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A SURVEY OF RECREATIONAL AND EXTENSION SERVICES PROVISION TO CHILDREN BY PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN ABIA AND IMO STATES.

By

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Abstract

Purpose*: The main aim of the study is to access the extent recreational and extension services are provided to children in public libraries in Abia and Imo States. In addition, the study sought to identify the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children.*

Design/Methodology/Approach*: The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study comprised 98 library staff in public libraries in Abia and Imo States. Since the entire population was manageable, all 98 library staff was used in the study, using the census sampling technique. A questionnaire titled: Recreational and Extension Services to Children in Public Libraries (RESCPL) was used for data collection. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation while one sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.*

Findings: *The findings revealed that: recreational and extension services are provided to a low extent and the major challenges affecting provision of library services for children in public libraries include: inadequate multimedia facilities, non-availability of mobile van, inadequate knowledge of library staff on child psychology, erratic power supply, and inadequate provision of facilities for children with special need.*

Practical Implications*: The low level of recreational and extension services implies that public library administrators and state governments need to redesign children's library services to include regular storytelling, drama, craft activities, reading clubs, exhibitions, mobile library services, and community outreach programmes. This would enable public libraries to respond more effectively to children's educational, recreational, and social needs and extend services to children who cannot easily visit the library.*

Originality/Value*: The value of this work is on the identification of the extent recreational and extension services are provided to children in Abia and Imo States by public libraries. Its originality lies in the fact that it has not been published elsewhere.*

Keywords*: Recreational Services; Extension Services; Children's Library Services; Public Libraries; Library Provision; Children; Public Library Users*

Introduction

Children just like adults, also have knowledge gaps and they also seek for information to fill up their knowledge gaps. Children are persons less than 18 years of age, and they enjoy every right and benefit like adults (UNICEF, n.d). International agencies recognize the place of children in any society, especially in view of the fact that they are the future leaders of any nation. Information needs of children are as a result of explorative activities being undertaken by the children. These needs change continuously as a result of their growth (Oyediran, 2019). The developmental stages of children are; early

childhood (2-6years old), late childhood (6-12 years old), and adolescence (12-18 years old) (Hussain & Begum, 2021). There is a need for public libraries to identify the age varieties of children in the library and the children's information needs so as to be able to know the right quantity of information resources to acquire and the services to be provided for children. Stressing on the need for public library services to children, Fasick (2021) maintained that children are special public library users whose needs must be met and not overshadowed by information needs of adults.

The public library provides children with access to reading materials, learning programmes, and a safe environment where they can develop reading habits and curiosity. It also provides free services such as preschool story time to encourage early literacy, quiet study and work areas for students and professionals, and book clubs to encourage appreciation of literature in adults. Maximum or effective utilization of library services by the users is the main motive of the public library (Stejskal, & Hajek, 2015). In many communities, especially in developing countries, public libraries serve as one of the few places where children can freely access educational materials outside the school environment. As a result, effective library services for children contribute greatly to their literacy development, creativity, and lifelong learning.

The public library is also saddled with the responsibility of organizing library activities for children and their parents or guardians. This they do by organizing recreational activities that will capture their interests. Weekend and holiday programmes can be organized for them such as: story hour, reading of poems, recitations, jig saw puzzle, identifying colours and numbers, display of models, drama, puppet making, crafts display, display and exhibition. These programmes will attract the children to the library and while in the library they will be involved with other activities that will make them permanent users of the library.

In some instances, some children are far from the reach of public library services hence the need for extension services. Extension services in libraries represent a strategic approach to broadening the reach and impact of library resources and services beyond the confines of the physical library building. These services are designed to cater for the diverse needs of communities, particularly those of underserved and remote populations who may not have easy access to library facilities (Sarkar, 2019). The concept of extension services encompasses a variety of programs and initiatives aimed at extending the library's educational, informational, and cultural

offerings to the broader community (Egwuonwu, Obiekwe & Ekpeha 2022).

The provision of library services to children by public libraries is however without challenges. Factors lowering service delivery of public libraries could also be the collection of obsolete library resources, especially in public libraries in Nigeria where most of the libraries are full of outdated and mostly irrelevant materials for this present-day use. Unegbu, Ikonne and Ohwofasa (2023) listed major challenges facing service delivery in public libraries in Nigeria as well as other library institutions in the country as lack of infrastructural facilities, lack of e-resources equipment, inadequate qualified staff (librarians), erratic power supply and lack of funds among many others.

