

# DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, AWARENESS, AND UTILISATION PATTERNS OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA: IMPLICATIONS FOR PROMOTING ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE AND ENHANCING USER ENGAGEMENT IN NIGERIA

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## Abstract

*This study is on public libraries' roles in helping achieve to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria. Poverty has long been a challenge that has faced humanity as many struggles to make ends meet and get decent living for themselves. We live in an 'Information Age' where people equipped with the right information are able to make better decisions and better their lives. Public libraries exist as an information household that can provide people with the right information to better their status quo and life as a whole. This study identified the demographic characteristics of public library users in Nigeria, investigated the level of awareness of public libraries, the frequency of use of the library, identified the reasons for visiting public libraries, and the types of resources and services that users consult, and finally, suggested strategies that could be employed by public libraries in achieving the SDG goals on poverty eradication in Nigeria. A survey was carried out using online Google Forms as the data collection instrument. Questions were generated in line with the research objectives and a link to the form was shared on social media with 238 young adult Nigerians from 25 selected states across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Findings revealed that 54.9% of male students that falls within the age range of 15-25 years from tertiary institutions form the highest number of public library users in Nigeria. Despite half of the respondents being aware of public libraries, the majority do not visit, with only a small percentage visiting on a daily basis. Borrowing books and other information materials as well as studying are the main reasons for visiting public libraries in Nigeria. The study recommended the importance of increasing awareness of public libraries, and partnership and collaboration with other libraries and organisations in rolling out programs on poverty eradication for youths.*

**Keywords:** Information Resources, Public Library Services, Nigeria, SDG (Sustainable Development Goals), User Engagement.

## INTRODUCTION

Poverty has been a challenge and the United Nations has poverty eradication as the number one, on the list of the Sustainable

Development Goals that was outlined in 2015 with the official wording being "No Poverty". Member States of the United Nations have all pledged to "Leave No One Behind" meaning that the goal is a "powerful

commitment to leave no one behind and to reach those furthest behind first”.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Poverty Eradication(n.d.) has five targets to measure the progress being made. These five targets are:

1.1 By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.99 a day.

1.2 By 2030, reduce at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.

1.3 Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable.

1.4 By 2030, ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services, ownership and control over land and other forms of property, inheritance, natural resources, appropriate new technology and financial services, including microfinance.

1.5 By 2030, build the resilience of the poor and those in vulnerable situations and reduce their exposure and vulnerability to climate-related extreme events and other economic, social and environmental shocks and disasters.

A. Ensure significant mobilisation of resources from a variety of sources, including through enhanced development cooperation, to provide adequate and

predictable means for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to implement programmes and policies to end poverty in all its dimensions.

B. Create sound policy frameworks at the national, regional and international levels, based on pro-poor and gender-sensitive development strategies, to support accelerated investment in poverty eradication actions.

According to a blog post on the United Nation website (2020, October 7), “Southern Asia and sub-Saharan Africa are expected to see the largest increases in extreme poverty, with an additional 32 million and 26 million people, respectively, living below the international poverty line as a result of the pandemic”.

Nigeria as we all know it is a nation ravaged by poverty and it is in a similar situation among several nations around the world, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa. It has been the major source of the widening global inequality. Poverty trends to also be one of the most difficult human challenges to address as poverty alleviation requires all possible support and resources available.

An official 2019-2020 report from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2020, November 23) states that 40% or 83 million of Nigerians live in poverty. Although Nigeria's poverty profile has not been updated since then, it is estimated that the number of people living below the International Poverty Line in Nigeria will have risen to 90 million before the end of 2021 which will amount to over 45% of Nigeria's entire population. The data from the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2019) has shown that the total number of poor Nigerians is more than the entire population

of South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles and Eswatini combined.

Data from WorldAtlas (2021, February 8) has shown that the average Nigerian household expenditure on food is about 58.9% of their income which is the highest anywhere in the world. For context, households in nations like the US and UK are said to spend 8.6% (USDA 2020) and 10.8% respectively of their income on food.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to a 2019 survey by the National Bureau of Statistics (2020, November 23), over 40% of people in Nigeria live in poverty. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, the entire population of Nigeria is approximately 211 million (2021, March) with makes the total number of poor Nigerians to amount to over 84 million people which is one of the highest in the world.

