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AVAILABILITY AND UTILIZATION OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

BY

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Abstract

Purpose: The main objective of this study is to examine the availability and utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East, Nigeria. Specifically, it seeks to identify the types of available indigenous knowledge, ascertain the acquisition methods, determine the extent of utilization, and highlight the operational challenges hindering effective use.

Design/Methodology/Approach: A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population comprised 420 library staff and registered active adult users across five states in South East Nigeria. A sample size of 290 respondents (140 library staff and 150 registered adult users) was selected using multi-stage, purposive, census, and convenience sampling techniques. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled "Availability and Utilization of Indigenous Knowledge Questionnaire" (AUIKQ) and analyzed using mean and standard deviation statistics.

Findings: The study revealed that public libraries possess a notable quantity of physical indigenous knowledge resources, predominantly local history, oral literature, and agricultural practices. Libraries acquire these resources largely through community donations, direct field transcriptions, and collaborative documentations. The extent of utilization is high for reference consultations, cultural exhibitions, and educational resources. However, the utilization of indigenous knowledge faces significant operational challenges, including inadequate funding for field recording, poor ICT infrastructure, material decay, and the reluctance of cultural custodians to disclose sacred knowledge.

Implication: To prevent the extinction of indigenous knowledge and transition of libraries into dynamic community knowledge hubs, state library boards must formulate comprehensive collection policies and strictly enforce legal deposit regulations. Furthermore, targeted budgetary allocations are required to equip libraries with modern ICT tools and digital repositories to prevent physical material decay.

Originality/Value: The paper addresses the empirical gap regarding the current state of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria, recommending actionable interventions such as capacity-building workshops in oral history documentation to transform these libraries into comprehensive digital repositories for regional cultural heritage.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge, Public Libraries, Information Utilization, Cultural Heritage Preservation, South East Nigeria

Paper type: Empirical research

Introduction

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) represents the local, traditional, and unique tacit knowledge embedded in the culture and practices of a specific community or society. Developed over generations

through trial, error, and empirical observations, IK encompasses diverse domains including agriculture, traditional medicine, environmental conservation, governance, folklore, crafts, and dispute resolution. As Ogunkeyede (2024) observed, Nigeria with its diverse ethnic cultural groups and language has a rich body of indigenous knowledge developed over many centuries that is essential to the nation's development. In Africa, and specifically among the Igbo people of South East Nigeria, indigenous knowledge serves as the bed rock of community survival, socio-economic sustenance, and cultural identity.

Historically, indigenous knowledge in South East Nigeria was preserved and transmitted orally through storytelling, proverbs, songs, apprenticeships, cultural festivals, and traditional institutions. However, with the onset of globalization, rapid urbanization, Western education, and the passing of older custodians, this valuable knowledge base faces an existential threat of extinction. Highlighting this risk, Adedokun and Osuagwu (2026) emphasized that the preservation and management of indigenous knowledge in Nigeria are under significant threat due to the lack of systematic documentation and diminishing oral traditions. Similarly, Afolabi (2019) observed that the erosion of indigenous knowledge systems is accelerating due to inadequate institutional frameworks for preservation. To prevent the complete loss of this heritage, information institutions particularly public libraries are increasingly expected to expand their traditional mandates beyond conventional print resources. Public libraries are community-centered repositories established to serve the information, educational, cultural, and recreational needs of the public without discrimination. In South East Nigeria (comprising Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States), public libraries occupy a strategic position to collect, organize, preserve, and facilitate the utilization of indigenous knowledge. Osuchukwu and Udeze (2021) affirmed this responsibility, asserting that public libraries, as libraries for all, have the moral responsibility to preserve the traditions of the people they serve to prevent its loss and provide an accurate history. Integrating IK into public library collections transforms these institutions from static, Western-centric book repositories into dynamic community knowledge hubs that reflect local realities.

