

Information Needs of Rural Dwellers as a Measure of the Effectiveness of Library and Information Services Provision in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Purpose: The study was designed to determine the effectiveness of information services provision to rural dwellers in Anambra State, Nigeria vis-a-vis their information needs.

Design/Methodology: A survey was carried out using rural dwellers in Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State including civil servants, petty traders, farmers, artisans(welders, carpenters, hairdressers, carpenters) and the unemployed. The survey employed three instruments to elicit data from library and information centres (LIC) and the rural dwellers in Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State. Questionnaire and observation checklist were designed for data collection from the LIC. Questionnaire was provided to the managers of available LIC in the Zone namely: Nteje Community Development Information Centre, Igbariam Community Development Information Centre, Awkuzu Central Library and Atani Community Branch Library. Observation checklist was used for on-the- spot check of the available resources as well as data on the statistics of the users and resources consulted. The predominantly illiterate rural community in Nigeria justifies the use of interview to elicit information from rural dwellers on their awareness of information centres, their use, as well as approach to their information sourcing and needs. A total of eighty (80) respondents were interviewed from the communities, twenty (20) respondents per community. These rural dwellers were randomly sampled in the community.

Findings: The survey revealed that non-government funded library and information centres provide satisfying information modelled along the needs of the rural dwellers. Contrary to the government funded print based information provision, rural dwellers sources of information are predominantly oral and their information needs are relative to their type of occupation. Contrary to documented information on print and video sources provided by library and information centres, rural dwellers source information from their professional colleagues/trade masters, churches, promotion by motor advertisers, television / radio and ceremonies. The study therefore concludes that with the exception of the non-governmental information centres which are modelled along the needs of the rural dwellers, other government funded information centres do not provide effective library and information services to rural dwellers.

Practical Implication: Information needs of rural dwellers is of paramount importance if millennium development goal will be attained. Government sponsored community library and information centres which are geared towards the information needs and literacy enhancement of rural dwellers must be focused upon rather than the print/ paper based platform of the pre and post independent era. Actualization of the later implies that critical needs assessment must be put in place with a view to packaging information services on the required rather than the imaginary.

Originality/Value: The place of library and information centres in the all round development of Nigerian citizenry irrespective of location is portrayed.

Introduction

One of the major yard sticks for measuring development of a country is the status of rural dwellers who constitute seventy percent of the population in places like Nigeria, (Nwafor 1986). In Nigeria, the rural environment is characterized by highly illiterate petty traders as well as subsistence farmers (Muhammed, 1996).

Other characteristics include low population, primary production and few basic/social infrastructures (Yusuf 2010). Since the development of rural dwellers serves as a positive indicator for national development, their involvement in developmental process becomes imperative. One way of doing this is through the identification of their information needs and the provision of innovative rural public library

services (Obinyan, Obinyan and Aidenojie, n.d). Rural public library services are provided to satisfy the needs of the local community, considering their locality with a focus on producing a well informed and democratic society.

Abolaji (2009) emphasized that public library collection is geared towards providing for moral and cultural edification in contrast to other libraries that house research materials. Their resources, as suggested by Issa (n.d) include facilities needed for regular information, such as television, occasional video viewing, radio and gramophone, posters and other handbills that could enhance public enlightenment. Newspapers and magazines are also relevant to the local dwellers needs (Hossain, 2012). Obinyan et al (n.d) also emphasized the need to provide newspapers and magazines especially for the retirees who may need such resources to keep abreast of developments in the society. Due to the predominately oral traditional communication method, most of the rural dwellers source their information through indigenous means including town criers, churches/mosques and non conventional sources like friends and close associates, as well as organized groups like agricultural extension workers, political groups and co-operative societies, (Ogunrombi & Amadasu,2005). The provision of the appropriate resources through the appropriate channel (medium) demands the employment of the right personnel who must be a qualified library professional competent in rural information gathering and dissemination technique (Issa n.d).