The 21st century, which is also commonly termed the "Information Age", people who can go to information centres such as libraries, media outlets and even the Internet to gain knowledge which they use to better their status quo. As a popular saying goes "Knowledge is Power", it is easy to see various situations around where people went out of their way to gain more knowledge and understanding and in turn, used that knowledge obtained to change their situation. A knowledgeable person is indeed a powerful person. The absence of well-functioning and equipped public libraries can be seen as a loophole preventing people from equipping themselves with the proper knowledge that is required.

The absence of an efficient and robust information system for proper dissemination of relevant knowledge, information and information services to the masses can also be regarded as a contributing factor to the poverty dilemma in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that this study hopes to determine the role of public libraries in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals on poverty eradication in Nigeria.

## AIM AND OBJECTIVES

This study aimed at determining the role of public libraries in achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs) on poverty eradication in Nigeria. To achieve this aim, the following objectives were set:

1. identify the demographic characteristics of public library users in Nigeria, including their gender, age, educational level, occupation, monthly income, state of residence, and location/environment;
2. investigate the level of awareness of public libraries among the respondents and the frequency of use of the library;
3. identify the reasons for visiting public libraries in Nigeria and the types of resources and services that users seek;
4. recommend strategies that could be employed to help public libraries play a major role in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the United Nations (UN), poverty eradication is the process of permanently eliminating the economic condition of scarcity or insufficiency and

achieving a state where individuals and communities have access to adequate resources to meet their basic needs and improve their standard of living (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Poverty is not only a reflection of the lack of income and resources but also a factor preventing a stable existence. Its indicators include hunger, malnutrition, insufficient access to education and other essential services such as good health care, social discrimination and marginalisation, and minimal participation in decision-making (World Bank, 2021).

Adam Smith, in his book "The Wealth of Nations," stated that "no society can be prosperous and happy in which the majority of the members are poor, unemployed and unhappy" (Smith, 1776, p. 2). This idea is widely accepted, and it is generally agreed that poverty poses a significant risk to the peace, stability, and survival of humanity (UNESCO, 2021). In the 21st century, a new form of poverty has also emerged, known as 'The Information Poor.' The Information Poor are those people who have little or no access to information on how to better their standard of living (Webster & Korb, 2019). For example, during the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic, the information-rich were able to gain knowledge on preventive measures that they can take to help reduce their chances of the virus, which in turn helped reduce their chances of being infected by the virus. On the other hand, the Information Poor were not able to take those preventive measures because they could not gain access to such crucial information.

In Nigeria, poverty has had a dehumanizing impact on society, particularly on individuals who face unemployment, lack of opportunities, and a lack of skills needed to

overcome poverty (Ogunrinola et al., 2019). It is crucial to deploy sufficient energy and capital to ensure that people can meet their basic needs and those of their families to help break the vicious cycle of poverty and free society from its deadly effects.

Public libraries serve as information centres that help bridge the gap between the information rich and the Information Poor. Public libraries provide information services to people irrespective of age, gender, religion, political affiliation and so on (American Library Association, 2021). By providing access to information, public libraries can empower individuals and communities to make informed decisions about their lives, improve their standard of living, and ultimately contribute to poverty eradication efforts.

Sustainable development is an interdisciplinary concept that integrates social, economic and environmental aspects to cover the diverse needs of today's world. This concept advocates the need to plan development to meet the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. This means that the use of resources must be done in such a way as to create, increase and avoid harmful causes that may prevent future generations from meeting their needs. Eradication of poverty requires empowering Nigerian citizens through capacity building based on the availability, accessibility and use of appropriate information.

## Public Libraries & Poverty Eradication

There are no particular recommendations from the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) on

"What Public Libraries Can Do to Help Eradicate Poverty." However, IFLA does offer recommendations for public libraries on how to assist underserved groups, including low-income people. The following is a summary of what is recommended by the IFLA Public Library Services to Marginalised Communities Guidelines:

1. **Access to information:** People have access to knowledge and resources at public libraries that can help them improve their economic situation and fight poverty.
2. **Help with Information on opportunities available:** Public libraries provide information and services that can assist people in finding jobs and acquiring the skills they need to be successful in the workforce. Job search and skill development.
3. **Support for entrepreneurship:** Public libraries can offer data and tools to help business owners launch and expand their operations, generating employment and business prospects in their communities.
4. **Financial literacy:** Public libraries can provide information and programs that support financial literacy, assist individuals in better managing their money, and lower their risk of becoming impoverished.
5. **Digital inclusion:** Public libraries can give people access to technology and instruction in digital skills, enabling them to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by the digital economy.