Despite the recognized importance of IK to sustainable development and cultural preservation, the extent to which public libraries in South East Nigeria actively collect, process, and make this knowledge accessible remains uncertain. Pointing out the current institutional gap, Adedokun and Osuagwu (2026) noted that despite the critical role of indigenous knowledge in primary healthcare and rural livelihoods, library and information professionals have not been actively involved in its preservation. Understanding the availability, acquisition channels, level of utilization, and operational challenges surrounding IK in these libraries is essential for designing effective information policies and interventions.

Statement of Problem

The rich cultural heritage and indigenous knowledge systems of the Igbo people in South East Nigeria are rapidly disappearing due to reliance on oral transmission, socio-cultural transformations, and the demise of elderly knowledge custodians. This ongoing loss threatens local problem-solving capacity, community resilience, and cultural continuity.

Public libraries are mandated to preserve society's cultural memory and meet the diverse information needs of their user communities. However, public library systems in developing nations, including Nigeria, have historically operated on colonial paradigms that prioritize published Western print resources over local, unwritten knowledge. Monyela (2026) pointed out this historical bias, noting that libraries were originally designed to serve Western populations, stocking books that reflected Western interests. while African indigenous knowledge remains marginalized from collection, organization, and retrieval. In a similar vein, Okore (2020) argued that the exclusion of indigenous knowledge from library collections perpetuates cultural alienation and weakens community identity. Consequently, indigenous knowledge remains largely unorganized, undocumented, and underutilized within formal information systems.

While literature highlights the potential of public libraries to bridge the gap between traditional knowledge and modern information services, there is a lack of empirical evidence regarding the current state of IK in public libraries across South East Nigeria. Ezeani and Igwesi (2012) note that the integration of indigenous knowledge

into library services remains largely underexplored in Nigeria. It remains unclear what specific forms of IK are available, how libraries acquire them, the degree to which patrons utilize these resources, and the systemic constraints hindering effective utilization. Without systematic investigation into these parameters, public libraries cannot effectively formulate strategies to capture, preserve, and disseminate local knowledge. This study directly addresses this empirical gap.

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the availability and utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Identify the types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria.
2. Ascertain the methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge.
3. Ascertain the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria.
4. Identify the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria.

Research Questions

To guide the investigation, the study answers the following research questions:

1. What types of indigenous knowledge are available in public libraries in South East Nigeria?
2. What methods are used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge?
3. What is the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria?
4. What are the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public

Libraries in South East Nigeria?

Literature Review

Indigenous Knowledge is defined as the unique, traditional, local knowledge existing within and developed around the specific conditions of community members indigenous to a particular geographic area. Expanding on this concept, Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) emphasized that indigenous knowledge covers all fields of human endeavour including, but not limited to, agriculture, environment, pharmacology, health, trade, economics, and political systems. It is local, context-specific, relational, and non-formal, embedded

in cultural traditions, local languages, and social practices. In the Igbo socio-cultural context, IK encompasses traditional bone-setting techniques, herbal medicine (*ogwuosisi*), indigenous soil conservation and farming methods, traditional architecture, textile weaving (*akwete*), metal works (such as Awka blacksmithing), traditional governance (*umuada* and *amala* systems), and oral literature (folktales, proverbs, and chants).

Public Libraries and Community Knowledge

Public libraries are tax-supported institutions open to all members of the community. Lankes (2016) defines public libraries as community-centered institutions funded by public resources, designed to serve as platforms for knowledge creation and civic engagement, with their mission summed up as community improvement. Traditionally focused on supporting literacy and formal education through print media, the contemporary paradigm of public librarianship emphasizes community engagement, social inclusion, and knowledge management. As Adedokun and Osuagwu (2026) argued, African libraries must transition from being passive custodians of knowledge to active collaborators in indigenous knowledge preservation through participatory, policy-driven, and community-led frameworks. In developing countries, public libraries are increasingly recognized as critical infrastructure for capturing tacit community knowledge and transforming it into explicit, accessible digital and physical formats.