Provision of effective rural information starts with the analysis of rural information needs. This is because, their needs are relative to a specific rural dweller (Ogunombi & Oladokun , 1993). Contrarily, the information provisions in Nigerian rural areas are modelled along the western libraries without consideration to the rural or African context (Uheghu 1997). As such, the information needs are not met (UNESCO 1997).The information needs of rural dwellers which is based on their activities include those which help them attend to health, agriculture, social, political, trading (petty trading), food processing, textile, pottery and other crafts, entertainment, as well as other public affairs, aesthetic and cultural matters (Abolaji 2009, Ogunrombi & Amadasu 2005, Mabogunje 1985, Munyan 2000, Saleh & Lasisi, 2011). Satisfaction of the contextual

information needs involves unique information services which could be in the form of telephone, recreational, advisory services, extension/outreach, social- political, current awareness, children, selective dissemination of information, book mobile and referral services (Stith and Klee 1983, Aboyade 1984, Udofia & Posigha 2010, Issa). The content and packaging of each service varies from one environment to the other. Provision of information resources and services as well as expressed needs do not guarantee use. However, Iyoro (2004) emphasized that use is a function of ease of access but Aguolu & Aguolu (2002) indicated that availability and accessibility alone do not determine use of library and information resources. Conceptual, linguistics, critical, bibliographic and physical issues as recommended by Meelamegham 1981 and Kuhlthau 1991 are also necessary in ensuring use .. One way for ensuring the use of rural information centres is the creation of awareness on information products and services.

Awareness creation is necessary to ensure effective rural library services given the environmental and population characteristics of rural communities. Hence, the provisions of library services in rural areas are faced with issues different from what obtains in other types of library services. These issues include dispersed population, poor transportation and communication systems, illiteracy, poor financial resources, language barriers, poverty, lack of physical infrastructure, inappropriateness in library collections and services, and low patronage (Onwubiko, 1999, Correa et al 1997, Posigha 2010, Kamba and, Obinyan, Obinyan & Aidenojie and, Abolaji, 2009, and Kantumoya 1992).

Anambra North Senatorial Zone has its own share of rural dwelling communities as other parts of Nigeria. It has over sixty (60) communities with a population of one million, one hundred and thirty-two thousand, two hundred and thirty one (1,132,231) people. Seven local government areas (LGA) constitute the senatorial zone namely, Onitsha North, Onitsha South, Anambra East, Anambra West, Aghamelum, Oyi and Ogbaru LGAs. Of these LGAs, Ogbaru, Oyi, Anambra West and Aghamelum have dwellers possessing characteristics of rural communities. Though, Aghamelum is identified with such characteristics, there is no evidence of library

and information centres in the local government. Therefore, emphasis was on Ogbaru, Oyi and Anambra West which have library and information centres located in Atani, Nteje, Awkuzu and Igbariam, respectively. Although the library at Awkuzu known as Awkuzu Central Library, located at Dusogu is ready for use, it is yet to be formerly opened for users. Moreover, the newly constructed public library at Nteje is yet to be put to use but there exists a Community Development Information Centre (CDIC) , established in 2010, a non– governmental outfit managed by an individual. It is funded through donations, grants and supported by World Bank global fund. Another Community Development Information Centre (CDIC) was established in Igbariam, Anambra West L.G.A. by an individual through a Non-governmental Organization that is affiliated with FADAMA III Project . Igbariam is the agricultural backbone of Anambra state.

Statement of the Problem

Literature has established the need for and provision of various library services to rural dwellers. Preliminary observations by the researchers indicated the availability of such services which informs the purposive selection of the community for the study. However, it is not clear if the resources, information and services provided by these centres have relationships with the needs of the community they serve. This study was designed to address the problem.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the information needs of rural dwellers and those provided by library and information centres (LIC) in Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State. Specifically, the study intends to:

1. Find out the information resources provided by the LIC;
2. Identify the information provided by the centres;
3. Ascertain the information needs of rural dwellers;

4. Determine the relationship between needs and the information provided;
5. Find the challenges faced by LIC as well as the rural dwellers in the communities.