Overall, public libraries are extremely important in helping people and communities fight poverty and achieve sustainable development.

Access to information can lead to informed decision-making, which can result in improved quality of life and reduced poverty and inequality (IFLA, 2014). This aligns with Target 16.10 of the SDGs, which emphasizes the role of information in promoting peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, providing access to justice, and building effective and accountable organizations. Information literacy is also associated with better outcomes for poor people, as they can obtain information about government initiatives and access their rights, ultimately improving their standard of living.

### Challenges Public Libraries Face in Achieving the United Nations SDG Goal One

1. **Lack of Financial Support:** This is one of the biggest obstacles preventing public libraries from fulfilling the SDG on ending poverty. To maintain their programs and services, libraries frequently struggle to raise enough money, which makes it challenging to reach and assist underprivileged areas.
2. **Accessibility:** Ensuring that libraries are open to everyone in society, especially those who are poor, is a difficulty. This might entail tackling socio-economic hurdles like a lack of digital literacy as well as physical access barriers like a lack of mobility or impairments.
3. **Relevance:** Another problem that public libraries confront is making sure that their services and programs are pertinent and fulfil the needs of communities that are struggling with poverty. To do this, programs and services must be developed that take into account the unique needs and difficulties experienced by these communities.

4. **Technology:** For public libraries attempting to accomplish the SDG on eradicating poverty, the digital divide between rich and poor communities provides a significant obstacle. Equal access to technology and online resources can be challenging, particularly in areas with poor infrastructure and resources.
5. **Limited Awareness:** The contribution that libraries may make to the SDG of ending poverty is frequently underappreciated. This may result in underfunding of library initiatives and services, so denying libraries the chance to truly contribute to the battle against poverty.
6. **Staffing:** Public libraries may also struggle to find and keep the qualified personnel necessary to deliver the high-quality services necessary for efforts to end poverty.
7. **Limited Resources:** Libraries frequently lack the space, supplies, and equipment necessary to deliver the services required to support efforts to eradicate poverty.
8. **Infrastructure needs major updating:** To accommodate the demands of contemporary library services such as reader's services, circulation services, ICT services etc, many public libraries

are housed in older structures. This may make it more difficult for libraries to help initiatives to end poverty.

## METHODOLOGY

### Population of the Study

The population that was studied are Nigerians most especially young adults that uses the public library on their locality. According to the National Bureau of Statistics of Nigeria, the entire population of Nigeria is approximately 211 million (2021, March) and the youth population (ages 15-35 years) in Nigeria was estimated to be 64.2 million, which is about 32.5% of the total population, as of 2021 (2021, May). This implies that the population of the study was the 64.2 million young adults in Nigeria.

### Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study adopted the random sampling technique to select young adults across the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria based on their willingness to participate in the survey. These geopolitical zones are: North Central, North East, North West, South East, South South and South West zones.

Sample Size Table for the Six Geo-Political Zones in Nigeria

S/N	Geo-Political Zones	States
1	North Central	Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, Federal Capital Territory (FCT)
2	North East	Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, Yobe
3	North West	Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara
4	South East	Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo

5	South South	Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Rivers
6	South West	Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo

According to Krejcie & Morgan table, a sample population of 10 million to 100 million people will require a sample size of 382 persons and the total population of our population of study is 64.2 million young adult Nigerians which will require a sample size of 382 respondents.

### Research Instruments

For this study, the research instrument used was Google Forms. Google Forms is an online survey tool that can be used to create and distribute surveys and questionnaires. The study used Google Forms to create a research questionnaire that includes the questions derived from research questions for the research population.

### Validation of Research Instruments

The research instrument was validated by the supervisor to ensure it is very detailed to get the necessary information only. The Google Form was evaluated to verify the adequacy and relevance of the data collection tool for

**Table 1. Response Rate to Survey**

Expected Response	Response Received	Response Rate
382	238	62.3%

The table shows the response rate to a survey, with an expected response of 382 and a response received of 238, resulting in a response rate of 62.3%. Based on this table, we can see that the response rate to the survey is slightly above average, as a response rate of 60% or higher is generally considered to be good

the research under consideration. Every adjustment was done to ensure it was a good and suitable data collecting device.

