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Needs Assessment For The Establishment Of Rural Library In Ogba/Egbeme/Ndoni Local Government Area Of River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated need assessment for the establishment of rural library in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The study was guided by three (3) research questions which include the relevance need of establishing a rural library in the community; sources of funding for the library and factors militating against the establishment of rural library in rural community. The sample size was 288 drawn from the population comprising of community leaders from Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni local government area of Rivers State. A well-structured questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Cronbach Alpha was used to test the reliability of the study with reliability co-efficient of 0.84. mean was used as statistical tool for analyzing of the data collected. The findings of the study revealed among others that there is need for establishment of rural library in the communities and that there should be regular source s of funding for the library. Based on the findings, it was recommended that seminars, workshops and conferences should be organized periodically for the traditional rulers and other community leaders on the importance of rural library development towards community building and the state government should mandate every local government chairman to build and maintain at least two functional libraries in their local government headquarter and the out sketch of the council.

Keywords: Rural library, Need assessment, Library establishment, Rural area

1.1 Introduction

A groundbreaking project that can close the achievement gap in education and advance literacy in marginalized area is the establishment of rural library in remote location. Amiri (2023) defines a library as an organized collection of materials made available for reference or borrowing to a certain community. The term comes from the French “libraira (from Latin “liber” – book), it

offers digital or physical access to content and might be a virtual environment, a real building or room or both. Books, magazines, newspapers, documents, microform, CDs can all be found in a library collection. The process of establishing a rural library starts with the thorough need assessment that explores the rural community's educational needs and literacy level. Following the identification of the need in establishing a

rural library, thorough strategy is created that outline the goals and tactics to be implored, to ensure that the rural library is in line with the taste, standard and interest of the community, a thorough planning process and community interaction are necessary. According to Francis *et al* (2023), a library is customarily defined as a structure or room that houses a collection of books that are utilized for reading or study. All libraries including public ones are dynamic, ever-evolving spaces where librarians assist patrons in locating the most reliable sources of information, whether it is a book, websites or database entry (Eberhart, 2022). A library is defined by UNESCO (2020) as an organization or part of an organization whose main aims are to build and maintain a collection and to facilitate the use of such information resources and facilities as are required to meet the informational, research, educational, cultural or recreational needs of its users; these are the basic requirements for a library and do not exclude any additional resources and services incidental to its main purpose.

Furthermore, National Geographic Society (2023) defined rural area as an open region with few houses or other buildings and a low population. The term 'rural' is ambiguous and refer to different things to different groups of people, institution and governments. However, a geographical area that is situated outside of towns and cities is generally referred to as a rural area or countryside (Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia, 2023). Development can only be effective if rural dwellers have access to relevant and diverse information for their activities hence effort must be made to give access to knowledge and information to non-literates who constitute most rural dwellers thus the need assessment for establishment of rural library. Need assessment is the process of identifying and determining how to bridge the gap between an organization's current and desired state. It is a systematical process that examines what criteria must be met in order to reach a desired outcome, in this context the

rural library. Libraries are social institutions for educational research and teaching whether in physical or digital form. However, rural library according to Harade (2009) is a library situated in a rural community, providing information services directly to the rural dwellers with a view to keeping them abreast of development in their locality.

Furthermore, Ibegbulem (2015) opines that, rural library is an information centre that provides information to users as an agency of rural development, it supports the formal and informal education programmes and cultural activities through the provision of materials to both students and teachers in the locality. Nzelum & Uhegbu as cited by Njoku (2011), asserted that, the establishment of rural libraries in rural areas will provide information relating to health, housing, income, legal protection, economic opportunities and political rights to the rural people. In the same vein, the establishment of rural libraries in the rural areas will help improve the living standard of the people and minimize illiteracy and extreme information poverty. A rural library is a public library that serves the community's needs and is situated in a rural region. It also serves the community by providing a place where they can access a variety of freecol lections to suit their information needs. (Chairtra & Maranna, 2023). It is believed that the rural library would aid the community in overcoming information gap in a variety of areas including education, health, the economy and even culture. It is also generally accepted that rural libraries play a significant role in enhancing literacy rates and contributing to community well-being by organizing empowerment activities. Access to information is the keystone of democracy. However, it is worthy to note that rural dweller consists of mostly illiterates, subsistent farmers, artisans, petty traders, herbalists, senile people and a few young people that live in poor and deprived conditions due to the absence of necessities of life.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Rural library services are free based services managed and controlled by the public library for the welfare of the country's citizens. The function of the rural library in a community are to contribute to sustaining quality of life in all aspects – educational, economic, scientific and cultural as well as promote a democratic society in which equal opportunity exist to all and to develop into an ideal society at large. Despite the relevance of the rural libraries to the rural areas, there seems to be uneven spread or distribution of the public libraries between municipal and rural areas leaving rural areas with scanty or absence of library. The need to cater for the information desire of the country's dwellers has been the major issue of discussion by librarians and educators.