Method

The survey employed three instruments to elicit data from library and information centres (LIC) and the rural dwellers in Anambra North Senatorial Zone of Anambra State. Questionnaire and observation checklist were designed for data collection from the LIC. Questionnaire was provided to the managers of available LIC in the Zone namely: Nteje Community Development Information Centre, Igbariam Community Development Information Centre, Awkuzu Central Library and Atani Community Branch Library. Observation checklist was used for on- the- spot check of the available resources as well as data on the statistics of the users and resources consulted. The predominantly illiterate rural community in Nigeria justifies the use of interview to elicit information from rural dwellers on their awareness of information centres, their use, as well as approach to their information sourcing and needs. A total of eighty (80) respondents were interviewed from the communities, twenty (20) respondents per community. These rural dwellers were randomly sampled in the community. These consist of civil/public servants, market men/women, farmers, artisans and unemployed. The instruments were analyzed with tables and frequency counts. The results were organized to reflect the objectives of the study.

Results

Information Provision to the Community

Characteristics of the Centres

Information on the characteristics of the LIC in the communities was sought. It was discovered that Awkuzu Central Library located at Dusogu, Awkuzu, established as community branch library of Anambra State Library Board is stocked with information resources but yet to be put to use. The characteristics of other centres are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Characteristics of the Library and Information Centres Sampled

Name of the Centres	Location	Funded By	Status	Qualification
Community library (CLA)	Atani	Government	Non- professional	WAEC
Community Development Information Centre(CDIC)	Nteje	Philanthropists	Professional	MLS
Omambala Community Information forum (OCIF)	Igbariam	NGO in affiliation with FADAMA III	Professional	HND / BLS

Among the three functional libraries, only Atani is being funded by Nigerian government, Nteje is funded through philanthropic activities while Igbariam is funded by non-governmental organization(NGO) in affiliation with FADAMA III Project. However, the latter two are manned by professionals and Atani which is

owned by Government is headed by a nonprofessional.

Resources Available at the Centres

Data on the available resources and the type of users served by the centres are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Resources and Type of Users Served by the Information Centres

Name of Centre	Type of Users Served	Resources Available
CL, Atani	Farmers, Civil Servants (Teachers, Nurses), Unemployed, School children, Politicians.	Textbooks, newspapers/ magazines, picture books, Audiovisual (video cassette, film strips), Bulletin board.
CDIC, Nteje	Farmers (poultry), Artisans (hair dressers, mechanics, carpenters, drivers, Okada riders, artists), Traders, Civil servants (Health officers, Teachers) School children, Politicians, Unemployed.	Textbooks, Journals, newspaper/magazines , Audio Visuals (Television , Radio, Video cassette, VCD, DVD)
OCIF Igbariam	Farmers, Traders, Artisans (hair dressers, mechanics, Okada riders, Artists, carpenters, drivers) Politicians, Petty-traders, School children and Unemployed.	Audio visuals (Television, Radio, Video cassette, VCD, DVD, film strips) Textbooks, Journals, Newspapers / magazines.

Table 2 shows that though the three centres have textbooks, newspapers / magazines and audio visuals (AV materials), the type of audio visuals vary from one centre to another. CDIC Nteje and OCIF Igbariam have more developed AV including television, radio, video cassettes, VCD and DVD, while CL Atani funded by government have none of these except video cassette. These centres have similar users which include farmers, civil servants, school children, artisans, traders, politicians and unemployed. However, CL Atani is not patronized by artisans, and petty traders. This demonstrates the irrelevance of the resources available in CL Atani to the artisans. Professionalism was demonstrated by the head of CDIC Nteje who has statistics of different types of users. It shows an average of 30 users per month. The highest users are recorded by the unemployed.

Resources Used By Patrons

Data on the resources used by the patrons of the centres revealed that whereas the patrons of all

the centres use textbooks and newspaper/magazines, the patrons of CL Atani could not use journals and other AV resources which were utilized heavily by the patrons of CDIC Nteje and OCIF Igbariam. This further reflects the unavailability of possible relevant resources in CL Atani though, funded by government.

Information Provided at the LIC

The Centres provide the following similar information to the patrons: Information on deaths/birth, employment, recreation and education enhancement. CDIC Nteje and OCIF Igbariam however, provide more innovative information which includes information on skill acquisition, firm, referral, workshop for users as well as other popular community information such as health information and agricultural information. Unfortunately CL Atani does not provide any of the information. Civil society information is also provided by CDIC Nteje.

