

**Challenges Faced by Leaders in Improving the Job Performance of Subordinates****Dolly C. Kalu; Nonyelum P. Okpokwasili & Monday B. Ndor**  
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ISSN: 2360 – 994X (e-version)**Abstract**

The major purpose of this study was to determine challenges faced by leaders in improving the job performance of subordinates in academic libraries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The research design adopted for the study was a survey. The entire population which consisted of all the 74 professional and Para-professional staff working in the libraries studied also formed the sample size. Data collection was through questionnaire while analysis was done using frequency and means to answer the research question. It can be concluded that the major challenges leaders face in improving job performance of subordinates are that of subordinates not reporting to the leader who delegated authority, high expectations by subordinates from the leader and attitude of subordinates towards the leader. It is recommended among others that subordinates who are delegated to do something should be made to know from the beginning that they should report back to the leader. It is suggested that subsequent researchers can investigate other areas such as; Perception of subordinates on the leadership styles adopted by management of various libraries.

**Keywords; leadership, job performance, subordinates, Port Harcourt,**

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**Introduction**

A leader is a person who takes the central roles in interaction and who influences the behavior of other members of a group. Fatokun, Salaam, Ajegbomogun and Adidipe (2010) described a leader as an individual who has authority over others and who is responsible for guiding their actions. In academic libraries, university and college/polytechnic librarians are the managers of the libraries and will be described as leaders in this work. Laurie and Mullins (2007) described leadership as a matter of making a difference. According to them, it entails changing an organization and making active choices among plausible alternatives, mobilizing and developing them to get the job done. Mosadegh and Yarmohammadian (2006) stressed that leaders who are able to influence, motivate and direct employees will often be rewarded by loyalty and performance of their employees. Regardless of environmental constraints, they are praised for successes and blamed for failures. One thing that is paramount is the fact that a leader

should be able to carry the subordinates along at all times so as to be able to achieve the set goal(s) of the organization.

Leadership can be defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2007). However, good leaders must understand that positive relationships with all organization stakeholders are the gold standard for all organization success. As the performance of an organization is dependent on the quality of the workforce at all levels of the organization, it is essential to discuss the concept of individual performance (Tample, 2002),

Employees are the most important assets in organizations, without which, the goals and objectives may not be attained. All, Elmi and Mohammed (2013) maintain that although many factors may influence the performance of an organization, there can be little doubt that the quality of leadership available to it will be one of the most critical determinants of ultimate success. Leadership behavior plays a very important role in enhancing employees' job satisfaction, work motivation and work performance. Mwita, (2000) saw performance as a major multidimensional construct aimed to achieve results and has a strong link to strategic goals of organization.

Management style depicts the personality or image of the organization. Managers/leaders tell employees how things should be done and what is important in the organization. When managers develop consistent and articulated pattern of basic assumptions they tend to have strong teamwork. The influence of any style of leadership on the workforce, especially on the subordinate librarians will be bearable if the library leadership will achieve set goal. This is because followers are influenced when leadership and followership are properly linked (Vecchio, 2007). And in this respect, the subordinate job performance of librarians comes to bear to properly link leadership in academic libraries.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The impact of leadership in the overall success of the organization cannot be over emphasized. Many organizations have not been able to attain the set goals due to problems arising from leadership styles adopted in those organizations. Robbins, Crino and Fredendell (2002) stated that leadership technique or skill in organizations is necessitated by the fact that the set objectives of organization, formulated policies or strategies aim at the achievement of goals. Therefore, for progress to be recorded in any organizations, there must be a leader to direct and coordinate the activities of group members of the organization to ensure conformity with the policies and plan made. In the library, like other organizations, each leadership style has effect on the job performance of librarians, who are the "engines" saddled with the task of bringing

library vision and mission into reality. This will be achieved through mutual understanding, trust and commitment. Are there some challenges faced by leaders on their way to improving subordinates' job performance. This is what this study seeks to find out.

