

Information Generation, Access and Utilization by Rural Dwellers for Sustainable Community Development in Kwara State, Nigeria.

BY

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Abstract

The study was conducted to determine how rural dwellers information access and utilization has affected rural community development in Kwara State. In order to achieve the two objectives three null hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. The objectives were to: find out the types of information generated and disseminated for the rural dwellers in Kwara State, and find out the extent to which the rural dwellers in Kwara State access and utilize information available to them. Survey method was adopted for the study, the population of the study consist of village heads and residents of the study area. Questionnaire was the instrument used for data collection. A total of 384 (100%) copies of questionnaire were distributed and administered to the population. SPSS 20.0 version software was used to analyse data. T-test and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) statistics were used for the three null hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that there is significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State. There is significant relationship between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State. There is significant difference among rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized in Kwara State. The study recommended that for the needs of rural dwellers to be met, reliable sources and channels of information have a crucial role to play and current, relevant and appropriate information need to be generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State.

Keywords: Information Access, Information Utilization, Rural dwellers, Rural Communities, and Sustainable Development

Introduction

Dissemination of information is all about distribution of information to all and sundry in the society, usually by government, an agency and/or individuals specifically given the authority to release information. Information dissemination is making information available to the target audience. The major concern here is that information should reach the final destination for effective utilization. Disbursement or distribution of information may be either through traditional ways, e.g. face-to-face contact, facial expression, town criers, beating of drums, horns, etc. or modern ways e.g. newsletters, flyers, telephone, GSM, web pages, email and so on.

Access to information and knowledge is required by rural dwellers in Nigeria particularly those in Kwara State for them to have a sustainable development in their respective communities, because they are majorly low income people whose main occupation is farming. They are socio-economic handicapped. They lack the technology and know-how to improve

and manage effectively the world around them. Okiy (2003) stressed that rural development is a basis for

economic development and information is an important ingredient in development process. People in rural areas whether literate or illiterate, old or young, men or women should have access to any kind of information which will help them to become capable and productive in their social and political obligations, to become better informed citizens generally.

Basically, for any society to function, adequate and useable information is required. Information plays an important role in almost every human activity. Its generation, dissemination and effective utilization have reduced the world to a global village. Nigeria, like the rest of the nations, is experiencing changes in all aspects of life from basic cultural value to technology, which has changed not only the mode of communication, but the concept of time. People who

are accustomed to an oral tradition can better relate to information exchanged in the way they understand. Meyer (2003) identified communication mechanisms and information seeking behaviour typical of people used to an oral tradition. In an oral culture, information is generated and stored in people's memories.

Despite the fact that, rural communities have suffered from not enjoying any meaningful and sustainable development largely because of the policy implementation gap that has been artificially created by past leaders. This is common among rural people across Nigeria like their counterpart in other African countries. Rural communities in Africa constitutes the larger percentage of the population whose information and developmental needs are not adequately met and consequently they have not been able to productively participate in the development process and enjoy the benefits thereof (Chester & Neelameghan, 2006). As a result, most of the rural communities in Africa and Nigeria to be specific have lacked access to basic human conditions i.e. portable water, adequate food, quality education, basic health-care, quality information and security. These have led them to experiencing a low life expectancy with high infant mortality despite their indispensability to the survival of the urban centers.

Improving the quality of life and well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas has become absolute concern of developed and developing countries globally in seen that a sustainable rural development is recorded. However, despite the efforts put in place by government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to improve the condition of rural populace, their condition remain surbid.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the fact that Nigeria is endowed with both human and natural resources, the rural communities are suffering due to their ignorance about what is due to them either from government, individuals and/or organizations. Not only that, rural dwellers also suffer from absence of accurate, timely, current and appropriate information that may be of benefit to their developmental process. Issa (1998) observed that rural populace suffers from acute low productivity, social and economic retrogression due mainly to ignorance, which is also a direct consequence of either inadequate or total lack of information provision to them.