Awareness Creation

Results on the method employed by the centres to publicize their activities to the community revealed that all the centres use churches' announcements and town criers. In addition, OCIF Igbariam and CDIC Nteje use street bulletins and radio announcements while CDIC

Nteje goes further by using the training the trainer outlet.

Information Needed By the Rural Dwellers

The result of the interview with rural dwellers of the communities revealed their information needs, resources needed, their awareness of available information centres and sources of the needed information.

Characteristics of the Communities

Table 3: Characteristic by Type of Rural Dweller

Trade	Age (n=16)				Education (n=16)			Sex(n=16)	
	15 -20	21- 35	36-45	Above 45	FSLC	WAEC	Higher Degree	M	F
Farmers	-	4	10	2	14	1	1	14	2
Traders	-	6	8	2	6	7	3	6	10
Artisans	-	12	3	1	3	12	1	14	2
Civil Servant	-	10	5	1	-	2	14	8	8
Unemployment	-	16	-	-	-	12	4	10	6
TOTAL		48	26	6	23	34	23	52	28

Table 3 shows that majority of the sampled respondents are aged between twenty one and thirty five. Though farmers and traders have their age concentrating between thirty six and forty five , artisans and civil fall within twenty one and thirty five of age. All the unemployed are aged between twenty one and thirty five. Most of the respondents have WAEC where there is equal number of FSLC and dwellers certificate above WAEC. Whereas the majority

of the farmers, traders and artisans and even the unemployed posses FSLC and WAEC. Almost all the civil servants possess WAEC certificates and above.

Information need of Dwellers

The sampled rural dwellers were required to indicate their information needs. The result is presented in the Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Information Needed by Rural Dwellers

Information	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Health	71	89
Agriculture	65	81
Employment	42	53
Skill acquisition	53	66
Recreational	35	44
Political	51	64
Work Enhancement	36	45
Business Enhancement	42	53
Birth and death	72	90
Educational Enhancement	32	40
Development in Civil service	26	33
Fashion Related	54	68

Table 5: Information Needs by Type of Rural Dweller

Type of Information	Type of Rural Dweller	% Response			
		Unemployment	Traders	Farmers	Artisans
Health	100	63	100	88	94
Agric	75	32	63	100	75
Employment	75	100	19	63	6
Skill Acquisition	13	81	63	75	100
Recreational	81	75	13	19	31
Political	88	75	50	25	81
Work Enhancement	19	13	13	81	100
Business Enhancement	6	0	100	75	81
Birth & Death	88	75	94	94	100
Education Enhancement	100	81	6	13	0
Development in Civil Service	100	63	0	0	0
Fashion Related	63	63	63	63	88

Table 4 shows that all the listed information are needed by the members of the community except information on development in civil service, education enhancement, work enhancement and recreational information which have responses below fifty percent . However, close look at the type of respondents in Table 5 shows that all the traders as well as seventy five percent and eighty one percent farmers and artisans need information on business enhancement, education

enhancement and development in civil service information. The low response on recreational information is as a result of low response by traders, farmers and artisans.

Sources of Information used by Rural Dwellers

The dwellers were required to indicate the sources they consult to satisfy their information needs. The result is presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6: Sources Consulted by the Communities

Sources	Response	Percentage (%)
Professional Colleagues and Trade Masters	33	41
Catalogues, Newspapers and Magazines	40	50
Television and Radio	35	44
Ceremonies	8	10
Government Extension Workers	16	20
Library and Information Centers	12	15
Cyber Cafes	10	13
Promotion By Motor Advertisers	13	16

Table 7: Sources Consulted By Type of Dweller

Sources of Information	% Response				
	Civil Servant	Unemployed	Traders	Farmer s	Artisan s
Professional Colleagues and Trade Masters	31	13	63	63	100
Catalogs, Newspapers and Magazines	50	100	13	0	88
Television and Radio	50	88	25	13	44
Ceremonies	0	0	0	0	50
Government Extension workers	0	0	0	100	0
Libraries and Information Centers	75	0	0	0	0
Cyber Cafes	63	0	0	0	0
Promotion by Motor Advertisers	0	0	81	0	0