Recent studies have shown that majority of the rural dwellers are still ignorant of the importance of the rural library to their survival. The situation is even made worse by virtue of gross illiteracy among the rural dwellers who see the library as a place where only educated people go to read and are unaware that the information facilities accommodate both the educated and uneducated irrespective of gender, status, religion, level of education, ethnic affiliation and so on. Series of debates have been on going over the need for the establishment of functional rural libraries in our local communities that would engender rapid development in our local community and as well curb youth violence and insecurity among rural dwellers and the nation at large. What seem to be unclear is not only the perceived yearning for rural library establishment but the factors mitigating against the establishment of the libraries or is yet undetermined; sources of funding are major issues of worries.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research question were

posed to guide the study

1. What are the relevant needs for establishing a rural library in Ogba, Egbema, Ndoni Local Government Area?
2. What are the sources of funding the library?
3. What are the major factors militating against the establishment of the rural library?

2.1 Literature Review

A rural library is a visibly distinct cultural icon hence rural library is a local gateway to knowledge which provides a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision making in cultural development and social group. Rural libraries, often refers to as village or community libraries are built to serve the needs of rural population outside the reach of standard information services. Akanwa *et al* as cited in Chaitra & Maranna (2023), explained that rural libraries, which are a subset of public libraries play a significant role in promoting development by acquiring; preserving and making available to the general public information resources that are pertinent to the expansion of their environmental knowledge. Jawahar as cited in Chairta & Maranna (2023), examined the generally recognized conceptualization of information for the development of social and cultural activities in people living in rural areas by delivering the information at all the level necessary for it.

Furthermore, Damayaniet *al* as cited Chaitra & Maranna (2023), observed that the rural library can enhance and contribute to the community's skills to investigate superior local products that are regarded as regional specialties which help to add to and broaden the community's knowledge and understanding. Notwithstanding, Behera & Parida (2014), observed that rural libraries are helpful in meeting the information demands of various communities in their day-to-day lives. The rural library is not only a building to read

with many available information resources that are coinciding with the needs of the society, but also likely to be a place to find enough of information as a learning hub and develop the community's skills (Chairta & Maranna, 2023). In addition, visitors to the library can utilize it as a recreational place where they can acquire something new while relaxing.

3.1 Research Methodology

A survey research design was adopted for this study. It has 288 study population which comprised of community leaders (three

each) from the communities that makes up Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area (ONELGA), Rivers State, Nigeria. a sample size of 288 was purposively drawn from the population based on census enumeration technique which permit the adoption of the entire population of sample. The reason for using the entire population of the study is because the population is small and can be conveniently managed. The instrument used for data collection was a closed ended questionnaire. All the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statics mean and standard deviation.

4.1 Result and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1:

Table 1: Mean Response of the Relevance needs of establishing rural library N = 288

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	F	X	SD	Decision
1	To provide resources needs of education programme in rural community	168	40	27	23	288	3.4	0.5	Agreed
2	To provide information materials to the door post of the citizens for self-employment	250	30	8	-	288	3.8	0.73	Agreed
3	For the preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of rural dwellers	210	60	18	-	288	3.7	0.70	Agreed
4	For the provision of information need for the enhancement of mass literacy in the rural community	240	40	8	-	288	3.8	0.72	Agreed
5	To organize enlightenment programme on national issues and development in the communities	243	30	25	-	288	3.75	0.71	Agreed
	Grand Mean				-		3.7	0.67	Agreed

Survey Data (2024)

Table 1 revealed the result of respondent's opinion in item 1 – 5. The results showed that all items were accepted with a grand Mean of 3.7 and standard deviation of 0.67 which indicates that, respondents accepted that establishing rural library in rural community/area is relevant in Ogba/ Egbema/ Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding is in line with Chairta & Maranna (2023), explained that the rural

library fulfils a number of functions, including information collection, a centre for informal learning, o platform for cultural preservation and educational entertainment.

According to the authors, rural library's specialized responsibilities include: serving as a middleman to convey all information through resources in the library in order to improve communication between patrons and library mangers; through reading

collections, it has the potential to encourage an interest of reading, promote the culture of the ability to read and fulfil the information needs of the community to assist those who want to learn more by acting as a motivator, facilitator or mediator; through the function and services offered by the library, people can influence changes; rural libraries, which provide non-formal education help people improve their knowledge and abilities via self-directed study; the manager of a rural library might serve as a counselor or guide for library patrons and convey the value of science and maintaining a variety of reading collections, including books, magazines, newspapers and others.