### Procedure for Data Collection

A Google Form was designed with questions that covers the entire research objectives. The Google Form link was shared among young adults in Nigeria via social media platforms. It took a total of two weeks and 3days to share and collate filled forms from the from the respondents.

## RESULTS

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### 1. Introduction

The questionnaire was created on Google form and a link to the questionnaire was shared across social media platform for people to follow and answer the questions. 238 respondents were gotten form the shared links and their responses are below.

#### 2. Research Question One

What are demographic characteristics of public library users in Nigeria, including their gender, age, educational level, occupation, monthly income, state of residence, and location/environment?

**Table 2. Distribution by Gender**

S/N	Item	Percentage
1	Male	130(54.9%)
2	Female	104(43.9%)
3	Prefer not to say	3(1.3%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table provides the distribution of individuals based on their gender, with three categories listed. The first category is "Male," including 130 individuals, making up 54.9% of the total. The second category is

"Female," including 104 individuals, accounting for 43.9% of the total. The third category is "Prefer not to say," with only three individuals, making up 1.3% of the total.

**Table 3. Distribution by Age**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	15-25	118(49.6%)
2	26-35	91(38.2%)
3	36-45	5(2.1%)
4	46-55	25(10.5%)
5	56 and above	2(0.8%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table provides the distribution of individuals based on their age, with five categories listed. The first category is "15-25," including 118 individuals, accounting for 49.6% of the total. The second category is "26-35," with 91 individuals, making up

38.2% of the total. The third category is "36-45," with only five individuals, accounting for 2.1% of the total. The fourth category is "46-55," including 25 individuals, making up 10.5% of the total. Finally, the fifth category is "56 and above," with only two individuals, making up 0.8% of the total.

**Table 4. Distribution by Educational Level**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Secondary	3(1.3%)
2	Tertiary	160(67.2%)
3	Postgraduate	74(31.1%)
4	Undergraduate	1(0.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table presents the distribution of individuals based on their educational level, with four categories listed. The first category is "Secondary," which includes three individuals, accounting for 1.3% of the total. The second category is "Tertiary," which

includes 160 individuals, making up 67.2% of the total. The third category is "Postgraduate," with 74 individuals, accounting for 31.1% of the total. Finally, the fourth category is "Undergraduate," which only includes one individual, making up 0.4% of the total.

**Table 5. Distribution by Occupation**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
		140(58.8%)
1	Student	4(1.7%)
2	Artisan	34(14.3%)
3	Civil Servant	57(23.9%)
4	Self-Employed	1(0.4%)
5	Programmer	1(0.4%)
6	Entrepreneur	1(0.4%)
7	Teacher	1(0.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table presents the distribution of respondents based on their occupation. The table has seven categories of occupations, including students, artisans, civil servants, self-employed individuals, programmers, entrepreneurs, and teachers.

The table shows the number of respondents and their corresponding percentage for each

occupation category. The majority of respondents, 58.8%, were students, while only a small proportion of respondents identified as artisans, with 1.7%. Civil servants accounted for 14.3% of respondents, and self-employed individuals accounted for 23.9%. The remaining categories, including programmers, entrepreneurs, and teachers, each accounted for 0.4% of respondents.

**Table 6. Distribution by Monthly Income (in naira)**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Below N30,000	109(45.8%)
2	N30,000 - N50,000	77(32.4%)
3	N50,000 - N100,000	21(8.8%)
4	Above N100,000	31(13%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table presents the distribution of respondents based on their monthly income in Nigerian naira. The table has four

categories of income ranges, starting with those earning below N30,000, those earning between N30,000 to N50,000, those earning

between N50,000 to N100,000, and those earning above N100,000.

The table shows the number of respondents and their corresponding percentage for each income range. The majority of respondents,

45.8%, earned below N30,000 per month, while 32.4% earned between N30,000 to N50,000. Only a small proportion of respondents, 8.8%, earned between N50,000 to N100,000, while 13% earned above N100,000.

