USE OF INFORMATION RESOURCES IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES BY GRASSROOT PEOPLE FOR COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION IN NORTH-CENTRAL, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study investigated the use of information resources in public libraries by grassroot people for community transformation in North-Central, Nigeria. The study was guided by 2 research objectives and 2 corresponding research questions. The total population for the study was 198 librarians in public libraries in North-Central, Nigeria. The researcher adopted census sampling technique to cover the entire population of library staff in the State public libraries. Questionnaire and checklist were the research instruments used for data collection. Out of the 198 copies of questionnaire administered, 174 copies were filled, returned and used for the analysis representing 88% success rate. Descriptive statistical tool involving frequency counts and percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data. The findings of the study revealed the availability of library catalogue, indexes, bibliography, abstracts, textbooks, journals and monographs as information resources available in all the public libraries. The study revealed further that the grassroot people use books, journals article, dictionaries, newspapers and manuscripts for community transformation with the weighted x□ of 2.67. The study concluded that public libraries in North-central, Nigeria have the potential to play a significant role in community transformation through the use of information resources by grassroots people. By harnessing the power of information, grassroots people can become active agents of change, driving development and improving the quality of life in their communities. The study recommended among others that the management of public libraries in North-central, Nigeria should prioritize the development of relevant information resources and services that meet the needs of grassroot people.

Keywords: Community transformation, Information resources, Grassroot people, Public libraries, Use.

Introduction

Public libraries play a pivotal role in community development and transformation by serving as vital centres for information, education, and cultural enrichment (Etebu and Zacchaeus, 2020). In the context of North–central, Nigeria, understanding the access and utilisation of public libraries by grassroots communities is essential for fostering community development. Community transformation refers to a comprehensive and sustainable process of positive change that occurs within a community, affecting its social, economic, cultural, and environmental dimensions. It involves a shift from existing conditions to a more desirable state, often with the aim of improving the well-being and quality of life of community members (Okojie and Okiy, 2020). Community transformation is a collaborative effort that requires active participation from all stakeholders, including government agencies, non-profit organisations, and community members themselves.

Leveraging the resources and services provided by public libraries, grassroots communities can empower themselves with the knowledge and skills to drive sustainable development

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initiatives. Community transformation is a dynamic and multifaceted concept that encompasses various aspects of development. By actively engaging with individuals and organisations within their community, grassroots communities can work together to address social issues and create positive change.

Community transformation is an ongoing and participatory process that often requires collaboration among community members, local organisations, governments, and other stakeholders (Idhalama & Ikenwe, 2018). It involves building trust, fostering inclusivity, and promoting collective decision-making to ensure that all voices are heard and valued. Through these collaborative efforts, communities can build resilience, promote social cohesion, and achieve long-lasting impact. It involves a collective effort to identify priorities, set goals, and implement strategies that lead to positive and sustainable changes within the community.

Public libraries play a crucial role in fostering community development, providing access to information, and empowering individuals with knowledge (Kattari *et al.,* 2023). The significance of public libraries extends beyond urban areas, impacting the lives of people in rural or grassroots communities. Public libraries serve as hubs for lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and social engagement for individuals of all ages and backgrounds. They offer resources such as books, technology, and programming that contribute to the overall well-being and education of communities. Public libraries serve as valuable community resources, offering a wide range of information resources, educational materials, and cultural enrichment opportunities. They are essential in bridging the information gap, promoting literacy, and supporting lifelong learning.

Library professionals play a major role in the advancement of users' digital literacy through the provision of Internet and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) access, as well as specialised training or formal initiatives. Libraries also offer resources such as online databases, e-books, and digital media to further enhance users' digital skills. Additionally, library staff are often trained to assist patrons in navigating the complexities of the digital world, making them valuable allies in the journey towards digital literacy. By providing access to technology and guidance on how to use it effectively. Through their commitment to digital literacy, libraries are helping individuals develop the skills needed to succeed in today's increasingly digital society.

Utilisation is the extent to which library resources and services are consulted to meet users' information and academic needs (Akanbi and Sambo, 2022). By monitoring utilisation rates, libraries can identify areas where additional support or resources may be needed to better serve their communities. Ahmed *et al.* (2020) asserted that the utilisation of information resources and services is the extent to which library resources like books and journals are exploited and used for study, teaching, learning, and research activities. Furthermore, understanding the patterns of resource usage can help libraries tailor their collections and services to better meet the needs of their users. By analysing data on as opined by, Abubakar (2017) opined that the effectiveness of the public library, to a large extent, depends on the utilisation of its resources and services, which is premised on the quality of services rendered as well as the availability and accessibility of information resources to the user community.