Table 6 shows that majority of rural dwellers in the zone access their information from catalogues, newspapers and magazines though, a

large number (44%) but not up to the half access information from televisions and radio. Sources specific to the different types of dwellers as shown in Table 7 revealed that only civil

servants visit library and information centres for their information needs. The unemployed are more interested in newspapers/magazines, catalogues and televisions/radio sources. Farmers go to their professional colleagues and government extension workers who visit the areas from time to time. Traders get majority of their information from their professional colleagues and promotions by motor advertisers. For the artisans, their source cut across professional colleagues/masters, catalogues newspapers/magazines and visits to ceremonies.

Awareness of Availability of Library Information CentresThe rural dwellers were required to indicate their awareness of any library and information centres in their communities. The result shows that less than

fifty percent of the respondents were aware of the availability of any library and information centre in the community except in Awkuzu where seventy percent of the respondents were aware despite the fact that the Awkuzu Library is yet to be put to use.

Furthermore, there is a general low awareness of the existence of information centres by the different types of rural dwellers. Their percentage levels of awareness consist of twenty five percent, ten percent, four percent, and three percent for civil servants, unemployed, farmers and artisans, respectively. None of the traders were aware of any information centre around.

Relationship between Sources Provided and Those Used

Table 8: Relationship between Information Sources Provided By LIC and Those used by Rural Dwellers

Information sources used by Dwellers	Sources provided By LIC
Professional Colleagues and Trade Masters	Not Provided
Television / Radio	Provided
Catalogues / Newspapers / Magazines	Provided
Promotion by motor Advertisers	Not Provided
Library and Information Centre(Prints)	Provided
Government Extension Workers	Not Provided
Cyber cafés	Not Provided
Not Used	Film Strips
Not Used	Bulletin Board
Not Used	Video / VCD /DVD

Table 8 shows that, of the seven information sources used by the rural dwellers, three were provided. These include television/radio, newspapers/magazines/catalogues and other

print based resources. Though film strips, bulletin board as well as video/VCD/DVD were provided by the information centres, they were not sourced by the rural dwellers.

Relationship between Information provided and those needed.

Table 9: Relationship between Information Needed by the Rural Dweller and Those Provided by LIC

Information needed	Information provided
Health	Provided
Agricultural	Provided
Employment	Provided
Skills acquisition	Provided
Recreational	Provided
Political	not provided
Birth and Dearth	Provided
Fashion Related	Not provided
Educational Enhancement	Not provided
Not needed	Readers services/guide

Table 9 shows that of the information needed by the dwellers, political, fashion-related and education enhancement information are not

provided. Though readers' services and guide information are provided, they are not among the information needed by the dwellers.

Challenges

Responses from managers of the LIC show that poor funding is one of their primary challenges. NGO funds are scarcely inadequate to provide the needed sources and information and government does not allocate fund to the centres. The poor attitude of rural dwellers to information sourcing and use which is a consequence of the illiteracy and unawareness also affect the activities of the centres. The managers of the centres also indicated low patronage by the rural dwellers which could be attributed to their type of occupation. Again, the managers informed that professional librarians resist the job offer by the community centre due to their rural location.

On the part of the rural dwellers, those who know the existence of the centres informed that the resources available in the centres are not relevant to them and their information needs are not provided for. For those who are not aware of the centres, they informed that if LIC can solve their information needs as well as provide them in the manner they will understand, they would visit the centre.

Discussions of Findings

The presence of various information centers, their resources and information provided to the various rural communities are quite revealing. The availability of government established, well stocked library at Awkuzu which is yet to put to use is an indication that government pays less attention to social services provided for rural community development. This is further buttressed by the management of the community library at Atani by a nonprofessional who has only WAEC as qualification. Further to that is the availability of little or non audio visual facilities in this government funded Atani library. This may later have resulted in low patronage of Atani library by artisans and traders. In other words, community library Atani, is fashioned alongside the colonial masters, being independent of the needs of the community.