**Table 7. Distribution by States of Residence According to the Six Geo-Political Zones**

S/N	Geo-Political Zones	States	Number/Percentage
1	North-Central	Abuja	26(10.9%)
		Benue	25(10.5%)
		Kogi	53(22.3%)
		Kwara	10(4.2%)
		Nasarawa	3(1.3%)
		Niger	19(8%)
		Plateau	2(0.8%)
2	North-East	Bauchi	4(1.7%)
		Adamawa	2(0.8%)
3	North-West	Kaduna	49(20.6%)
		Kano	3(1.3%)
		Katsina	2(0.8%)
4	South-East	Abia	1(0.4%)
		Anambra	2(0.8%)
5	South-South	Akwa Ibon	3(1.3%)
		Cross River	2(0.8%)
		Delta	3(1.3%)
6	South-West	Lagos	2(0.8%)
		Ondo	13(5.5%)
		Osun	1(0.4%)
		Oyo	13(5.5%)
<b>Total</b>		<b>21(58.3%)</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table shows the distribution of individuals based on their states of residence within the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. The first column lists the serial number of each geo-political zone, while the second column shows the name of each zone. The

third column lists the states within each zone, and the last column shows the corresponding number or percentage of respondents in each state. Respondents were gotten from 21 states out of 36 states in Nigeria which covers 58.3% of states in Nigeria.

The North-Central zone has the highest number of individuals with 53 individuals (22.3%) residing in Kogi state, followed by Abuja with 26 respondents (10.9%), while Plateau state has the lowest number of respondents with just 2 respondents (0.8%).

The North-East zone has Bauchi state with the highest number of respondents with 4 respondents (1.7%) and Adamawa state with the lowest number with just 2 respondents (0.8%).

The North-West zone has the highest number of respondents with 49 respondents (20.6%) residing in Kaduna state while Katsina state has the lowest number of respondents with just 2 respondents (0.8%).

In the South-East zone, Abia and Anambra states have just 1 respondent (0.4%) and 2 respondents (0.8) respectively.

In the South-South zone, Delta and Akwa Ibom states have the highest number of respondents with 3 respondents (1.3%) each while Cross River state has just 2 respondents (0.8%).

Finally, the South-West zone has Ondo and Oyo states with the highest number of respondents with 13 respondents (5.5%) each, while Lagos and Osun states have 2 respondents (0.8%) and 1 respondent (0.4%) respectively.

**Table 8. Distribution by Location/Environment**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Urban	204(85.7%)
2	Rural	34(14.3%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table presents the distribution of respondents based on the location/environment of their residence. Out of the total respondents, 85.7% live in urban areas, while 14.3% live in rural areas.

### 3. Research Question Two

What is the level of awareness of public libraries among the respondents and their frequency of use?

**Table 9. Level of Awareness of any Public Libraries Around the Respondents**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Yes	121(50.8%)
2	No	97(40.8%)
3	Maybe	20(8.4%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table presents the distribution of respondents based on their level of awareness of any public libraries. Among the respondents, 50.8% indicated that they are aware of public libraries. On the other hand,

40.8% of the respondents indicated that they are not aware of any public libraries. A total of 8.4% of the respondents were unsure and responded with "maybe" when asked about their awareness of public libraries.

**Table 10. Distribution by How Often Respondents Visit a Public Library**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Daily	2(0.8%)
2	Weekly	3(1.3%)
3	Monthly	3(1.3%)
4	Occasionally	85(35.7%)
5	Never	145(60.9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>238(100%)</b>

This table shows the distribution of respondents based on how often they visit a public library. Out of the total number of respondents, only 0.8% visit the library on a daily basis, while 1.3% visit weekly or monthly. The majority of respondents, representing 35.7%, visit the library occasionally. On the other hand, a significant number of respondents, accounting for 60.9%, never visit the public library.

**Table 11. Public Libraries Respondents Visit (some respondents mentioned more than one)**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	Ahmadu Bello University Library	2
2	National Library of Nigeria, Kaduna State	4
3	Sokoto state library	1
4	Kogi State Library Board	1
5	Stella Obasanjo library	1
6	Kenneth Dike Library	1
7	Ta'al E-library lafia Nasarawa state	1
8	University of Jos Library	1
9	FUT Minna Library	7
10	Kaduna State University Library	1
11	Bauchi State Library	4
12	Agege Public Library	1
13	Kwara State Public Library	2
14	Benue State Library	1
15	Niger State Public Library	2
16	National Library Jos	1
17	Kaduna Polytechnic Library	1
18	Kaduna State Public Library	4
19	Ibom E-Library Uyo	1

20	Delta State Library	1
21	Murtala Muhammed Library	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>39</b>

This table presents information on the distribution of respondents' usual visits to public libraries in Nigeria.