This paper is limited to challenges faced by leaders in improving the job performance of subordinates in academic libraries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Though there are many eight academic libraries in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, this study is limited to the following four out of eight academic libraries in Rivers State, Port Harcourt: University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT) Library, Rivers State University (RSU) Library, Ignatius Ajuru University of education, (IAUOE) Library and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic (CEAPOLY), Rumuola.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This study is aimed at finding out the challenges faced by leaders in improving the job performance of subordinates.

### **Research Question**

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research question was proposed to guide and direct the study:

What are the challenges faced by leaders in improving the job performance of subordinates?

### **Literature Review**

Yukl (2010) defines leadership as:

“The process wherein an individual member of a group or organization influence the interpretation of events, the choice of objectives and strategies, the organization of work activities, the motivation of people to achieve the objectives, the maintenance of cooperative relationships, the development of skills and confidence by members, and the enlistment of support and cooperation from people, the group of organization.”

Through leadership, teams are built and right decisions that ultimately affect the growth of the library are made. So decisions of leadership permeate every facet of an organization and hence its importance (Chukwuma and Idris, 2009). Leadership is therefore the ability of management to induce subordinates to work towards group goals with confidence and keenness. Martin (2013) identified five types of leadership that exist within an organization and its environment namely:

**Charismatic Leader:** This type of leadership style is based on the personality and status in the society. The followers are influenced by his physical and spiritual power, such leaders may not

necessarily possess plenty of wealth but possess certain unique traits or quality that distinguish them from other leaders. When such leader dies, he or she dies with his or her leadership.

**Traditional Leader:** This type of leadership is based on birth, and inheritance from father or mother. For example, the traditional rulers, chiefs, Obas etc.

**Situational Leadership:** This refers to leaders that are rightly placed at the right time to resolve problems at hand through negotiation and joint participation of followers in decision making in matters that concern them. The leader is he/she who does the right thing at the right time for the interest of the organization and employees.

**Appointed Leader:** This can be formal or informal leaders. It is formal when it is bureaucratic, they are structured in the organization and they have legitimate powers to punish or appraise subordinates. It is informal when group or team asks someone to be their spokesman as trade union leaders, pressure group leaders that are not appointed by the management.

**Functional Leader:** This type of leadership is based on the leader's behavior as regards his responsibility in the work place. His or her behaviour identifies his position as a leader.

**Job Performance:** High distinct performance is needed for organizations to achieve their goals. Therefore, leaders' performance is one of the important pointers in assessing organizational performance. Indeed, performance that is founded on a relative judgment or absolute value can echo inclusive organizational performance (Wall, Michie, Patterson, Wood, Sheehan, Clegg, & West, 2004). Although, performance is frequently regulated by financial statistics, it can also be assessed through the blend of task-related aspects and expected behavior (Motowidlo, 2003).

Various matters can be assessed in higher education including the personnel performance (e.g., research, faculty service and teaching), educational; programs, student learning, and institutional productivity. More specifically, the objects of assessment with regard to academic leaders may comprise behavior, effectiveness, attitudes, performance, or decision making. Evaluating performance of a leader encompasses inquiring how well he/she is conducting his/her functions. It can be formulated as how effective is he/she in achieving its objectives and how proficiently does he/she employs the resources in practice? How much faculty and leaders have assurance in each other's competence and integrity' to what extent conflict happens and in what way they try to reach communal objectives and goals; how much discussion is held in the process of decision making; how communication streams downward upward, and through the institution; how much faculty senses affection (Seldin, 1988).

There are factors which have been identified that bear on employee performance and unless the management or shareholders of an organization are able to recognize them and find solution in the overall interest of the organization, the performance level or capacity of the

employee may be unacceptable. In the Nigerian context, Ubeku (1983) identified the following key factors.

- a) A good infrastructure
- b) Available and adequate materials
- c) Intelligent use of capital
- d) Adequate machinery
- e) A good organization structure, providing for clear line of communication
- f) A trained and knowledgeable management
- g) A committed and motivated staff

### **Challenges of Leadership**

The status of a leader is fraught with many problems. The following are some of the management problems confronting a leader as identified by Tennenbaum and Schmidt (1973):

**Human Factor:** Human beings are a constant factor in the accomplishment of the organization's goals – the task to be accomplished and the resources with which to accomplish the task. Coping with the changing nature of human beings is a very big problem to leadership. This is because a loyal staff today could be forced by personal circumstances or societal changes to change behavior tomorrow.