Statement of the Research Problem

Public libraries play a crucial role in fostering community transformation by serving as hubs for information, education and cultural enrichment. They provide access to resources that can empower individuals to pursue lifelong learning and personal growth. However, it could be

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observed by the researcher that there exists a critical gap in understanding the extent to which grassroots populations access and use information resources in public libraries for community development in North-central, Nigeria. This gap in knowledge hinders the ability of individuals in the grassroot to effectively use information resources for community transformation in North-central, Nigeria. It could be observed further by the researcher that despite the potential benefits offered by public libraries towards empowering individuals especially those at the grassroot level with needed information, there are several challenges and uncertainties that need to be addressed, such as funding limitations, technological barriers and changing community needs in terms of access and use of information resources.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the use of information resources in public libraries by grassroot people for community transformation in North-central, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were to:

a. identify available information resources for use in public libraries for community transformation in North-Central, Nigeria;

b. determine the extent of use of information resources by grassroots people in public libraries for community transformation in North-Central, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Concept of public library

The primary purposes of the public library are to provide resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information and personal development including recreation and leisure. They have an important role in the development and maintenance of a rural communities by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas and opinions (Okojie and Okiy, 2020).

Libraries are playing a significant role in implementing and moderating a country's information society agenda (Nwankwo *et al.,* 2020). Library is the focal point of learning and research activities in academic institutions due to its indispensable information acquisition, organisation, storage, retrieval and dissemination functions to the learning community. The achievement of the goals of the university for instance, is paramount to the establishment of the university library. Librarians are at the threshold of these activities and are now faced with the emergence of information technology in the scene of information exchange. This brought new tools and techniques of acquiring and handling information. To effectively serve the academic community in the ICT environment, the librarians need to move along with the new development. Librarians are those who have the care of library and its content; the work includes selection of stock, its arrangement and exploitation in the widest sense, and the provision of a range of services in the best interest of al groups of users (Ordu & Emmanuel, 2021). They are also involved in the coordination of activities, setting of priorities, evaluation and other managerial tasks and their involvement in the community they serve facilitate sustainable development.

In the present age, besides using the new tool to fulfill the traditional roles of the library, librarians, as the managers and gate-keepers of libraries evolved some new practices in the profession (Okeji *et al.* 2020). Some of the new developments include digital environment for information acquisition, processing and dissemination. All these practices anchor on ICT. Information is now mostly in electronic format. Library services are also affected by the new format. Therefore, the new era librarians that can operate in the digital or ICT environment are

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indispensible (Onah *et al.* 2015). Librarians are compelled to be content creators of information, web page planners, designers and internet navigators. As a result of the digital technology inroad into the profession, such nomenclatures as internet librarians, digital librarians, cyberians or weberians were attributed to the emerging librarians. These are librarians that have acquired the new literacy skills in the manipulation of the ICT tools for information service delivery to the library clientele. Libraries with ICT literate librarians, furnish their users with information that foster sustainable development where the users are ICT friendly.

Concept of information use

Use entails the action of making practical and effective use of something, steps to increase the use of resources, or action taken to increase the use of something. Information use is the practical and maximum use of library resources identified and acquired for the purpose of solving a problem or achieving a set goal. Information resources' use in libraries is a process comprising of initiation, selection, formulation, collection and use of information resources. It is simply the process which initiates the search and use of information resources for answering pertinent questions of great importance to the information seeker. In a similar vein, Olorunfemi and Ipadeola, (2021) asserted that use of information resources is the extent to which the resources of the library are actually used for teaching, learning and research. Also, Ibrahim and Sakiyo (2015) opined that use of information resources connotes pattern and frequency of information resources usage by the library's community of users. Therefore, information resources use is the actual putting into appropriate use of acquired information and may differ from person to person, one discipline to another, one faculty to another as well as from one corporate organisation to the other according to their information needs and other socio-economic imperatives (Olorunfemi & Ipadeola, 2021).