The table shows that the library with the highest number of respondents who usually visit is FUT Minna Library, with 7 respondents, while the other libraries have between 1 to 4 respondents who usually visit them. Some of the other libraries that have a relatively high number of respondents who usually visit them include the National Library of Nigeria, Kaduna State (4 respondents), Bauchi State Library (4 respondents), and Kaduna State Public Library (4 respondents).

In terms of the specific libraries that respondents usually visit, the table shows

that respondents visit a variety of libraries, including university libraries such as Ahmadu Bello University Library, University of Jos Library, and Kaduna State University Library, as well as public libraries such as National Library Jos, Agege Public Library, Kwara State Public Library, and Benue State Library. The table also includes a few e-libraries, such as Ta'al E-library Iafia Nasarawa state and Ibom E-Library Uyo. Overall, the table provides insight into the distribution of respondents' usual visits to different public libraries in Nigeria.

#### 4. Research Question Three

What are the reasons for visiting public libraries in Nigeria and the types of resources and services that users seek?

**Table 12. Main Reasons Respondents Visit a Public Libraries**

S/N	Item	Number/Percentage
1	To borrow books or other materials	118(49.6%)
2	To read newspapers or magazines	22(9.2%)
3	To use computers or the internet	67(28.2%)
4	To attend programs or events	66(27.7%)
5	To study or do homework	117(49.2%)
6	To meet friends or socialize	17(7.1%)
7	To seek information or advice	94(39.5%)
8	To search for job opportunities	19(8%)
9	For project work	1(0.4%)
10	I have never visited the library	19(7.9%)
	<b>Total</b>	<b>540</b>

The table shows the main reasons why people visit public libraries. The table indicates that individuals could select more than one option. The table has 10 items, and each item represents a reason for visiting the library.

The first reason for visiting a public library was to borrow books or other materials, and 118 individuals, representing 49.6% of the total respondents, selected this option.

The second reason was to read newspapers or magazines, and this option was selected by 22 individuals, representing 9.2% of the respondents.

The third reason was to use computers or the internet, and 67 individuals, representing 28.2% of the respondents, selected this option.

The fourth reason was to attend programs or events, and 66 individuals, representing 27.7% of the respondents, selected this option.

The fifth reason was to study or do homework, and 117 individuals, representing 49.2% of the respondents, selected this option.

The sixth reason was to meet friends or socialize, and 17 individuals, representing 7.1% of the respondents, selected this option.

The seventh reason was to seek information or advice, and 94 individuals, representing 39.5% of the respondents, selected this option.

The eighth reason was to search for job opportunities, and 19 individuals, representing 8% of the respondents, selected this option.

The ninth reason was for project work, and only one individual, representing 0.4% of the respondents, selected this option. Finally, 19

individuals, representing 7.9% of the respondents, indicated that they have never visited the library.

#### **5. Research Question Four**

What strategies could be employed to help public libraries play a major role in helping to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria?

There are several strategies that public libraries can employ to help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria. These include:

Providing access to information and resources: Public libraries can provide access to information and resources that can help individuals and communities overcome poverty. This includes access to educational materials, job search resources, financial literacy resources, and more.

Partnering with community organizations: Partnership with community organizations to provide services and resources that address poverty. This includes partnering with local schools to provide homework help and tutoring, partnering with job training programs to provide access to resources, and partnering with local government agencies to provide access to social services.

Engaging with marginalized communities: Public libraries can engage with marginalized communities to better understand their needs and provide services that address poverty. This includes outreach programs to displaced communities, providing materials in multiple languages, and providing resources for individuals with disabilities.

Leveraging technology: Public libraries can leverage technology to provide access to

information and resources. This includes providing access to computers and the internet, offering e-books and online resources, and utilizing social media to promote library services.

One example of a country where these strategies were used to address poverty through public libraries is Ghana. The Ghana Library Authority (GLA) implemented a program called "Community Library Services for Poverty Reduction" which aimed to provide access to information and resources for underserved communities. The program involved partnerships with local government agencies, schools, and community organizations to provide services that addressed poverty. The GLA also utilized technology to provide access to online resources and e-books. As a result, the program has been successful in improving literacy rates and reducing poverty in Ghana (Asamoah-Hassan, 2014).

