connect all librarians, and consistent inspiration. The responsibility of academic library leadership is to make space for briefings on the efficacy of the provision of services. Libraries must adapt to the ways in which society is evolving and diverging from its historical norms. When librarians align themselves with the trend, users will undoubtedly gain, and the system will also work as intended (Alex-Nmecha and David-West, 2022).

10. Conclusion

This article examined leadership styles and the service delivery of academic libraries. It asserts that leadership is the most distinctive characteristic of human beings. Whenever and wherever individuals assemble, a leader will inevitably occur. The document explained that leadership is contingent upon group affiliation and engagement. The leadership of the academic library must concentrate on actions that enhance user satisfaction with the services provided, stemming from inspirational leadership that motivates and empowers professionals. Bill Gates argues that empowerment is crucial for continuity. "In the forthcoming century, effective leaders will be those who empower others." Libraries and their leaders, in addition to their coordination responsibilities, have to ensure that objectives are efficiently and swiftly

accomplished by employing appropriate leadership styles or a combination thereof, as determined by the present situation. The educational institutions should employ both innate and developed leadership qualities to cultivate an atmosphere that effectively communicates the library's vision and intended to employees, therefore maximizing their potential and enhancing productivity.

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