Notwithstanding, it was also found

out in course of this study that the rural library serves as a social and cultural hub of the community; provides books for leisure reading that will help local young adults and children develop personally and spiritually during their free time. it is also worthy to note that, the rural library as revealed in this study is a knowledge center for society's disadvantaged i.e. every member of society has equitable access to library resources in order to advance their education in a certain manner. (prisoners, hospital patients, blind people, resident of rehabilitation facilities and others should all have free access to information in their appropriate location) (Chaitra &Maranna, 2023).

Research Question 2:

Table 2: Mean Response of sources of funding the rural library

N = 288

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	F	X	SD	Decision
6	Local Government Council should be one of the variable sources of funding	243	45	-	-	288	3.7	0.69	Agreed
7	Community tax-support would be one of the major sources of funding	260	28	-	-	288	3.8	0.74	Agreed
8	Library fee would be another dependable source of funding	180	20	88	-	288	3.3	0.54	Agreed
9	Philanthropic donation/gift would be another source of funding	271	17	-	-	288	3.9	0.89	Agreed
10	Proceed from business outfit would be one of the major alternative sources of funding	232	56	-	-	288	3.8	0.75	Agreed
	Grand Mean						3.7	0.72	Agreed

Survey Data (2024)

From the analysis in the table 2 above, the mean score of item 6 – 10 were all accepted with a grand mean of 3.7 with standard deviation of 0.72 which indicates that the respondents agreed that there are various sources of funding for the rural library in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. This finding is related to a study by Leo-Ogbonna as cited in Chaitra &Maranna (2023), stated that the public

library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization. Leo-Ogbonna as cited in Chairta Maranna (2023) opines that public libraries are funded from tax-payer's money. Furthermore, Oduagwu as cited in Chairta & Maranna (2023) classified the sources of public library (rural library)

funding into two broad categories which are tradition and alternative sources. The author further explained that traditional sources of funding include annual budgetary allocation from the ministry of education or supervising ministry; local government, individual group/

association sponsorship and miscellaneous ways. The alternative sources of funding rural library activities according to the above-mentioned authors are activities of patron' community and international aid respectively.

Research Question 3:

Table 3: Mean Response of major factors militating against the establishment of rural library
N = 288

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	D	SD	F	X	SD	Decision
11	Ignorance of our leaders of the importance of library in rural development	251	37	-	-	288	3.9	0.89	Agreed
12	Lack of cooperation of local government council with community authorities	220	28	40	-	288	3.6	0.62	Agreed
13	Inadequate funding	197	91	-	-	288	3.7	0.73	Agreed
14	Corruption on the part of traditional rulers	180	108	-	-	288	3.6	0.74	Agreed
15	Mass library predominant in rural area	271	17	-	-	288	3.9	0.99	Agreed
	Grand Mean						3.7	0.79	Agreed

Survey Data 2024)

Table 3 showed the mean Score of items 11 – 15. The table indicates a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 0.79 which revealed that respondents accepted that there are factors militating against the establishment of rural library in their communities within Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. It was revealed in the study that financial and human resources are typically scarce in rural areas, this is in line with Ianuzzi & Baule (2016) that the creation of rural library might put further burden on already limited resources. Another challenge in the establishment of rural library is cultural diversity that exist in rural location thus it is important to consider this when choosing resources and interacting with the locals (Ortega, 2017).

Conclusion

The study concludes that establishing a rural library in rural areas is a commendable

initiative that might revolutionize local communities by eradicating obstacles to education and encouraging reading culture among rural dwellers. Recognizing and resolving the challenges associated with the establishment of rural libraries in rural areas is essential. However, strategic planning is necessary due to infrastructure constraints, budgetary constraints and impact of rural library in rural areas. Ensuring the long-term effectiveness and impact of rural libraries in rural areas requires overcoming these challenges.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers however recommend that during the planning and execution phases, the local communities should be included, the services and materials offered by rural library should be determined by their preference and insights. Also, long term funding plan that

combines public and private financial sources - this is to guarantee ongoing support, look for collaborations with regional businesses and governmental institutions. Furthermore, every rural community has different information needs hence, there is need to for effective library services to accommodate and satisfy information needs of the rural dwellers. Notwithstanding, attention should be on developing literacy and reading, thus all age groups as well, will develop love of reading by participating in outreach programmes and offering a wide variety reading materials.

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