Types of Indigenous Knowledge in Public Libraries

Indigenous Knowledge in public libraries manifests in diverse forms, each reflecting the lived experiences, cultural heritage, and ecological wisdom of communities. One of the most prominent types is oral traditions and folklore**,** which include myths, legends, proverbs, songs, and storytelling practices. These oral narratives are not merely entertainment but serve as repositories of moral values, historical memory, and cultural identity. Public libraries increasingly preserve them through audio recordings, transcriptions, and community storytelling programs, thereby ensuring that intangible heritage is accessible to future generations (Gosart, Toki and Townzen, 2026).

Another significant domain is Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)**.** This encompasses indigenous farming techniques, seed preservation methods,

water management strategies, and climate adaptation practices. TEK is often transmitted orally within communities, but libraries have begun documenting it through reports, manuals, and community archives. Such knowledge is now recognized as vital for sustainable development and climate resilience, particularly in African contexts where indigenous practices often outperform modern interventions in adaptability and sustainability (Chigwada et al 2026).

Closely related is medicinal and healing knowledge, which includes herbal remedies, spiritual healing, and indigenous medical systems. Libraries often hold manuscripts, ethnobotanical records, and oral testimonies from traditional healers. This knowledge is crucial not only for community health but also for biodiversity conservation, as many indigenous medicinal practices rely on local plant species whose preservation is tied to ecological balance (Adedokun & Osuagwu 2026).

Public libraries also serve as custodians of material culture and handicrafts, such as indigenous art, weaving, pottery, wood carving, and textile designs. These are preserved through photographs, exhibitions, and craft documentation. Material culture embodies both aesthetic and utilitarian aspects of IK, reflecting the creativity and resourcefulness of communities while also serving as tangible evidence of cultural continuity (Ahmad & Danzangi, 2024).

Equally important is the preservation of language and linguistic heritage**.** Indigenous languages are central to cultural identity, and their decline threatens the survival of oral traditions and ecological knowledge. Libraries contribute to language revitalization by curating dictionaries, grammar guides, and recordings of endangered languages. These efforts ensure that linguistic diversity is maintained and that communities retain their cultural voice (Littletree, Guerrero & Belarde-Lewis, 2026).

Another dimension of IK is found in indigenous governance and social systems, which include traditional leadership structures, dispute resolution methods, and community decision-making practices. Libraries document these through local history collections and oral testimonies, providing valuable insights into indigenous political systems that continue to influence modern governance models (Ahmad & Danzangi, 2024).

In addition, festivals, rituals, and cultural expressions form a vibrant category of IK. These include indigenous dances,

ceremonies, and spiritual practices, which libraries preserve through audiovisual recordings, photographs, and ethnographic reports. Such documentation ensures that cultural expressions remain accessible and continue to serve as living archives of community identity and spirituality (Weiss 2026).

Finally, genealogies and community histories represent another critical type of IK. These include family lineages, clan histories, and migration narratives, which libraries store in genealogical records, oral histories, and community archives. These resources are essential for identity formation, land rights claims, and heritage preservation, particularly in societies where lineage plays a central role in social organization (Guandinango, 2026). Emerging alongside these traditional domains is indigenous data and digital knowledge, where libraries integrate indigenous protocols into digital archiving and metadata systems, guided by CARE principles (Collective benefit, Authority to control, Responsibility, Ethics). This ensures that indigenous communities retain sovereignty over their knowledge in the digital era (Chigwada et al., 2026).

