

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY LIBRARIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

By

Dr Isaac M. Ogbonna
Deputy University Librarian
Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Nigeria

And

Professor Chinwe N. Ezeani
University Librarian
University of Nigeria, Nsukka

Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria. Six articulated purposes of the research guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and the population for the study was 2,052 communities and Directors of Library Services. This was made up of 2,047 communities that were represented by 2,047 traditional rulers of the communities and 5 Directors of Library Services in the five states of South East Nigeria. Yaro Yemane's formula was used to determine the 335 respondents (Traditional Rulers and Directors of Library Services) obtained as the sample size of the population while Bowley's proportional allocation formula was applied to determine the proportion of respondents for each of the five states. Data collected through the questionnaire were coded, analyzed and presented by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that: the communities participated to a little extent in community library development; community participation minimally contributed to community library development. Poor/inadequate enlightenment, poor leadership, ineffective mobilization of the people, and unfavourable government policies were among the challenges associated with community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria. Some of the recommendations of the study included that community leaders and community-based organizations should mobilize the people towards increased community library development actions; and that librarians and library associations should create awareness of the need for community participation in community library development and also mobilize the community leaders to get increasingly involved in the development of community libraries.

Keywords

Community; Community Library; Community Participation; Community Library Development.

Introduction

Community library (CL) is important in promoting lifelong learning and in the overall development of members of a community. 'Library,' as used here in the concept 'community library' refers to the hybrid library located in a particular place which contains a combination of print and electronic resources offered in different formats and delivered either locally or remotely or both locally and remotely. Also, in this work, 'community library' refers to the library owned by a community, used by members of the community, administered by professionals (Librarians) or non-professionals, funded, and controlled by the community. The participation of communities is, therefore, required for the extensive spread and development of community libraries (CLs).

Community libraries help communities to pursue knowledge, cultivate sound reading habits, and engage in lifelong learning. They provide reading materials to all age groups and people from different interest groups within the community. With easy access to the CL, members of a community become literate, better informed and develop their information seeking skills. This turns villages or rural communities into viable places to live by creating access to library based information and also new information technologies, thus contributing significantly towards balancing or narrowing the urban-rural opportunity gap. It also helps urban community dwellers to live a more meaningful life. These inherent gains of CL stress the need for CL development actions in the communities of South East Nigeria.

The general objective of CL is to further the rights to education, and access to information, knowledge, and ideas of members of a community. The CL grooms members of a community to develop the culture of using libraries as they progress from childhood to adulthood, from primary to tertiary educational levels and for life. That is, it introduces community members to use the library early in life through adulthood thereby imbibing the flair for habitual library use and reading for life. This goes a long way to impact positively on the use of school, academic, public and other types of libraries by students, researchers, and the general populace. By so doing, the CL serves as a critical link to the greater use of other types of libraries. Indeed, lack of CLs adversely affects, directly and indirectly, the visibility, popularity, usage and general progress of libraries of all types in any society.

Development of community library involves library projects such as the construction of library building or payment of community library staff salaries, or the provision of community library books, computers, carrels, shelves, etc. Enugwu Ukwu Community Library in Njikoka LGA of Anambra State represents an ideal community library in this research. The community built a town hall and used one floor of the building for community library. Through community efforts and the contribution of individual entrepreneurs, library books, computers, shelves, carrels, etc were provided. The community tasked themselves and raised fund for the library development. Individual entrepreneurs also voluntarily donated funds and library materials and equipment for the development of the community library. A non-professional librarian who heads the administration of the library was given a basic training on library works/services in a University Library. The Enugwu Ukwu Development Union, on behalf of the community, controls the activities of the Library including payment of the staff salaries. The library admits members of Enugwu Ukwu community for its use.

From the above, 'participation' in the context of CLD is a process through which members of the community with or without the assistance of government get involved in and have influence on decisions and actions related to CLD in the community.

Statement of the Problem

Community libraries bring information, information resources, ideas, knowledge and individuals together to enhance the socio-cultural, political, and economic life of the community. It is a common belief that, in South East Nigeria, the likelihood of government involvement in the development of CLs is low despite the increasing benefits of CLs to members of the community. However, government alone cannot provide all the needs of communities. This calls for more community participation in CLD. The participation of the community is expected to ensure extensive spread of CLs in many communities in South East Nigeria.

The effect of non-participation in CLD by the communities is enormous and this suggests that non existence of CLs will unfortunately persist and probably worsen in the various communities. This also implies that illiteracy rate will be high as many literate youths will relapse into illiteracy while advancing in age without lifelong learning and reading habit which CLs promote. Thus, there will be armies of uninformed youths, men and women in the

communities because of non-availability of information within their reach which CLs could have provided.

