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INTEGRATING LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES INTO RURAL COMMUNITIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN BIDA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The study investigated the integration of library and information services into rural communities for sustainable development in Bida LGA, Niger State, Nigeria. This research employed a survey design. The population of the study constituted 5,515 registered users of the Niger State Library Board. The sample size of this study is 363 library users. Simple random and accidental sampling techniques were used for this study. A questionnaire was used as the study's instrument. Data collected was analysed using frequencies and mean. Findings from the study revealed that the level of sustainable development in rural community libraries is high. The rural communities' information-seeking behaviour medium for sustainable development agreed that they seek information through various ways such as radio, neighbourhood, newspapers, NGOs, and television. The types of library and information services and the sustainable development of rural communities is low. The study recommended, among others, that rural libraries should be able to repackage all kinds of information, including agricultural, health, economic, legal, land, and education, in different formats and local dialects that fulfil the unique needs for information of rural residents. There should be an effective means of seeking information from rural dwellers by opening more radio and television stations, etc. Public libraries should have sufficient, current and pertinent resources.

Keywords: *Library and Information Services, Public Libraries, Sustainable Development, Information Needs, Information Seeking Behavior*

Introduction

Rural dwellers, put succinctly, refer to individuals and groups of people who live in remote areas of any country, region, province, or continent. They are the direct opposite of urban dwellers. They are constantly beleaguered with a lack of basic life amenities such as: access to roads, communication gadgets, electricity, hospitals, education, and accurate information, amongst other things. It should be stated without mincing words that since rural people are also human beings, the basic amenities that the people who live in urban areas enjoy are part and parcel of their inalienable rights and should not be deprived of them. Rural dwellers require timely, precise, relevant, and consistent information if sustainable rural development is not to be jeopardised nor compromised. In Nigeria, it's projected that above 70% of the citizens live in remote regions that are mostly uneducated (Mohammed & Garba, 2019).

Sultana (2014) posited that rural library has a vital role in proving suitable and current sources in the forms of dialects, which are well understood, with the aid of residents for sustainability. However, the growth of the local region has been a tremendous sign of an improvement in any country, and knowledge transmission via people's libraries is an essential factor in the growth of local people. A study by Sultana (2014) found that the "role of rural public libraries in the overall development of India was not given much attention" (p.27). Sultana (2014) noted that rural libraries are not improved and the victims are rural communities due to information poverty, lack of personal means of access to education, and illiteracy level, poverty, or ill health.

Sustainable development (SD) has been a global programme in the past few decades. SD refers to the improvement of society in all aspects, including the individual's progress in economic, religious, and social structures. SD is the undeniable, substantial positive evidence for the education and development of any country. SD is completely hopeless without access to information. Agbo and Onyekweodiri (2014) stated that SD is vital and crucial to the development and subsistence of a nation to effectively boost the essential quality of life for its people, which libraries hold the keys to all the information required to grow. SD addresses not only the needs of the current generation, but also those of future generations.

According to Tyonum and Ezeogu (2015) SD refers to the total change and development in society as related to the person progressing from the socially, politically, spiritually, and economically structured country. A significant outcome of instruction is a sustainable improvement.

Information needs refer to individual user needs concerning the information required by every individual. Doraswamy (2017) defines information need as

"extending vague comprehension of something from missing as well as finding knowledge that leads to understanding and significance" (p. 5). According to the findings of the study conducted by Mtega (2012), the majority of the information needed by rural communities is health, political, civic, leisure, agricultural husbandry practices, market information, farm inputs, and others like academic, credit, and international news information. Nwokocha and Chimah (2016) concluded that rural inhabitants of rural communities want information in these areas: health-related issues, issues of everyday existence, occupational issues, government services, education, religious matters, and recreational matters. El-Kalash, Mohammed, and Ahmed (2014) observed that information needed by rural denizens in virtually all of their endeavours is genuinely many. Rural communities can only achieve sustainable rural development if their residents have access to timely, unbiased, comprehensive, and appropriate information.

It is vital to understand information-seeking behaviour (ISB) as it reveals how ordinary citizens find the crucial information they need for their daily lives. It is the process of seeking information that fulfils a need. ISB can vary from one person to the next depending on their age, gender, education, job, location, culture, and so forth. For many people living in developing countries, it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify ISB (Ekoja, 2010). Ekoja (2010) stated that ISB refers to the patterns and procedures that individuals use to seek information. It will determine the individual's perception of his needs and what motivates him to use resources and services to satisfy these perceived demands. Samuel and Apata (2010) concluded that ISB is an essential human process closely linked to problem-solving and understanding. It is a process where one seeks information that fulfils its needs. This particular study examines information-seeking behaviour. It includes how people express their information needs and search for, evaluate, and use information.