The study examined recreational and extension services provided by public libraries specifically for children in Abia and Imo States. The study focused on Abia State Public/Central Library Board, Umuahia and Imo State Public/Central Library Board, Owerri.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine recreational and extension library services to children in Abia and Imo States. The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. find out the extent recreational services are provided by public libraries to children.
2. ascertain the extent extension services are provided by public libraries to children
3. identify challenges affecting the provision of library services to children

Research Questions

The following research questions are posed to guide the study:

1. To what extent are recreational services provided by public libraries to children in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria.?
2. To what extent are extension services provided by public libraries to children in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria.?
3. What are the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children in Abia and Imo States, Nigeria.?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses are formulated and were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Ho_1: The mean response score on the extent recreational services are provided by public libraries to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20

Ho_2: The mean response score on the extent extension services are provided by public libraries to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 17.5

Ho_3: The mean rating score of the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20

Literature Review

Public libraries are institutions created to provide access to knowledge and information for all members of the community by providing book and non-book materials arranged in an orderly manner and made accessible to users. Seavey cited in Nwabueze and Ntogo-Saghenen (2017) defined a public library as an institution open to all categories of persons in the society irrespective of status, age, gender, educational background, nationality, language or affiliation. According to the author, it is the people's university, the local gateway to knowledge providing opportunities for life-long learning, independent decision making and cultural development.

Public libraries are locally based service organisations set up to meet the needs of the local communities and to operate within the context of the communities while contributing to the creation and maintenance of a well–informed and democratic society. Libraries are still responsible for acquiring and providing access to books, periodicals, and other media that are required to meeting the educational, recreational and informational needs of their users. Public libraries render library services to all categories of users. Some of the services they render are but not limited to storytelling to children to encourage early learning and reading culture, information resources in all formats, and quiet reading space for students and professionals (Ekere & Ugwuanyi, 2020). The services rendered by public libraries could be summarized as mobile library services, information and referral services, outreach programmes, Current Awareness Programmes (CAS), Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), internet services, photocopy services, book depot, and library services to children (Anyalebechi & Udo-Anyanwu, 2016). Public library services include but not limited to community information services, recreational activities, reference services, storytelling and reading competition for children, career information, customer care, and adult literacy education (Iwhiwhu & Okorodudu, 2012). Barker (2020) opines that public library staff should be knowledgeable on best approaches in rendering library services to the different age groups of children in the public library.

The services of public libraries can be categorized into: informational, educational, recreational and extension.

Recreational Services

In as much as one of the roles of public libraries is to pay more attention to its patrons, the librarian working in a children's library according to Bhatti cited in Nnah and Ita (2025), must line up various activities to be able to achieve the goal which includes: storytelling, craft making, film shows, puppetry, talks, books, exhibition and book talks. The authors further outlined recreational activities of public libraries to include public libraries organizing story hour talk in evening of week day or Saturdays, creative activities or creative writing such as puppets, either with paper, or clay, formation of clubs within the library setup, drama presentation. The children section provides pre-school programmes, storytelling, reading competition, riddles and joke among others. The library facilitates education of children. In addition to the reading habits, the section has a computer lab, an activity room, a storytelling and puppet show corner, and a multimedia corner.

A special section is dedicated to children with different types of disabilities. Several activities are offered by the staff of children section on a daily basis, such as storytelling, puppet shows, and arts and crafts. (Ternenge & Tamen, 2021). Nzewi, Okechukwu and Urhiewhu (2021) added that library provides story hours for children which is also a kind of extension service. Part of the activities being carried out in children's libraries in public libraries is story hour. Osuchukwu (2019) averred that public libraries establish story hour programmes to enrich children's learning experiences. The services offer recreational moments through books, stories, crafts, and language as well as social interactions to imbibe the love of books and learning. Osuchukwu noted that librarians are at the centre of story hour and reading activities, extending these services to promote equitable quality education.