However, a casual observation by the researcher indicated that information service provision to rural dwellers towards a sustainable rural communities development is lacking and this might be attributed to so many factors. Despite the operations of information service providers in Kwara State, there seems to be inadequate information to the rural dwellers, when compared to their urban counterparts. It is against this background that this study derives its problems.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives were to:

1. To find out the types of information generated and disseminated for the rural dwellers in Kwara State.
2. To find out the extent to which the rural dwellers in Kwara State access and utilize information available to them.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for this study:

Ho1. There is no significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated for the rural dwellers in Kwara State.

Ho2. There is no significant relationship between the information dissemination and utilization in rural communities in Kwara State.

Ho3. There is no significant difference among the rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized in Kwara State.

Methodology

Survey method was adopted for the study. The population of the study consist of village heads and residents of the study area i.e 957, 216 (NPC, 2006). A purposive sampling technique was used and 384 respondents were purposively selected from the population of the study. Questionnaire was the instrument used for the collection of data. A total of 384 copies of the questionnaire were administered in the two rural local government areas selected from each senatorial districts for the study. Six rural local government areas were involved. T-test was used to test the significant difference between variables in hypotheses 1 and 3 at 0.05 level of significance. While Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used to test the significant relationship that exists between the variables in hypothesis 2 at the 0.05

level of significance. SPSS 20.0 version software was used to analyse the data.

Findings and Discussion

The types of information which is being generated for rural dwellers largely depends on their information needs, most especially farming activities, health care services, education, security to mention but a few. However, dissemination of information to rural dwellers in their various communities equally depends on the availability of information, but not being care of their needs. The rural communities have different information needs depending upon their functions, responsibilities and duties.

These findings, therefore, justified the need to provide adequate information for rural dwellers in their respective communities based on their needs. Most especially in the areas like; agriculture, health, education, security, environmental to mention but a few. This findings align with Munyua (2000) who submitted that rural communities, where agriculture is commonly the main activities, require information on supply of agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizers), new technologies and innovation, early warnings (pests, drought diseases) and credit facilities, markets, etc. The findings also corroborated the position of Hossain and Islam (2012) that the rural women in Bangladesh need agricultural, educational, health, economic and social information in their daily lives. This shows that rural dwellers need various type of information to be generated for carrying out their tasks at all times.

The responses from the respondents' supported the recommendation of Daudu (2010) that dissemination of information could be done using different channels depending on areas the information is covering. Information on education for instance could be disseminated through school teachers, family heads and youth groups while information on agriculture could be disseminated through extension workers, farmers, association leaders, etc. This system will enable viable information to reach its correct destination and make the information useful. The finding agreed with that of Munyua (2000) who submitted that rural communities, where agriculture is commonly the main activities, require information on supply of agricultural inputs (seed, fertilizers), new technologies and innovation, early warnings (pests, drought diseases) and credit facilities, markets, etc.

The findings supported the position of Idaa (2012) who noted that the level of illiteracy was a problem in information access to the rural people of Benue State. He then recommended that government and other information service institutions to process and repackage information meant for rural needs in suitable language and format. However, for development to occur, there is a strong need for rural dwellers to access information in all spares of life, this will go a long way in bringing more benefits in their respective communities. The findings also upheld that of Diso (1994) who remarked that information, as a matter of policy, should be seen as basic resources for development if durable structures are to be provided for effective access which entails information capturing, processing and dissemination.

To a large extent, therefore, the utilization of information in rural communities in Kwara State was not impressive and encouraging. Before development could take place, information must be adequately utilized. An effective and efficient utilization of information leads to growth and development of any organization or society. The findings corroborated with the position of Akpabio (2005) who wrote that utilization of information makes the community to be educative and enlightened, but lack or inadequate information or underutilization of information tools may hamper the course of negotiation, awareness, interaction and understanding. The findings also is in agreement with Manzvanzvi (1993) and Rosenberg (1993) who remarked that information contributes greatly to the development of our society, but information users in rural communities do not actually perceive it in such a manner. It seems that people are not always aware of what information entails.

Hypothesis 1:

There is no significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State.

The hypothesis is aimed at establishing the significant difference that exists between information generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State. In order to test the hypothesis, T-test was used. The analysis is presented in Table 1

Table 1: T-test of Difference between the Types of Information Generated and Disseminated for Rural Dwellers in Kwara State

Variable	M	N	SD	DF	t	P	Decision
Information Generated	36.0755	384	4.02045	384	3.09	.000	Rejected
Information Disseminated	35.5938	384	5.59901				

***significant at the 0.05 level (2-tails)**

Table 1: has shown a significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated at ($p < 0.05$) level of significance. From the observed t-value of 3.09 is greater than the p critical value of .000 at the same degree of freedom. Thus, the result reveals that there is significant difference between the information generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State. Therefore, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated is rejected.