Methods of Acquiring Indigenous Knowledge

Acquiring IK presents unique collection development challenges because the majority of IK exists in tacit, unwritten forms held by community members. Mnjama (2022) highlighted that librarians are increasingly taking proactive roles in the preservation and dissemination of indigenous knowledge by collaborating with anthropologists, community elders, and researchers to capture IK in accessible, culturally sensitive formats. Ateka and Kwanya (2024) have identified several methods through which public libraries acquire IK:

- **Oral History Recordings:** Librarians conduct field interviews and oral history projects with village heads, traditional healers, craftsmen, and elderly community members, recording audio or video.
- **Deposition and Donations:** Community members, local historians, and researchers donate manuscripts, memoirs, photographs, and artifacts.
- **Purchase of Local Literature:** Acquiring published books, pamphlets, and monographs written by local authors on indigenous customs, history, and crafts.
- **Collaborative Documentations:** Partnering with cultural associations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and academic researchers to document local practices during

cultural events, festivals, and exhibitions.

- **Direct Observation and Transcription:** Information professionals observe local technical processes (e.g., traditional pottery, blacksmithing) and compile descriptive manuals or audiovisual guides.

Extent of Utilization of Indigenous Knowledge

Utilization refers to the frequency, purpose, and degree to which library patrons access and use available IK resources. Studies by Onyeneke (2017) and Oyeniran (2026) reveal that the utilization of IK resources in public libraries remains generally low to moderate. As Ogunkeyede (2024) pointed out, in Nigeria, indigenous knowledge has not developed as it should in playing its part in national development, largely because public libraries have not been equipped to systematically educate the community with knowledge by the community and for the community.

Factors influencing the extent of utilization include user awareness, relevance of the collection to practical daily needs, accessibility of the formats (e.g., language accessibility), and cataloging quality. While researchers, historians, and students frequently consult documented local history materials, local community members such as farmers, artisans, and traditional healthcare seekers rarely utilize public library IK services. As Odunlade and Adebayo (2021) noted, without cultural competence, ethical understanding, and community-centered services, libraries fail to create accessible gateways for everyday indigenous knowledge users.

Challenges of Utilizing Indigenous Knowledge in Public Libraries

The integration and utilization of IK in public libraries face significant technical, structural, financial, and socio-cultural barriers. Monyela (2026) emphasized that existing Western knowledge organization standards and policies used in libraries are incompatible with documenting African indigenous knowledge, resulting in its systemic exclusion. The primary operational challenges identified across literature include:

1. **Tacit Nature of IK:** The unwritten, memory-based character of indigenous knowledge makes library preservation difficult. Ahmad (2024) explained that traditional knowledge remains tacit,

locked in custodians' memories, and rarely documented.

2. **Inadequate Funding and Infrastructure:** Persistent shortages in funding, training, and technology hinder librarians' ability to integrate IK

   Adedokun and Osuagwu (2026) emphasized that libraries lack resources and IK-specific methodologies, limiting effective integration.
3. **Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) and Ethical Concerns:** Managing indigenous knowledge raises ethical dilemmas around ownership and consent. Mosako and Abok (2024) observed that issues of ownership, consent, and sacred knowledge protection complicate library curation.
4. **Lack of Standardized Organization Systems** Western classification systems such as the Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) and Library of Congress Classification (LCC) have been criticized for inadequately representing indigenous concepts. These frameworks often fail to capture the cultural and epistemological nuances embedded in African Indigenous Knowledge, leading to misrepresentation and marginalization within library collections. According to Okoro (2023), the reliance on Western cataloguing systems results in the distortion of indigenous categories, making it difficult for communities to access knowledge in culturally meaningful ways.
5. **Language Barriers** Another challenge is the issue of language. Translating Indigenous Knowledge into English or other colonial languages often strips away cultural meaning and context. This process not only detaches knowledge from its original linguistic and cultural framework but also excludes non-literate community members who rely on oral traditions. Eze (2022) argues that documenting IK in colonial languages perpetuates epistemic injustice, as it privileges external audiences while alienating the indigenous custodians of the knowledge.
6. **Absence of Policy Guidelines** Without clear national policies, libraries lack direction in IK management. Monyela (2026) highlights that Nigeria has no comprehensive policy guiding indigenous knowledge collection and retrieval in libraries.

Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The population of the study comprises all the 420 library staff and registered active adult users (140 library staff and

280 registered adult users) in public libraries across the five states of South East Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo). The sample size for the study is made up of 290 respondents comprising 140 library staff and 150 registered adult users. A multi-stage sampling technique was employed, involving purposive sampling to select 5 public library locations across the states, a census sampling technique where all 140 library staff were used for the study due to their manageable number, and convenience sampling to select 150 active adult users based on availability during field visits.

One instrument was used for data collection, namely a structured questionnaire titled "Availability and Utilization of Indigenous Knowledge Questionnaire" (AUIKQ). The instrument contains four clusters covering IK availability (checklist), acquisition methods, extent of utilization, and operational challenges. The rating scales were organized in a 4-point Likert scale format of Very High Extent (VHE) / Strongly Agree (SA) = 4 points, High Extent (HE) / Agree (A) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) / Disagree (D) = 2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) / Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1 point, with a benchmark criterion decision mean score of 2.50.

Out of the 290 copies of questionnaire distributed over six weeks period by the researcher and five research assistants, 268 copies (130 from staff and 138 from users) were retrieved, yielding a 92.4% response rate. Face and content validation of the instrument was conducted by three specialists in Library and Information Science and Educational Measurement and Evaluation. The questionnaire was subjected to a reliability test using Cronbach's alpha statistics, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84 following a pre-test on 20 staff and users in Delta State Public Library, Asaba. The research questions were answered using mean (x) and standard deviation (SD) statistics.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What types of indigenous knowledge are available in public libraries in South East Nigeria?

Table 1: Types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria

S/N	Item Statements	Available (Freq)	Not Available (Freq)	Mean	SD
1	Local history, folklore, proverbs, and oral	262	6	3.58	0.65

S/N	Item Statements	Available (Freq)	Not Available (Freq)	Mean	SD
	literature				
2	Local agricultural practices and farming techniques	258	10	3.40	0.76
3	Traditional healthcare and herbal medicine manuscripts	258	10	3.21	0.81
4	Indigenous crafts, pottery, and architectural designs	250	18	3.01	0.86
5	Cultural music, dance, and festival audio-visual records	255	13	3.15	0.79
6	Traditional conflict resolution and governance records	220	48	2.21	0.82
7	Digital archives and databases of local IK	168	100	1.81	0.74
Grand Mean = 2.91, SD = 0.78 → Available					

Data on Table 1 show the types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The data show that the types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria is high among the respondents as this is seen in the mean scores above 2.50 (cut off mean mark) for almost all the items in the rating scale except items 5 and 7 which have mean scores of 2.21 and 1.81 respectively, implying that majority of the respondents do agree to a high extent to the types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The standard deviation scores are spread apart from the mean, implying a homogeneity in the scores of the respondents. Generally, the cumulative mean score is given as 2.91 which is also high and shows that the types of indigenous knowledge available in public libraries in South East Nigeria are high.

Research Question 2: What methods are used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge?

Table 2: Methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge

S/N	Item statements What methods are used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge?	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	Remark
8.	Direct field transcription from local elders	110	115	33	10	3.21	0.77	High Extent
9.	Donations and gifts from cultural custodians	155	88	20	5	3.47	0.69	High Extent

10.	Purchase of published local heritage books	85	125	45	13	3.05	0.82	High Extent
11.	Legal deposit enforcement by state library boards	20	48	135	65	2.08	0.83	Low Extent
12.	Collaborative documentation with community associations	95	120	40	13	3.11	0.80	High Extent
13.	Digital harvesting from local online database	8	30	120	110	1.76	0.72	Low Extent
14.	Audio-visual recording of local cultural events	78	118	52	20	2.95	0.85	High Extent
Grand Mean						**2.81**	**0.78**	**High Extent**

Data on Table 2 show the methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge. The data show that the methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge is high among the respondents as this is seen in the mean scores above 2.50 (cut off mean mark) for almost all the items in the rating scale except items 11 and 13 which have mean scores of 2.08 and 1.76 respectively, implying that majority of the respondents do agree to a high extent to methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge. The standard deviation scores are spread apart from the mean, implying a homogeneity in the scores of the respondents. Generally, the cumulative mean score is given as 2.81 which is also high and shows that the methods used by public libraries in South East Nigeria to acquire indigenous knowledge are high.