Extension Services

Public libraries also carry out extension services to remote areas that cannot easily access the library; these include the rural areas, where majority of the inhabitants need information that are necessary for survival, such as health, occupation, business information. This service is usually carried outside the library to those who may not come to the library or are not aware of library resources and services. According to Umar (2020) public library extension services is viewed as the process of reaching out to the people in communities and proving them with information materials either on a weekly or monthly basis. It could be an avenue to inform the rural populace, local schools or

artisans on the importance of sending their wards to the library and making use of the library themselves. Extension service is a service provided by a library, which delivers library materials to members of the community that are unable to visit the library. Libraries can partner with other agencies to carry out extension services. They can partner with the Ministry of Health to create awareness about diseases – mode of transmission, prevention, management and cure

Activities in the children's library can be referred to as extension work, extension activities or children's programmes. Much is expected of the public library that serves such children than the mere introduction of effective literature to children. Since a lot of children are not in the habit of reading, the children's librarian has to add the task of enticing the children to books. Schemeller as cited in Akanwa (2015) supports this view by stating that the children's library should provide not only books and other media, but also possibilities of communication and personality development. Extension activities are those activities ancillary to the main use of books and libraries which are conducted within the library to make children become more interested in books and libraries. Kumar and Singh (2017) highlight different forms of extension activities provided by public libraries like user education, reading and study circle, organizing meetings, public lectures/talks, arranging cultural programmes, observation of events and festivals, book fair and exhibitions, etc.

Extension activities should be given priority by the public library. Authors such as Mmejim (2020), Akanwa and Chimdi (2020), Benson, Onuoha and Mbagwu (2018) found that public libraries are faced with the problem of inadequate funding and accommodation which have stalled the provision of children's literature, activities and services. Umar (2020) identified challenges affecting library extension services in Nigeria among others to include; lack of library extension policies: inadequate skilled manpower; active library users are lost in some libraries because there is no knowledgeable staff to win their attention. and inability of government to monitor effectively the policy on library extension services.

Extension services play a vital role in promoting information utilization in public libraries. According to Inyang, Abia, Inyang and Udoh (2025) can be achieved through outreach programmes, community partnerships, outreach programme, and the digital Literacy programme. Library extension services may be of internal extension service which includes orientation programmes and the external extension service includes the mobile library service, publicity programmes etc. Kumar and Singh

(2017) in their study highlighted different forms of extension services provided by public libraries like library orientation, reading/ study circle, organizing meetings, public lectures/ talks; arranging cultural programmes, observation of events and festivals, book fair/ exhibition, mobile library services, etc.

Review of Empirical Studies

Borgohain and Nath (2020) studied public library extension service as a community development programme: A case study. Three objectives guided the study. A survey design was adopted for this study. For the study, three District Libraries of Upper Assam were purposively selected to visualize a clear picture regarding extension services. The target population of this study comprised 120 users' communities like students, senior citizens, housewives, businessmen, government employees, etc. in each of the three district libraries of Upper Assam. A structured questionnaire was used for collecting relevant information pertaining to the subject. The collected data for each category were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and calculated using percentages and presented in tabular form. The findings showed that most of the identified extension services had not been practiced in the three district libraries and also the awareness level was very pathetic among the community.

Opara (2016) carried out a study on public library services to children in Imo State Public Library, Owerri. The study was guided by three research questions and objectives. The survey research design was used to carry out the study while the questionnaire was the major instrument that was used to elicit data for the study. The population of the study was 241 made up of 236 children and 5 librarians, data collected were analysed with frequency counts and percentages. Some of the findings are that; literature, circulation/lending services, reprographic services, reference services are provided to children; extension services and audio-visual services are minimally provided while library services for the physically challenged, internet services and mobile library services are not provided at all.

The study of Ternenge and Torkuma (2021) was on Information needs and seeking behaviour of children in public libraries: A case study of Benue State Public Library. Five (5) objectives with corresponding research questions were posed to guide the study. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 490 children registered with the Benue state library Board headquarters, Makurdi. However, a sample size of 220 was drawn using simple random sampling and Taro Yamene’s formula was used to determine the sample size from the

population. The instrument for data collection was questionnaire developed by the researcher and validated by two experts who are professional librarians. Data collected for the study was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and mean scores to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that children need information on child development and skills acquisition, some children need information on culture of the people, among others. Findings of the study further revealed that lack of awareness/ orientation programme, inadequate search skills, lack of information literacy programme, among others were the challenges hindering children from accessing and utilizing library resources in public libraries in Benue State.