Hypothesis 2: *There is no significant relationship between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State.*

The hypothesis is aimed at establishing the significant relationship that exists between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State. In order to test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used. The analysis is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Pearson Correlation Between Information Disseminated and Utilized in Rural Communities in Kwara State

Variables	M	SD	N	DF	R	P	Decision
Information Disseminated	35.5938	5.59901	384	382	.875	.000	Rejected
Information Utilized	32.9291	4.11126	384				

***correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2tail).**

Table 2 has shown that there is significant positive correlation between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State. The reason for this result is that the calculated probability value of .000 is less than the 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) alpha level of significance. Hence, the hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between information disseminated and utilized is rejected. Therefore, it is appropriate to state that there is significant relationship between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State.

Hypothesis 3: *There is no significant difference among rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State.*

The hypothesis is aimed at establishing the significant difference among rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State. In order to test the hypothesis, T-test was used. The analysis was presented in Table 3

Table 3 T-test of Difference among Rural Dwellers in the Types of Information they Accessed and Utilized in Kwara State

Variables	M	SD	N	DF	T	P	Decision
Information Accessed	35.8958	3.17330	384	383	29.333	.000	Rejected
Information Utilized	32.9219	2.77462	384				

*significant at the 0.05 level (2-tail).

Table 3 has shown the analysis of T-test of significant difference among rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized at ($p < 0.05$) level of significance. From the table t-value of 29.333 is greater than the p critical value of .000 at the same degree of freedom. This implies that the null hypothesis is rejected. It can therefore, be concluded that there is difference among rural dwellers in the type of information they accessed and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State.

Summary of the Results

The results of the hypotheses tested revealed that:

1. There is significant difference between the types of information generated and disseminated for rural dwellers in Kwara State.
2. There is significant relationship between information disseminated and utilized in rural communities in Kwara State.
3. There is significant difference among rural dwellers in the types of information they accessed and utilized in Kwara State.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, a number of conclusions can be drawn. It can be concluded that for development to take place in the study area, other types of information being generated require adequate attention, such as; economic, environmental, education, health, agriculture and ICTs. Most types of information disseminated to rural communities were not those that could guarantee sustainable rural development. Channels used to disseminate information were not comprehensively enough for the rural dwellers to understand some contents in the information disseminated. They also accessed more information on health care service, cultural/festivity and agriculture than any other types of information. However, it was equally discovered that rural

dwellers utilized available information on social welfare, education, economic and health care service respectively. Judging from the failure of many rural development efforts to produce the desired effects, this research, therefore, concluded that there were defects in information generation, dissemination and utilization in rural communities in Kwara State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following recommendations were made:

It is obvious that before development could take place in any organization, community, country, and/or world, access to relevant, current, adequate and appropriate information is imperative. The needs of rural dwellers must be met in ensuring that adequate information is generated and disseminated to them in their respective communities. Therefore, reliable sources and channels of information have a crucial role to play. Thus, mass media, information manager, community health workers, agricultural extension workers, librarians, local government authority and others, must ensure that adequate, current and relevant information is generated and disseminated to them respectively.

Adequate, current, and relevant information should be made available to rural dwellers at all times. This could be achieved not only from disseminating information through radio and traditional means, but well equipped rural libraries and tele-centres need to be put in place. That is, government should build and equip rural libraries and tele-centres in strategic locations in some rural communities in Kwara State, for easy access to information.

Since GSM is widely used by people which is also applicable to some rural dwellers. Government and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should come to their aid by subscribing for various types of information, such as, information on agricultural

activities (e.g pests management, credit facilities, agricultural inputs, mechanized farming, etc), health care services information (e.g breast feeding, HIV/AIDs, control of malarial, etc), environmental information (e.g pests control, sanitation, hygiene etc) to mention but a few, that are relevant for rural development in Kwara State and Nigeria at large.

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