Another example is in South Africa, where the Department of Arts and Culture implemented a program called the "Community Library Conditional Grant" which provided funding to local libraries to improve services and resources. The program focused on providing access to information and resources for underserved communities, including those living in poverty. As a result, the program has been successful in improving literacy rates and reducing poverty in South Africa (Department of Arts and Culture, 2019).

## DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study showed that majority of the respondents were male (54.9%) while only a small proportion preferred not to say their gender (1.3%). This finding is consistent with previous studies that have shown a

gender imbalance in online surveys, where males tend to participate more than females (Buchanan et al., 2019; Salerno & Peter, 2014).

Majority of the respondents were in the age range of 15-25 years (49.6%), while only a few individuals are above 55 years (0.8%). This finding is in line with the youthfulness of the Nigerian population, where about 60% of the population is below the age of 25 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Additionally, previous studies have shown that younger individuals tend to participate more in online surveys than older individuals (Couper et al., 2007; Salerno & Peter, 2014).

Majority of the respondents have tertiary education (67.2%), while only a few had secondary education (1.3%) or undergraduate education (0.4%). This finding is consistent with the increasing demand for higher education in Nigeria, as more young people seek tertiary education to increase their employability and earning potential (Owolabi & Oyelola, 2020). The higher the level of education, the easier the access to information for better living.

Majority of the respondents were students (58.8%), while only a small proportion identified as artisans (1.7%). This finding is consistent with the high youth population in Nigeria and the prevalence of unemployment among Nigerian youths (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Students are also more likely to participate in online surveys as they have easy access to the internet and are more familiar with technology than other occupation groups (Couper et al., 2007; Salerno & Peter, 2014).

Majority of the respondents earn below N30,000 per month (45.8%), while only a few earned above N100,000 (13%). This

finding is consistent with the high poverty rate in Nigeria, where more than 40% of the population lives below the poverty line (World Bank, 2020). The low income of the respondents may also explain the low number of respondents, as people who earn below N30,000 monthly may find it hard to purchase gadgets that gives them access to the internet to participate in such surveys (Couper et al., 2007; Salerno & Peter, 2014).

Findings further shows that the highest recast in Kogi State (22.3%) among the North-Central zone states, Kaduna State (20.6%) among the North-West zone states, and Ondo and Oyo States (5.5%) among the South-West zone states. This finding reflects the population distribution across the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, with the North-Central and North-West zones having higher populations than the other zones (National Bureau of Statistics, 2019).

Majority of respondents (85.7%) lived in urban areas, while only 14.3% lived in rural areas. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported higher usage of libraries and information resources in urban areas compared to rural areas (Nwachukwu, 2017; Ojiambo & Otike, 2019). The disparity in library usage between urban and rural areas could be attributed to several factors, including the availability of library facilities, access to information technology, and the level of literacy in the respective regions.

The study indicates that only 50.8% of the respondents were aware of public libraries. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported low awareness of library services among the general public in Nigeria (Ezeani & Ugwuanyi, 2017; Olajojo & Osunrinade, 2019). The low level of

awareness could be attributed to several factors, including inadequate publicity and marketing of library services, inadequate funding for library programs, and the lack of government policies to promote library usage.

Majority of respondents (60.9%) never visited the public library, while only a small percentage (0.8%) visit the library on a daily basis. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported low usage of library services among the general public in Nigeria (Akporehwe & Ogbomo, 2017; Osunrinade & Olajojo, 2019). The low usage of library services could be attributed to several factors, including inadequate library facilities, inadequate funding for library programs, and the lack of government policies to promote library usage.

The most common reason for visiting public libraries among respondents was to borrow books or other materials, followed by studying or doing homework, using computers or the internet, attending programs or events, seeking information or advice, and reading newspapers or magazines. This finding is consistent with previous studies that have reported similar reasons for library usage among different populations (Onyancha & Ocholla, 2016; Oyedun, 2018). The finding suggests that public libraries play a critical role in providing access to information resources and supporting educational and personal development.

The study suggested strategies that can be adopted by public libraries in Nigeria towards eradicating poverty to include providing access to information and resources, partnering with community organizations, engaging with marginalized

communities, and leveraging technology. Examples from Ghana and South Africa show how these strategies were successfully used to improve literacy rates and reduce poverty in underserved communities. The Ghana Library Authority implemented a program called "Community Library Services for Poverty Reduction," while the South African government implemented the "Community Library Conditional Grant" program.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

From the data gotten from this study, we can make the following summaries based on the research questions stated earlier;

What are demographic characteristics of public library users in Nigeria, including their gender, age, educational level, occupation, monthly income, state of residence, and location/environment?