Library and information services (LISs), according to IGI Global (2019), are sources and activities provided by libraries to meet the information needs of their clients. The services comprise references, circulations, Internet resources, interlibrary loans, training on information and knowledge abilities, information knowledge creation, and selective dissemination of information. LISs also include a variety of services provided to library users (Iroka & Ndulaka, 2018). Libraries provide a wide range of services for their users and the community and are sometimes called libraries or information services (Okuonghae & Obadare, 2019). Echzona, Ozioko, and Ugwuanyi (2011) stressed that information services are pivotal players in providing unrestricted access to vital information sources for social, financial, political, and cultural heritage/development. Idogbe and Philip

(2020) stated that library services are the instrument of national development that improves user knowledge and skills for positive productivity. The illiteracy level in developing nations is so high that many individuals relapse into secondary ignorance due to a lack of sufficient and pertinent reading resources to sustain and associate the reading skills learned in school. Without a doubt, the limits of the contents of the library materials available within the library setting or society will affect the degree to which today's young people and employees will be imaginative, educated, and knowledgeable (Iroka & Ndulaka, 2018).

It must be emphasised that there is a connecting line between sustainable development and information provision, in which libraries and librarians are major key players. A library is a collection of organised information materials, such as books and non-books, that are available and accessible to specific communities for referencing, consultation, and referral. It also enables physical, electronic, or visual access to information resources and perhaps a visible building or a room or a virtual space or both (Udensi & Akor, 2014). Libraries provide a multitude of services to their users or society, which are commonly known as information and library services (Okuonghae & Obadare, 2021).

Due to the wide range of services provided by libraries in the digital age, public libraries can have an important role in the realisation and maintenance of rural sustainable development. Public libraries may provide information services that can help create awareness of rights in rural communities and assist rural residents in understanding the social value of their community and integrating them into the digital age. However, libraries and information services can assist rural residents in conforming to the existing social, political, economic, health, and cultural heritage of the rural community. It is on this premise that the researcher intends to investigate if integrating LISs in rural communities ensures sustainable development in Bida, Niger State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problems

Information is the indispensable key when it affects issues that border on sustained development of any society like rural areas of Bida Local Government. It is because it can lessen uncertainty and broadens the scope of options available when it comes to problem-solving. When people know where to get help, they go for it to solve their problems. The rural dwellers in Nigeria have never profited enough from the several governments' policies and programs intended to develop their areas. These might not be, disconnected from the degree of prosperity, enlightenment, literacy, awareness and access roads. The provision of efficient library and information services in rural communities for sustainable

development in Bida LGA of Niger State, Nigeria, has been bedevilled by some factors, including inadequate facilities, inadequate ICTs infrastructure, illiteracy, barriers in language, and poverty. It is alongside this background the researcher decided to investigate how LISs integrated rural communities of Bida LGA of Niger State, Nigeria, sustainable development.

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to investigate the integration of LISs into Rural Communities for SD: A Study of Bida Local Government, Niger State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Determine the information needs of rural communities.
2. Determine the level of SD in rural community libraries in Bida LGA.
3. Determine the ISB of people in the rural communities for SD.
4. Identify the types of LISs provided for rural communities for SD.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the informational needs of the rural communities?
2. What is the level of SD in rural community libraries in Bida LGA?
3. Through what medium do people in rural communities seek information for SD?
4. What are the types of LISs provided for rural communities for SD?

Methodology

The survey research design was employed for this study to answer the research questions. The population of the study was 5,515 registered library users. It is made up of users in the state library branch at Bida LGA of Niger State, Nigeria. The sample for this study is 363 users. A simple random and accidental (availability) sampling technique was employed for the study. The research instrument used for this study is a self-designed questionnaire with the title "Integrating Library and Information Services into Rural Communities for Sustainable Development Questionnaire (ILISRCSDQ)". The reliability coefficient of 0.79 was obtained using the Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. Simple percentage, frequency and mean was used to analyse the data. Whereas the criterion mean score of less than 2.50 was regarded as negative, above 2.5 was regarded as positive.

Results

Section 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Table 1: Questionnaire Response Rate

Questionnaires distributed	Questionnaires Retrieved	Questionnaires Retrieved percentage
363	281	77%

Table 1, shows that a total of 281 out of the 363 copies of the questionnaire distributed were returned, representing 77% feedback.

Section 2: Analysis of the Demographic Information of the Respondents
Table 2: Gender of the Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Males	167	59.4
Females	114	40.6
Total	281	100.0

From Table 2, it is obvious that there were 167 (59.4%) males while there were 114 (40.6%) females. This implies that more males visited the rural public libraries than their female counterparts.