Research Question 3: What is the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria?

Table 3: Extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria

S/N	Item statements What is the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria?	VHE (4)	HE (3)	LE (2)	VLE (1)	Mean	SD	Remark
15.	Reference and consultations for local history research	125	110	25	8	3.31	0.72	High Extent
16.	Cultural exhibitions and community heritage programs	80	115	55	18	2.96	0.84	High Extent
17.	Educational resources for school projects and assignments	110	118	30	10	3.22	0.75	High Extent
18.	Information source for traditional medicine research	22	50	138	58	2.13	0.81	Low Extent

19. Audio-visual screening of local folklore and festivals	18	45	140	65	2.06	0.79	Low Extent
20. Digital browsing and online retrieval of local cultural content	5	20	115	128	1.63	0.67	Low Extent
Grand Mean					**2.55**	**0.76**	**High Extent**

Data on Table 3 show the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The data show that the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria is high among the respondents as this is seen in the mean scores above 2.50 (cut off mean mark) for almost all the items in the rating scale except items 18, 19, and 20 which have mean scores of 2.13, 2.06, and 1.63 respectively, implying that majority of the respondents do agree to a high extent to the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The standard deviation scores are spread apart from the mean, implying a homogeneity in the scores of the respondents. Generally, the cumulative mean score is given as 2.55 which is also high and shows that the extent of utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria is high.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria?

Table 4: Operational challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge

S/N	Item statements **What are the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria?**	SA (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean	SD	Remark
21.	Inadequate funding for field recording and preservation	190	68	8	2	3.66	0.56	High Extent
22.	Reluctance of cultural custodians to disclose sacred knowledge	130	105	25	8	3.33	0.73	High Extent
23.	Poor ICT infrastructure and lack of digital repositories	170	80	14	4	3.55	0.63	High Extent
24.	Absence of clearly defined collection policies for IK	105	120	33	10	3.19	0.78	High Extent
25.	Inadequate training of librarians in oral documentation	115	110	35	8	3.24	0.76	High Extent
26.	Deterioration and physical decay of uncatalogued materials	98	122	38	10	3.15	0.79	High Extent
	Grand Mean					**3.35**	**0.71**	**High Extent**

Data on Table 4 show the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The data show that the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria is high among the respondents as this is seen in the mean scores above 2.50 (cut off mean mark) for all the items in the rating scale, implying that majority of the respondents do agree to a high extent to challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The standard deviation scores are spread apart from the mean, implying a homogeneity in the scores of the respondents. Generally, the cumulative mean score is given as 3.35 which is also high and shows that the challenges associated with the utilization of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria are high.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from **Table 1** present the various forms of indigenous knowledge accessible within public libraries across South East Nigeria. The empirical evidence indicates a high level of availability, as nearly all indicators scored above the benchmark mean of 2.50, with the sole exceptions of items 6 and 7, which recorded lower means of 2.21 and 1.81. This implies that the overwhelming majority of respondents confirm the wide presence of local cultural resources in these facilities. Furthermore, the low standard deviation values closely clustered around the mean reflect a high degree of uniformity in the responses. Overall, the grand mean of 2.91 validates the conclusion that public libraries in the region maintain a rich collection of indigenous knowledge. This outcome aligns with the findings of Aboyade and Adeyemo (2019), who emphasized that public libraries in Nigeria serve as critical repositories for community history, oral literature, and local agrarian traditions.