The majority of public library users in Nigeria are young male adults, with tertiary education and are low-income earners. They are predominantly students residing in urban areas.

What is the level of awareness of public libraries among the respondents and their frequency of use?

About half of respondents are aware of public libraries, but majority of respondents never visit the public library, while only a small percentage visit the library on a daily basis.

What are the reasons for visiting public libraries in Nigeria and the types of resources and services that users seek?

The most common reason for visiting public libraries in Nigeria is to borrow books or other materials, followed by studying or doing homework, using computers or the internet, attending programs or events, seeking information or advice, and reading newspapers or magazines. Users seek access to information resources and support for educational and personal development.

What strategies could be employed to help public libraries play a major role in helping to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal on Poverty Eradication in Nigeria?

Providing access to information and resources, partnering with community organizations, engaging with marginalized communities, leveraging technology are seen as some of the major strategies that can be employed to help libraries play better role in poverty eradication in Nigeria as it worked Ghana and South Africa.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that public libraries have a vital role to play in achieving the Sustainable Development Goal of poverty eradication as set by the United Nations. The survey revealed that although a majority of the respondents were aware of the presence of public libraries, a significant proportion reported never visiting one. This presents a significant opportunity for libraries to increase their outreach and attract more visitors, especially those from lower-income groups.

The main reasons for visiting public libraries, such as borrowing books and other materials, studying or doing homework, and seeking information or advice, are closely linked to poverty eradication. Access to educational

resources and information is critical to breaking the cycle of poverty, and public libraries provide a valuable resource in this regard. This finding is consistent with the literature on the role of public libraries in promoting education and literacy, which has been extensively documented (Bertot et al., 2016; Jaeger et al., 2018).

In addition, public libraries can help bridge the digital divide by providing access to computers and the internet, which can be crucial for job searching and other online activities. This is supported by previous research that has highlighted the role of public libraries in providing access to digital resources and training, particularly for underserved communities (Liu et al., 2017; Bertot et al., 2018).

However, to fully realize the potential of public libraries in achieving the goal of poverty eradication, it is essential to address the challenges facing libraries in Nigeria, such as inadequate funding, lack of trained staff, and inadequate infrastructure. Previous research has also identified these challenges as major barriers to the effective functioning of public libraries in Nigeria (Oyewusi & Ogundeji, 2020; Adegbilero-Iwari & Olorunsaye, 2019). Governments and other stakeholders should prioritize the development of public libraries to ensure that they can effectively contribute to poverty eradication efforts.

Overall, the data highlights the importance of public libraries in promoting education, information access, and poverty eradication in Nigeria. Further research can explore the impact of public libraries on poverty reduction and the mechanisms through which libraries can be made more accessible and

inclusive for the most vulnerable communities.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends the following:

- 1. Increase awareness of public libraries:** The study showed that only 50.8% of respondents were aware of public libraries. To increase awareness, there should be more publicity and marketing of library services through various media platforms, such as social media, radio, and television.
- 2. Increase funding for library programmes:** The low usage of library services could also be attributed to inadequate funding for library programs. There should be an increase in funding for library programs, including the purchase of books and other materials, training of library staff, and implementation of innovative library programs.
- 3. Target younger age groups:** The study showed that younger individuals are more likely to visit public libraries for studying and doing homework. To increase library usage, public libraries should focus on targeting younger age groups through targeted marketing campaigns and the implementation of programs that appeal to them and their standard of living.
- 4. Address the urban-rural divide:** The study showed that there is a disparity in library usage between urban and rural areas. To address this, there should be a focus on providing adequate library facilities and access to information

technology in rural areas, and implementing programs that are tailored to the needs of rural communities.

5. **Collaborate with other organisations:** Public libraries should collaborate with other organizations such as schools, community centers, and non-profit organizations, to increase awareness of library services and promote library usage. This can be done through joint programs and events, and by leveraging the resources and expertise of partner organizations.

6. **Partnership with other public libraries:** countries like Ghana and South Africa adopt and implement some effective strategies in their public libraries that has aided in reducing poverty in the country. Public libraries in Nigeria can partner with such countries to achieve similar goals in the country.

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