The provision of innovative information such as film show, resource sourcing for users, skill acquisition information as well as workshop for users, along with other community information provision by CDIC Nteje and OCIF Igbariam buttresses the ingenuity of professional management of an information centre and confirms that the two centres provide services to

suit the needs of the community. In other words, CDIC Nteje and OCIF Igbariam are providing the actual services needed by the rural dwellers. Awareness creation by the centers including churches' announcement and town criers were fashioned along the oral traditional information dissemination which is predominant in the traditional African society. The use of street bulletin and radio announcements by OCIF Igbariam and CDIC Nteje further buttresses the ingenuity of professionals who use their professional skills to find users' behaviour and needs in order to serve them accordingly.

The rural dwellers response on the type of information needed is an indication that their information needed may be unique. Birth and death information need is a sign of the importance attached to communal relationship. The low response to recreation information is an indication that the rural dwellers pay less attention to recreation or that their recreation outlet may assume a different form. Relativity of information need is demonstrated by the need for education enhancement and development in civil services by the unemployed and civil servant. Surprisingly, the unemployed are not interested in agriculture hence; they have no need for agricultural information. Again the traders and other artisans are not interested in employment information. This implies that they are hesitant changing their occupation. The low response on political information by farmers is a sign of opting for ignorance to political developments which could invariably influence the life of a citizenry. The result which indicated catalogues/newspapers/magazine as the major source of information for the rural dwellers (Tables 6 &7) underscores the need for information centres to concentrate on steady acquisition of these sources. This is because, discussion with the dwellers reveal that these newspaper/magazine/catalogue were acquired on personal grounds and by browsing at newspaper stands. This implies that the information centres are not providing current and relevant issues or the rural dwellers are not aware of the existence of the centres. Though, the newspapers/magazines serve as major sources, farmers and traders do not consider them as major sources rather professional colleagues/masters and promotion by motor advertisers respectively. Unfortunately the later sources are not provided for by the information centres. Therefore the provided sources seems to be irrelevant to the rural dwellers but for

televisions and radio which unfortunately CL Atani does not provided. Sourcing information from library and information centre as well as cyber cafés by civil servants is a reflection that the colonial model of library and information services can provide only for the needs of elites and rural dwellers. Interest on professional colleagues and masters as the source of information by artisans, farmers and traders is justified by the explanation by some mechanics, hairdressers, welders, poultry farmers and petty traders. To them the state-of- the- art information is received from motor spare parts dealers, fellow mechanics/welders/hair dresses and poultry farmers or those who are quite experience in the business.

The low awareness of library and information centres further explains why the rural dwellers do not use the centres coupled with irrelevant information and marketing by the employers of the centres. It also underscores the poor attitude of the rural dwellers towards modern information providing centres instead of the traditional sources which they are familiar with.

Preference for traditional and rural information sources to the modern type is further justified by rural dwellers interest on professional colleagues/masters, oral promotions and government extension in place of documented information in form of prints on bulletin boards, video or films. It points to the need for managers of the information centres to rethink the mode of information provision to the rural dwellers. Further to that is the provision of readers services instead of education enhancement, fashion related and political information in the form needed by the rural dwellers.

Conclusion

Information needs of the rural dwellers as a measure of the effectiveness of Library and information services rendered rural dweller provided the following conclusive:

- None-governmental funded library and information centres in rural areas provide more relevant resources and information which is modelled along the needs of rural dwellers than the government funded centres which are modelled along the colonial masters libraries;
- Information needs and sources of rural dwellers are predominantly oral in nature and are relative to their type of occupation as they source information from television/radio, professional colleagues/trade masters, motor advertisers and ceremonies contrary to the print and other documented information and sources of library and information centres;
- Irrespective of the sources and type of information provided by the information centres , rural dwellers are not aware of their existence though they show willingness to access and use the information centres if model to sooth them.

Recommendation

The following recommendations are made:

- ❖ Rural library and information centres should conduct needs assessment so as to model their services towards the needs of their community;
- ❖ Nigerian Library Association should embark on advocacy visits to rural development stakeholder, partner with them and explore the opportunities inherent therein;
- ❖ Rural Library providers should utilize oral the information sources and behaviour which the rural community are familiar with to publicise their innovative information services.

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