The study of Anyalebechi and Udo-Anyanwu (2016) was on public library services and the attainment of social wellbeing in Enugu State. Seven research questions bothering on availability of resources for public libraries services were posed and answered by the study. The study employed survey research design for gathering data, through the use of structured questionnaire. The population of the study was 1,667 registered users of the branch libraries studied out of which a sample of 333 was drawn. The data collected were analyzed using frequency tables and simple percentages. The findings of the study revealed that the main areas of need of the respondents for using the public library are information, education and social; reference materials, government publications, serials/journals and textbooks, while inadequate resources, traditional library practice, lack of awareness and poor reading culture are the main challenges hindering the use of library services for social wellbeing of the users.

Research Methodology

The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 98 library staff in Abia and Imo State public libraries which were also used as the sample, hence the adoption of census sampling technique. A questionnaire titled: Recreational and Extension Services to Children in Public Libraries (RESCPL) was used to collect data for the study. Research questions 1 and 2 were rated with 3.50-4.00 Very High Extent, 2.50-3.49 =High Extent, 1.50- 2.49= Low Extent, and 1.00 – 1.49= Very Low Extent while research question 3 was rated with 3.50-4.00 =Strongly Agree, 2.50-3.49= Agree, 1.50- 2.49=Strongly Disagree, 1.00-1.49=Disagree. The research questions were answered using the mean and standard deviation while one sample t-test was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Data Analyses and Presentation

Research Question 1: To what extent are recreational services provided by public libraries to children?

Table 1: Extent of Provision of Recreational Services to Children in Public Libraries.

S/N	Items	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	Mean	St.dv	Remark
1	Public library organizes film shows	12	30	40	16	2.39	0.91	Low extent
2	Story hours are organized for children	18	35	32	13	2.59	0.93	High extent
3	Playtime is integrated during library use	15	32	36	15	2.48	0.92	Low extent
4	Children are exposed to craft making	11	28	44	15	2.36	0.88	Low extent
5	Children are organized into groups to form clubs	14	34	35	15	2.48	0.92	Low extent
6	Drama presentations are organized	10	25	45	18	2.28	0.88	Low extent
7	There is a time for riddles and jokes	16	36	32	14	2.55	0.92	High extent
8	There is a puppet show corner in the library	8	24	48	18	2.14	0.84	Low extent
	Mean of item means					**2.41**		
	Weighted Mean					**19.27**		

Table 1 shows the mean responses of the library staff on the extent to which recreational services are provided for children in the public libraries in Abia and Imo States. It is seen that only items 2, and 7 have their mean scores above 2.50, implying that story hours and riddles, and jokes are the major recreational services provided for students in the public libraries in Abia and Imo States. The other items have their mean scores below 2.50 showing low levels of agreement with the corresponding statements. The mean of item means is 2.41 which is also below 2.50 criterion mean. This clearly implies that the extent to which recreational services are provided for children in public libraries in Abia and Imo states is low.

Ho_1: The mean response score on the extent recreational services are provided by public libraries to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20

Table 2: One sample t-test of difference in mean scores of library staff on extent of provision of recreational services

Variable	N	Criterio mean	SD	df	t-	α-	p-	Decision

		n mean				**statistic**	**valu e**	**value**	
Recreational services	98	20.00	19.27	1.38	97	1.265	0.05	**.077**	**Ho not rejected**

df = degree of freedom, SD= standard deviation, α- value = 0.05 level of significance

The corresponding hypothesis on Table 2 shows the one-sample t-test of difference in the mean responses of library staff on the extent of provision of recreational services for children in public libraries. The mean score of the respondents (19.27) was significantly lower than the criterion mean of 20.00. The p value is 0.077 (greater than 0.05 level of significance) which confirms that the difference between the sample mean (19.27) and criterion mean (20.00) is not significant. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected and the alternative upheld. Hence, the mean response score on the extent recreational services are provided by public libraries to children is significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

Research Question 2: To what extent are extension services provided by public libraries to children?