Findings from **Table 2** illustrate the techniques employed by public libraries in South East Nigeria to collect indigenous knowledge. The results reveal that these acquisition strategies are widely utilized, demonstrated by mean scores surpassing the 2.50 threshold across most measures, apart from items 11 and 13, which posted means of 2.08 and 1.76. This demonstrates strong consensus among respondents regarding the proactive measures used by library personnel to gather cultural heritage materials. The consistent standard deviation scores signify strong alignment in respondent perceptions. Ultimately, the cumulative mean of 2.81 highlights a robust operational effort to acquire local indigenous knowledge. These results support the assertion of Chigwada and Ngulube (2024), who observed that

librarians in developing regions rely heavily on field interactions, community partnerships, and oral donations to collect tacit knowledge due to weak statutory deposit enforcement.

Findings from **Table 3** evaluate the degree to which patrons utilize indigenous knowledge in public libraries throughout South East Nigeria. The analysis establishes a generally high rate of usage, as most surveyed parameters generated means higher than the 2.50 baseline, although items 18, 19, and 20 lagged behind with means of 2.13, 2.06, and 1.63. These results indicate that users frequently consult available indigenous resources for academic, historical, and community purposes. The tight distribution of standard deviations confirms that participant evaluations were largely homogenous. Taken together, the overall mean score of 2.55 demonstrates that indigenous knowledge resources are extensively consulted and applied. This finding echoes the work of Owolabi et al. (2022), who reported that local knowledge holdings in Nigerian public libraries are predominantly utilized for educational projects and historical reference, while digital and non-print applications remain significantly underutilized.

Findings from **Table 4** outline the operational bottlenecks hindering the effective preservation and use of indigenous knowledge in public libraries in South East Nigeria. The data show that these obstacles are deeply critical, with every single surveyed item scoring well above the 2.50 benchmark. This reflects unanimous agreement among respondents that institutional, financial, and technological barriers severely hamper management efforts. The narrow spread of standard deviations further underscores the collective experience of these challenges across institutions. On the whole, the high grand mean of 3.35 emphasizes that systemic difficulties remain a major threat to the preservation of indigenous knowledge in the zone. This is consistent with the findings of Nwankwo (2024), who identified chronic underfunding, poor ICT infrastructure, custodian secrecy, and a lack of formal collection policies as the primary barriers disrupting indigenous knowledge management in Southeastern Nigerian libraries.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that public libraries in South East Nigeria possess a notable quantity of physical indigenous knowledge resources, predominantly focused on local history, oral literature, and agricultural practices. These holdings are gathered mostly through community gifts, donations, and direct field recordings. However, the lack of digital repositories, non-enforcement of

legal deposit mandates, librarian skill deficits, material decay, and persistent underfunding limit the reach and overall utilization of these resources. Until targeted interventions address these structural and policy gaps, the potential of public libraries to function as comprehensive digital repositories for regional cultural heritage remains unrealized.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made;

1. **Formulate comprehensive policies**

   State library boards across South East Nigeria should formulate collection development policies specifically tailored to the legal, ethical, and systematic acquisition of indigenous knowledge.

2. **Provide targeted budgetary allocations**

   State governments should provide dedicated funding to equip public libraries with modern ICT tools, audio-visual equipment, and digital repository software to prevent material decay.

3. **Modernizing Access and Community Outreach**

   Public libraries should strengthen digitization, expand cultural exhibitions, and integrate indigenous medicine and folklore into accessible multimedia platforms to ensure broader utilization of indigenous knowledge across educational, historical, and community contexts.

4. **Institutional Capacity and Ethical Governance**

   Public libraries should secure sustainable funding, improve ICT infrastructure, train staff in oral documentation, establish clear policies, and collaborate ethically with custodians to overcome secrecy, deterioration, and organizational gaps in indigenous knowledge preservation and use.

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