**The High Demands of an Effective Leader:** The Trait Theory assumes that certain traits or characteristics will tend to lead to effective leadership. These traits can be modified by training but this does not invalidate the need for prescribing qualities of effective leaders. Thus, leadership is a highly demanding task without its qualities will lead to failure.

**Delegation:** This is the process whereby a leader passes on some of his authority to his subordinate staff. It is one of the processes which management principles encourage because it relieves the head of minor chores and leaves him time for more important matters. It offers some management staff opportunity to experience certain aspects of the Head's authority and makes such staff develop confidence in themselves. In practice, some leaders do not give a free hand to the subordinate staff whom they have delegated authority to take decisions; on their own part, some subordinate staff do not report at all to the Head, rather they behave as if they are not representing their Head and fail to recognize that it is only authority to act that is delegated to them not the responsibility for the consequences of their decisions. The ultimate responsibility remains with the Head. This constitutes a problem for the leader.

**Staff Indiscipline:** Some human factors is the main cause of the worst problem for the leader, it becomes mandatory that the staff must be disciplined. The type of punishment that is meted out to erring staff will depend on the personality of the leader and the style of management in operation.

**Environmental Problem:** No matter how effective a leader is, if operates in the present, and ignores long-run economic, political, social and technological changes, he will certainly run into

avoidable problems. These factors call for change in leadership style and modify the situations that the leader must fact.

**Source of Authority:** Authority can come from the organization or the staff. There has been advocacy for faculty status for university libraries. If this comes to fruition, it will mean that the position of University Librarian will be elective like Deans of faculties. In this case, a leader can be voted out of power if he falls out of favour with his staff.

**Choice of Management Style:** This can constitute a problem if the leader fails to consider the multiple-determining criteria for such a choice and it, in the end, he does not choose a style that is combative with his personality traits.

**Personnel Problems:** Closely related with the problem of human factor are personnel problems. These include high staff turnover, dearth of experienced staff at managerial level, internal politics and godfather system, lack of professional motivation, malingering and absenteeism, disloyalty and lateness.

### **Research Method**

The study adopted a descriptive survey method. The academic libraries studied are all located in tertiary institutions Rivers State which is one of the thirty-six (36) states in Nigeria and was created on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1967. Rivers State is famous for its vast reserves of crude oil and natural gas. The tertiary institutions found in the state are as follows. University of Port Harcourt established by the Federal Government in 1975, the Rivers State University of Science and Technology (now Rivers State University), Port Harcourt founded in 1980 by the State Government; the School of Health Technology, Port Harcourt, established by the state government; the Federal College of Education (Technical), Omoku; the state-owned Rivers State Polytechnic at Bori; Ignatius Ajuru University of Education with three campuses at Rumuolumeni, Nkpolu-Oroworukwo and Ndele; School of Nursing and Midwifery at Rumeme, Port Harcourt; and last but not the least, Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic at Rumuola. All these schools mentioned above, ranging from universities to colleges have existing and functional academic libraries and are of immense help in the course of this research which prompted the researcher to survey them with particular interest in challenges faced by leaders in improving job performance of subordinates.

The population of the study is 74. This comprises of all the professionals and Para-professionals of the academic libraries studied namely; University of Port Harcourt (41; 22 Professionals and 19 Para-professionals), Ignatius Ajuru University of Education (10; 7 Professionals and 3 Para-professionals), Rivers State University (16; 11 Professionals and 5 Para-professionals), and Captain Elechi Amadi Polytechnic Libraries (7; 3 Professionals and 4 Para-professionals); all in Port Harcourt. The entire population of 74 was used as sample for this study since it is not too large and can be conveniently managed by the researchers.

The study used questionnaire instrument titled “Challenges Faced by Leaders in Improving Job Performance of Subordinates (CFLIIPS).” A four- point Likert scale questionnaire was developed to provide the respondents ease of answering the questions as per their level of agreement (McLeod, 2008). The Likert scale follows the format of: 1) Strongly Agree (SA); 2) Agree (A); 3) Disagree (D) and 4) Strongly Disagree (SD).