Table 3: Extent of Provision of Extension Services to Children by Public Libraries

S/N	**Items**	**VHE**	**HE**	**LE**	**VLE**	**Mean**	**St.dv**	**Remark**
1	Children are exposed to library resources and services through user education.	15	35	36	12	2.54	0.90	High Extent
2	Exhibitions are organized regularly	12	28	42	16	2.37	0.89	Low Extent
3	Social media is used to pass information to children users of the library.	14	30	38	16	2.43	0.92	Low Extent
4	Book mobile services are functional	8	22	46	22	2.16	0.86	Low Extent
5	The library produces handbooks and newsletters	10	26	44	18	2.29	0.87	Low Extent
6	Outreach services are carried out to acquaint users with information on health, governance, etc.	13	32	38	15	2.44	0.91	Low Extent
7	The public library uses television and	9	24	48	17	2.20	0.85	Low Extent

	radio to reach out to their users		
	Mean of item means	**2.35**	**Low Extent**
	Weighted Mean	**16.43**	

Table 3 shows the mean responses of the library staff on the provision of extension services for children in public libraries in Abia and Imo States. Only item 1 has its mean response above 2.50. The rest of the items in the scale have their mean scores below the 2.50 cutoff mean mark for a four-point Likert scale. The mean of item means is 2.35 which is also lower than the criterion mean of 2.50. This result means that the extent to which extension services are provided for children in public libraries in Abia and Imo States is low.

Ho_2: The mean response score on the extent extension services are provided by public libraries to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 17.5.

Table 4: One sample t-test of difference in mean scores of library staff on the extent of provision of extension services for children in their libraries

Variable	n	Criterion mean	Mean	SD	df	t-statistic	*α-value*	p-value	Decision
Extension services	98	17.50	16.43	1.29	97	0.574	0.05	0.586	**Ho Accepted**

Table 4 shows one sample t-test of difference in the mean responses of the library staff on the extent of provision of extension services for children in libraries. From the table, it is seen that the mean score is 16.43 with an associated non-significant p-value of 0.586. This mean score is less than the expected criterion mean of 17.50. The null hypothesis is therefore not rejected and it is further concluded that library staff's mean responses on the extent of provision of extension services for children in the public libraries in Abia and Imo States is not significantly greater than 17.50 criterion mean.

Research Question 3: What are the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children?

Table 5: Challenges Affecting Provision of Library Services to Children

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	St.dv	Remark
1	The non aesthetic nature of the library does not attract children to the library	12	22	48	16	2.31	0.87	Disagree
2	The space for children is inadequate	10	26	44	18	2.29	0.87	Disagree
3	There are no multimedia facilities like television etc.	48	38	9	3	3.34	0.77	Agree
4	Non availability of mobile van	55	32	9	2	3.43	0.74	Agree
5	Library staff do not have knowledge of children psychology	38	44	11	5	3.17	0.82	Agree
6	Inadequate qualified number of staff	11	24	47	16	2.31	0.86	Disagree
7	Erratic power supply	46	38	10	4	3.29	0.81	Agree
8	Non provision of resources and facilities for the children with special needs	40	42	12	4	3.20	0.79	Agree
	Mean of item means					**2.90**		
	Weighted Mean					**23.18**		

Table 5 shows the challenges affecting provision of library services to children in public libraries in Abia and Imo States. The major challenges affecting provision of library services for children in public libraries as shown by the table include: inadequate multimedia facilities (3.34), non-availability of mobile van (3.34), inadequate knowledge of library staff on child psychology (3.17), erratic power supply (3.29), and inadequate provision of facilities for children with special needs (3.20).

Ho_3: The mean rating score of the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children is not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

Table 6: One sample t-test of difference in mean scores of library staff on the challenges affecting provision of library services to children

Variable	N	Criterion mean	Mean	SD	df	t-statistic	*α-value*	p-value	Decision
Challenges to provision of library services	98	20.00	23.18	0.79	97	47.88	0.05	**.000**	Ho rejected

Table 6 shows the one sample t-test of difference in responses on challenges affecting provision of library services to children in the two studied libraries from the criterion mean of 20.00. The mean response is 23.18 with an associated significant p-value (0.000). The mean is clearly greater than the criterion mean. This leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that the mean rating score of the challenges affecting the provision of library services to children is significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.