Sections 3: Answering of the Research Questions
Research Question One: What is the level of SD in rural community libraries in Bida LGA?

Table 3: Level of sustainable development in rural community libraries in Bida LGA

Level of Sustainable Development in rural community libraries	Very High	High	Low	Very Low	Mean
Improved use of technology to promote Education	36	79	113	53	2.35
Social values	43	124	79	35	2.62
Economic values	47	156	54	24	2.80
Environmental values	67	96	88	30	2.71
Cultural values	64	119	52	46	2.76
Political values	65	143	40	33	2.85
Deployment of ICT in library operation	19	51	130	81	2.03
Sustainable library funding	16	79	99	87	2.09
Preservation of indigenous knowledge	24	83	112	62	2.25
Average Mean					**2.51**
Criterion Mean					**2.50**

Table 3 shows that with an average mean of 2.51, which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that the level of sustainable development in rural community libraries at Bida LGA is high.

Research Question Two:What are the informational needs of the rural communities?

Table 4: Information needs of the rural communities

Information Needs	Agree		Disagree		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Health information	230	81.9	51	18.1	281(100%)
Agriculture (farming)	183	65.1	98	34.9	281(100%)
Education	128	45.6	153	54.4	281(100%)
Employment	190	67.6	91	32.4	281(100%)
Transportation	183	65.1	98	34.9	281(100%)
Religion, Recreation and Culture	204	72.6	77	27.4	281(100%)
Legal Matters	227	80.8	54	19.2	281(100%)
Politics and Government Policies	219	77.9	62	22.1	281(100%)
Security	220	78.3	61	21.7	281(100%)
Land	214	76.2	67	23.8	281(100%)

Table 4 shows the information needs of rural communities. According to the findings, more than 80% of respondents required health and legal information. The majority of respondents needed information on security, politics, government policies, land, religion, recreation, and culture. 67.9%, or 219 respondents, needed information on employment. Others required information on agriculture (farming) and transportation, while 128 (45.6%) required education information. Hence, it could be inferred that rural people seek and access information to solve their day-to-day problems.

Research Question Three: Through what medium do people in rural communities seek information for SD?

Table 5:Medium of ISB of people in the rural communities for SD

Information seeking behaviours	Agree		Disagree		Total
	No.	%	No.	%	
Internet	115	40.9	166	59.1	281(100%)
Non-governmental organizations (NGO's)	208	74.0	73	26.0	281(100%)
Television	203	72.2	78	27.8	281(100%)
Radio	275	97.9	6	2.1	281(100%)
Libraries	137	48.8	144	51.2	281(100%)
Words of mouth (town criers)	206	73.3	75	26.7	281(100%)
Electronic Messages	107	38.1	174	61.9	281(100%)
Agricultural extensions agents	230	81.9	51	18.1	281(100%)
Health Workers	219	77.9	62	22.1	281(100%)
Newspapers and Magazines	215	76.5	66	23.5	281(100%)
Leaflets/fliers	122	43.4	159	56.6	281(100%)
Billboards/Signboards	95	33.8	186	66.2	281(100%)
Neighbourhood (friends, family, neighbour etc.)	257	91.5	24	8.5	281(100%)

Table 5, shows the rural communities' ISB as a means for sustainable development. The results show that the rural communities agreed that they seek information through the following mediums: radio 275 (97.9%), neighbourhood (friends, family, neighbours) 257 (91.5%), agricultural extension agents 230 (81.9%), newspapers and magazines 215 (76.5%), health workers 219 (77.9%), non-governmental organisations (NGO's) 208 (74%), words of mouth (town criers) 206 (73.3%) and television 203 (72.2%). This is simply an indicator that rural people access information through various mediums such as radio, neighbourhood, agricultural agents, newspapers, health workers, NGO's, town criers, and television to meet their daily information needs.

Research Question Four:Types of LISs provided to rural communities for SD?