The face validity of the instrument was determined by two experts in Library and Information Science, and Measurement and Evaluation who examined the purpose of the study and research questions alongside with each item of the instrument in order to determine whether the instrument actually measured what it is supposed to measure. The observations made by the experts were used to effect necessary corrections on the instrument before it was finally administered to the respondents. The reliability of the instrument was trial-tested in Imo State University, Owerri Library. Split-half method was used to test the reliability of the questionnaire instrument. Their responses were analysed using the Pearson Product Monument Correlation (PPMC) giving a correlation coefficient (r) is 0.94. This shows that the instrument is very strong and reliable to gather data for the study. The researchers personally administered the data collection instrument to the respondents with the help of the library staff that work in the libraries studied. For an accurate and effective analysis of data and findings, the data collected formed the basis of analyses using frequency counts and means to answer the research question

**DATA ANALYSES AND INTERPRETATION.**

**Data Analyses Based on Research Question**

Research question: what are the challenges faced by leaders in improving the job performance of subordinates?

**Table 1: Challenges Faced by Leaders in Improving Job Performance of Subordinates (N=74)**

S/No	Items Statement		Categories				Total Score xxx	Mean ( $\bar{x}$ ) (Total Score÷74)	Remarks
			SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)			
1	The changing nature of human beings	Freq.	8	14	26	26	152	2.05	Negative
		Score	32	42	52	26			
2	Subordinate not reporting to the leader who	Freq.	26	19	16	13	206	2.78	Positive
		Score	104	57	32	13			

	delegated authority								
3	High expectations by subordinates from the leader	Freq.	24	18	18	14	200	2.70	Positive
		Score	96	54	36	14			
4	Leadership style may not match with the personality trait of the leader	Freq.	20	14	20	20	182	2.46	Negative
		Score	80	42	40	20			
5	Attitude of subordinates towards the leader	Freq.	16	26	18	14	222	3.00	Positive
		Score	64	108	36	14			
6	The source of authority of the leader	Freq.	13	15	22	24	165	2.23	Negative
		Score	52	45	44	24			
7	Difficulty in determining the right punishment to be given to erring staff	Freq.	10	13	27	24	161	2.18	Negative
		Score	44	39	54	24			

**Researchers' Field work 2018; Criterion Score = 2.50**

From table 1 above, items 1 (The changing nature of human beings), 4 (Leadership style may not match with the personality trait of the leader), 6 (The source of authority of the leader) and 7 (Difficulty in determining the right punishment to be given to erring staff) are not seen as the challenges faced by leaders in improving job performance of subordinates. This is because their mean scores of 2.05, 2.46, 2.23 and 2.18 respectively; are below the cut off mean of 2.50. However, the major challenges are subordinates not reporting to leaders who delegated authority to them (item no. 2, mean score 2.78), high expectations by subordinates from the leader (item no.3, mean score 2.70), and attitude of subordinates towards the leader (item no. 5 with mean scores 3.00).

This finding shows that leadership is fraught with problems as identified by Ifidon and Ifidon (2007) as: subordinate not reporting to the leader who delegated authority, high expectations by subordinates from the leader and attitude of subordinates towards the leader

**CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTION**

It can be concluded that the major challenges leaders face in improving job performance of subordinates are that of subordinates not reporting to the leader who delegated authority, high expectations by subordinates from the leader and attitude of subordinates towards the leader. Based on the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that:

1. Subordinates who are delegated to do something should be made to know from the beginning that they should report back to the leader.
2. Subordinates should not expect much from their leaders especially those things beyond the leaders' limits.
3. Leaders should try as much as possible to maintain cordial relationships with their subordinates.
4. The leaders themselves who should keep away selfish interest and look for a way of bringing out the best in their subordinates.

It is hereby suggested that subsequent researchers can continue to extend the frontiers of knowledge by investigating other area such as; *Perception of subordinates on the leadership styles adopted by management of various libraries.*

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