The use of resources is essential for the justification of the existence and survival of any library user. This is because no matter how rich a library may be in terms of resources; it is believed that if the users of the library are not aware and use the resources effectively, the acquisition of the resources is regarded as a waste. It is a known fact in this digital era that, any library user at the higher level who intends to do better or go further in academics should have the ability to explore the resources of the library. The major objectives of any library are to ensure that maximum use is made of its resources and services. Yebowaah (2017) stated that users' ability to find and retrieve information effectively is a transferable skill useful for their future life as well as enabling the positive and successful use of the resources while at school. Information resources use serve as a motivating factor to library users as it provides them opportunity to transmit, acquire or download, process and disseminate information on a subject of interest (Urhiewhu e*t al.,* 2015).

Relevance of public library to community transformation

Unobe (2019) defines library is an institution equipped with treasures of knowledge maintained, organised and managed by trained personnel to educate the children, men and women continuously and assist in their self-improvement through an effective and prompt dissemination of information embodied in the resources. There are different types of library and they play vital role in national development. National library, Academic Library and Public Library, special library, school library. A library is an instrument of self-education, a means of knowledge and factual information, a centre of intellectual recreations and a beacon of enlightenment that provides accumulated preserved knowledge of civilization which consequently enriches one's mental vision and dignifies his habit, behaviour, character, taste, attitude, conduct and outlook on life.

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According to Zhao *et al.* (2022) public library is an institution which offers to people free access to information. To a large extent it is related to the principle of access. The role of the public library is linked to national development through providing knowledge that is critical in shaping the community, developing workforce capacity and improving early literacy as well as school readiness. The public library has been identified as a natural partner in promoting economic development. Further contribution by Mansour (2020) is that libraries are the corner stone of democracy in communities because they assist the public in locating diversity of resources and in developing the information literacy skills necessary to become responsible, informed citizen who can participate in democracy. Adeniji and Adeniran (2020) attests to the fact that economic growth is not possible without extensive use of scientific and technical know-how embodied in books, and other mediums access to right book or information at the right time for scientist, engineer or agronomist could have multiplier effect on the economy. It is at this juncture that the role of libraries becomes a cornerstone for development by collecting knowledge valuable to the engineers, entrepreneurs and scientist alike.

Libraries as a Tool for Educational Development Libraries are viewed as an important component of the massive educational effort of the Federal Government of Nigeria, without the library no meaningful academic achievement can be realized. Library services improve knowledge and skills for positive productivity as a tool for national development. If education is to have a greater share in the moulding and building of a happier individual and a better society, the providers of education must go further than their roles as literacy facilitators to a more practical role of providing libraries for sustaining the newly acquired skills of learners. Organizing a library to aid education calls for an atmosphere of friendliness and useful collection. For example parts of goals of learning in higher institution in Nigeria are: contribution to national development through high level relevant manpower training; development and inculcation proper values for the survival of the individual and society; and developing the intellectual capability of individuals to understand and appreciate their local and external environments.

Methodology

Survey research design was adopted for this study. The descriptive survey approach for the study served as a means of providing basic information in the area of study. Sharma (2017) posited that descriptive survey research method deals with describing the situation of a given population using some characteristics or features common to them. The population of the study was 198 which consisted of all librarians in public libraries in North-Central, Nigeria. The researcher adopted census sampling technique to cover the entire population of library staff in the State public libraries. This is because the population size of librarians in all the State public libraries in North-Central, Nigeria is manageable. The research instruments used for collecting data for the study were questionnaire and checklist. Data collected from the responses to the questionnaire items were analysed and presented using descriptive statistic, such as frequencies, mean and standard deviation.

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Result and Discussions

Table 1: Information Resources Available for Use in Public Libraries for Community Transformation

Information Resources	Name of Public Libraries													
	Abuja Public Library, Wuse		Benue State Public Library		Kogi State Public Library		Kwara State Public Library		Nasarawa State Public Library		Niger State Public Library		Plateau State Public Library	
	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA	AV	NA
Library catalogue	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Indexes	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Bibliography	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Abstracts	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Text Books	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Journals	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	
Encyclopaedia	√			X		X	√		√		√		√	
Electronic resources	√			X		X	√			X		X	√	
Cartographic sources	√			X		X		X		X		X		X
Monograph	√		√		√		√		√		√		√	

Key: Available (√), Not Available (x)

The result in Table 1 showed the information resources available and those not available for community transformation in the public libraries in North-central, Nigeria. Seven (7) of the public libraries had library catalogue, indexes, bibliography, abstracts, textbooks, journals and monographs, while encyclopaedia were available in only four (4) public libraries (Abuja, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau) respectively. Similarly, three (3) public libraries (Abuja, Kwara and Plateau) had electronic resources. On the other hand, cartographic resources were not available in six (6) public libraries (Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger and Plateau).