Table 6:Types of LISs provided to rural community for SD

Information Services	SA		A		D		SD		Mean
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	
Information literacy programmes	28	10.0	56	19.9	92	32.7	105	37.5	2.02
Awareness campaign	27	9.6	53	18.9	121	43.1	80	28.5	2.10
Computer/digital literacy programmes	30	10.7	49	17.4	122	43.4	80	28.5	2.10
Information provision	83	29.5	118	42.0	52	18.5	28	10.0	2.91
Provision of information resources	57	20.3	147	52.3	42	14.9	35	12.5	2.80
Provision of technological infrastructure	13	4.6	42	14.9	146	52.0	80	28.5	1.96
Current awareness services (CAS)	14	5.0	40	14.2	130	46.3	97	34.5	1.90
Traditional services' (reference, circulation, serials, children, etcetera.)	92	32.7	149	53.0	20	7.1	20	7.1	3.11
Outreach/mobile library services	22	7.8	49	17.4	112	39.9	98	34.9	1.98
Capacity building	43	15.3	124	44.1	79	28.1	35	12.5	2.62
Selective dissemination of information (SDI)	22	7.8	35	12.5	142	50.5	82	29.2	1.99
Organising exhibitions, workshops, meetings, and sem inars for rural communities to improve their conditions of living	19	6.8	51	18.1	130	46.3	81	28.8	2.03
Translation services	21	7.5	40	14.2	129	45.9	91	32.4	1.97
Information repackaging	33	11.7	52	18.5	128	45.6	68	24.2	2.18
Adult literacy programmes	23	8.2	28	10.0	147	52.3	83	29.5	1.97
Average Mean									**2.24**
Criterion Mean									**2.50**

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

Table 6 shows the types of LISs provided to rural communities. The results show that, with an average mean of 2.24, which is less than the criterion mean of 2.50, it can be concluded that the rural communities' provision of LISs for SD are low.

Summary of the Major Findings

Based on the analysis of the data, the following findings were made:

1. The level of sustainable development in rural community libraries is high.
2. Most rural communities information-seeking behaviour for SD agreed that they seek information through various types such as radio, neighbourhood, newspaper, NGOs and television.
3. More than 80% of rural people need information on health and legal matters and others.
4. The library and information services for SD of a rural community are low

Discussion of Findings

The study indicated that the level of SD in rural community libraries as social, economic, environmental, cultural, and political values as well as improved use of technology to promote education. This finding is in line with the one by Salim (2020) that, SD is a multi-dimensional concept that addresses economic, cultural, social, civil, political, information, and technological values and awareness. These demonstrate that high-quality SD could be very instrumental to the success of the rural community.

The study revealed that the rural community needed information for their SD, particularly on health, legal matters, security, politics, government policies, land, religion, recreation, and culture, employment, agriculture (farming), transportation, and education. Therefore, public libraries are anticipated to provide effective, current, and relevant information resources and services that will meet the needs of information to promote community development at the grassroots level for SD. This finding is similar to the study of Mohammed and Garaba (2019), which clearly stated that rural people's information needs for rural sustainable development are education, agriculture, economics, government policies, health problems, recreation, and culture. The finding is also in line with the findings of Momodu (2012), Nwakocha and Chimah (2016) and Eje, Ikhimeaku and Ayanlola (2018), who in their separate studies identified information needs of rural dwellers as agriculture, health, education, economics, political and community development, employment, land, legal, transportation, religion, security, and culture.

The study also showed the medium of ISB of people in the rural communities for sustainable development. This implies that the rural communities agreed that they seek information through: listening to radio; neighbourhood (friends, family, neighbours); agricultural extension agents; reading newspapers; health workers; non-governmental organizations; town criers; and watching television. Similarly, Okwu and Dauda (2011) stated that farmers search for information through personal and social channels of communication; relatives, friends, neighbours, agricultural extension agents, community leaders, posters, newspapers, and publications.

This implies that the LISs in rural communities for SD are low; that is, rural communities are not provided with adequate, relevant, and up-to-date information services. Harande (2009), Islam & Mezbah-ul-Islam (2013), and Anaehobi and Osuchukwu (2015) observed that approximately 75%-80% of the population in third world nations live in rural communities where average information services are so low or poor.

Conclusion

It was found that rural communities within the study area required all types of information. However, the study found that each individual respondent had their own information needs. This revealed that rural communities used a variety of information-seeking behaviours, including radio, newspapers, neighbouring, newspapers, words-of-mouth communication, and television sets. It is expected that the sustainable development of rural communities in Bida, Niger State, Nigeria will improve its ability to compete with urban counterparts once the role of information and library services in integrating them is addressed.

Recommendations

The study's findings have led to the following suggestions being made:

1. The rural library should be able to repackage all kinds of information, including social, political, cultural, agricultural, health, economic, legal, land, and educational information, in different formats and local dialects to fulfil the unique information needs of rural inhabitants for sustainability.
2. The Niger State government and donor agencies should adequately fund community libraries in Bida LGA on library services. This would enable them to equip their rural libraries with current books, journals, and functional Internet facilities; establish an ICT center; and provide adequate infrastructure in order to enable the staff to meet their responsibilities to the rural community for sustainable development.

3. There should be an effective and efficient means of information seeking behaviour among rural dwellers by opening more radio and television stations, newspapers, non-governmental organizations, etcetera.
4. Public libraries should provide adequate, current, and usable resources to meet the information quest of rural people.

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