Discussion of Findings

The study revealed that despite the high extent of provision of informational and educational services in public libraries, the provision of recreational services for children is low, as the mean response was not significantly greater than the criterion mean of 20.00. This gap reveals a profound disparity in the library service model. This finding implies that the public libraries excel in cognitive domains while neglecting the affective and psycho-social needs of children characterized by rich recreational abilities such as indoor games, arts and crafts, drama clubs, and the provision of fun fiction, comics, or audiovisual entertainment are largely neglected. This finding can be as a result of the conservative nature of educational policies in Nigeria where libraries are viewed strictly as "reading halls" rather than vibrant community spaces. Consequently, the library environment remains rigid and fails to attract children who view reading solely as an academic chore rather than an enjoyable leisure activity. This finding does not agree with that of Osuchukwu (2019) who averred that public libraries establish story hour programmes to enrich children's learning experiences. However, it is in tandem with that of Ternenge and Torkuma (2021) who revealed that while basic

traditional services were highly provided in Benue state public library, recreational services for children were lacking in the libraries.

The finding on extent of provision of extension services shows that the provision of extension services for children in public libraries is low, with mean responses failing to significantly exceed the 17.50 criterion mean. In order to reach a vast number of children, especially in rural communities, extension services such as mobile library services, book deposits in remote rural communities, advocacy visits to schools, and community-outreach programmes are vital. The low rating here highlights a localized, static approach to library service delivery in Abia and Imo States. Instead of taking the library to the children, the institution expects children to come to the library. This reality severely disadvantages children living in rural, suburban, or economically marginalized areas who cannot afford transportation to urban-centered public libraries, thereby deepening the information poverty gap. This finding aligns with that of Opara (2016) who discovered that extension services are minimally provided. Contrarily the finding debunks previous studies by Akanwa, Ilika and Udo-Anyanwu (2018) who in a similar study revealed that Current Awareness Services (CAS), extension services and selective dissemination of information services in Anambra state public library is high. Similarly, Inyang, Abia, Inyang and Udoh (2025) carried out their study on examining the extension services and information utilization in Akwa Ibom State Public Library and recorded good provision of extension services in Akwa Ibom State public library.

Also, the study found that the major impediments to service provision, with mean responses significantly greater than 20.00 include inadequate multimedia, non-availability of mobile vans, erratic power supply, lack of staff training in child psychology, and inadequate facilities for children with special needs. The lack of child psychology knowledge among staff is a critical human resource barrier; library workers who do not understand child development milestones cannot design age-appropriate programs or handle behavioral dynamics effectively. Furthermore, structural issues like erratic grid electricity cripple any minor digital initiatives that might exist. Most concerningly, the absolute lack of infrastructure for children with special needs (e.g., braille materials, wheelchair ramps, audiobooks) reflects an inadvertent exclusion of vulnerable populations, violating the ethical principle of universal equity of access. This finding corroborates that of Ternenge and Torkuma (2021) and Anyalebechi and Udo-Anyanwu (2016) who also identified such challenges.

Conclusion

The study's findings pose major implications for educational policy and practice. The neglect shown in low extent of provision of recreational and extension services implies that the creative and social development of the children is being neglected. Also, rural children and children with physical or cognitive disabilities may be effectively disenfranchised from the public library system. To transform these institutions into holistic, equitable spaces capable of nurturing 21st-century child development, there must be a deliberate shift from traditional, passive repository models toward proactive, digitally driven, and inclusive community outreach frameworks. Only through targeted funding, infrastructural modernization, and specialized staff training can public libraries in Abia and Imo States fully realize their potential as transformational engines for all children.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings, the following recommendations were made:

To address the deficit in extension services, the state governments should partner with corporate organizations or international NGOs to procure specialized mobile library vans to serve rural schools and remote communities.

To address the dearth of facilities in delivery of library services, library administrators should give priority to installing solar power systems (to bypass erratic grid electricity), establishing robust internet connectivity, and acquiring children's workstations/computers to improve library service delivery.

Continuous professional development programs and mandatory workshops on child psychology, early childhood literacy strategies, and methods for accommodating and supporting children with special needs should be organized for library staff.

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