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Table 42: Extent of Use of Information Resources by Grassroots People for Community Transformation

S/N	Statements	VH	H	L	VL	n	FX	$\bar{x}$	STD	Decision
		4	3	2	1	174				
1	The grassroot people use books in both print and electronic format for community transformation	85	61	24	4	174	575	3.30	0.80	High
2	The grassroot people use journals article for self-development and community transformation	75	71	18	10	174	559	3.21	0.71	High
3	The grassroot people use dictionaries through consultation for knowledge development and community transformation	54	69	29	22	174	503	2.89	0.39	High
4	The grass root people use encyclopaedia for community transformation	32	47	50	45	174	414	2.38	0.12	Low
5	The grass root people use newspapers for social and economic development	80	53	21	20	174	541	3.11	0.61	High
6	The grass root people use abstracts for community transformation	21	37	69	47	174	380	2.18	0.32	Low
7	The grass root people use indexes for easy retrieval of information resources pertinent to community transformation	17	32	63	62	174	352	2.02	0.48	Low
8	The grass root people use manuscripts for community transformation	83	47	28	16	174	545	3.13	0.63	High
9	The grass root people use available magazines for self and community development	19	36	53	66	174	356	2.05	0.45	Low
10	The grass root people do not use maps for community development	36	44	56	38	174	426	2.45	0.05	Low
	Weighted mean							**2.67**		

Key: Very High (VH), High (H), Low (LE), Very Low (VL), n = Number of Retrieved Copies of Questionnaire, $\bar{X}$=Mean and (Weighted mean = 2.67)

Table 4.5 showed the extent of use of information resources by grassroots people for community transformation. Out of the ten items listed, five items listed produced high mean scores which were above the weighted mean of 2.67. These items include item 1: The grass root people use books in both print and electronic format for community transformation (x□=3.30; SD=0.80), item 2: The grass root people use journals article for self-development and community transformation (x□=3.21; SD=0.71), item 8: The grass root people use manuscripts for community transformation (x□=3.13; SD=0.63), item 5: The grass root people use newspapers for social and economic development (x□=3.11; SD=0.61) and item 3: The grass root people use dictionaries through consultation for knowledge development and community transformation (x□=2.89; SD=0.39). Similarly, five other times produced low mean scores which were below the weighted mean of 2.67. These items include item 10: The grass root people do not use maps for community development (x□=2.45; SD=0.05), item 4:

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The grass root people use encyclopaedia for community transformation (x□=2.38; SD=0.12), item 6: The grass root people use abstracts for community transformation (x□=2.18; SD=0.32), item 9: The grass root people use available magazines for self and community development (x□=2.05; SD=0.45) and item 7: The grass root people use indexes for easy retrieval of information resources pertinent to community transformation (x□=2.02; SD=0.48).

The weighted mean of 2.67 and above is considered as the mean rate of the extent of use of information resources by grassroots people for community transformation, while the weighted mean below 2.67 is not considered as the extent of use of information resources by grassroots people for community transformation. Above all, the highest mean score was discovered from item 1 on the grass root people use books in both print and electronic format for community transformation. This is not far from the fact that books both in print and electronic are easily access by users in satisfying their information needs. From the analysis, the study revealed that item 1, 2, 3, 5 and 8 were rated high, while item 4, 6, 7 and 10 were rated low by the respondents as extent of use of information resources by grassroots people for community transformation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that public libraries in North-central, Nigeria have the potential to play a significant role in community transformation through the use of information resources by grassroot people. By harnessing the power of information, grassroots people can become active agents of change, driving development and improving the quality of life in their communities.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study.

1. The management of public libraries in North-central, Nigeria should acquire adequate information resources and subscribe to relevant online databases and e-book platforms offering access to academic journals, research papers and informative books for community transformation.

2. The management of public libraries in North-central, Nigeria should conduct outreach programmes to raise awareness about available information resources and their benefits for community transformation. They should also collaborate with local organisations, community groups and stakeholders to promote information resource use.

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