It is also a common belief that in the past, few communities in the South East Nigeria participated in the development of community libraries. However, there is no known research to support or oppose this common belief. There is also no known research-based information on the extent of participation of communities in CLD in South East Nigeria. This information gap needs to be filled through a study such as this.

Furthermore, it is worrisome that despite the prospect of the spread of CLs through the efforts/participation of the communities and the private sector, to the knowledge of the researcher, there is no research of this nature on the extent of community participation in CLD in South East Nigeria, thus creating an information gap in community participation in CLD in South East Nigeria. The problem of this research is, therefore, to bridge the information gap by providing research-based answers to pertinent questions on the extent of community participation in CLD such as: What ways will be adopted to promote community participation in the development of community libraries in South East.

Literature Review

Nwegbu, Echezona and Okafor (2012) reported that many communities in Anambra State have gone into self-help effort to build libraries for their community members. They revealed that the state of the economy makes it rather difficult for a balanced spread of community libraries in Anambra State. They also observed that many of the libraries in the communities were built by individuals, and town unions. Their work portrays community library as the library that owes its existence more to the involvement of the community people and/or the private sector. This is supported by the research findings of Veta (2010), who discovered in her study on community participation, that the Delta State Oil Producing Areas Development Commission had not been able to achieve its specific service goals. This she attributed to some perceived factors militating against its operations which include inadequate community participation in its developmental processes which is instructive in considering CLD. It is also usually assumed that community change should be optimally pursued through broad participation of a wide spectrum of people at the community level in goal determination and the subsequent actions like resource mobilization and goal attainment.

According to Ekong (2010), community development programmes, which also involve CLD, are often based on cooperative problem solving of self help effort. The people should articulate their felt need such as a community library and go about mobilizing resources, planning and getting involved in the execution of the project. To this extent, the community will regard the project as 'their own', therefore, they will be very willing to maintain it. This means that for development, in this context CLD, to be self-sustaining, it is of special importance that the members of the target group participate in the organization of the programme. If the participation of the community is sought properly and obtained, the perception of the target group will be positive and this will yield to efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the community library project.

Anyanwu (1992), Abiona and Bello (2013) observe that because of the recession that has affected global economy, governments at all levels in Nigeria now lack the ability to solely provide all the needed infrastructural and social amenities in the communities. This, according to Akinbile, Oladoja, Awoniyi, and Adisa (2006) has necessitated the need for community dwellers to embark on self-help projects such as community libraries in order to realize the continued development of their communities and ensure sustainability of such projects. In the face of incessant complaints by government of dwindling resources and persistent increase in costs due to inflation, communities and the private sector cannot but rise to the challenge of actively participating in transforming their communities (Obinna, 2012).

Anyanwu (1992) and Veta (2010) are of the view that community participation, as seen in the Enugwu Ukwu community library example, requires collective efforts to increase and exercise control over resources in the sustainability of the project and protection of the resources. This explains the opinion of the advocates of the community and private sector participation (PSP) that unless there is full participation of the community people in the whole process of community development, there will not be any sustainable development.

From observation, the spread of schools, hospitals and similar establishments that strengthen communities in South East Nigeria is largely as a result of the community participation in their development and sustenance. This tends to prove the validity of the statement of Ekong (2010) justifying the adoption of participatory approach involving the community people towards community development programmes. It is, therefore, envisaged that with very high participation of the communities, CLD in South East Nigeria will spread significantly.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to determine community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. identify existing community libraries in South East Nigeria;
2. find out the areas of community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria;
3. Examine the extent to which communities participate in community library development in South East Nigeria;
4. investigate factors that influence the communities in participating in community library development
5. identify the challenges associated with community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria; and
6. determine ways of promoting community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria.

Research Questions

This study is further guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the existing community libraries in South East Nigeria?
2. What are the areas of community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria?
3. To what extent are the communities participating in community library development in South East Nigeria?
4. What are the factors that influence the communities in participating in community library development?
5. What are the challenges associated with community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria?
6. What ways will be adopted to promote community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria?

Methodology

This study was carried out to investigate, among others, the: extent to which the communities participate in community library development; factors that influence their participation; and challenges of community library development through community participation. To realize the six purposes of the study, survey research design was adopted and the population of the study was 2,052. This is made up of 2,047 traditional rulers of autonomous communities and the 5 Directors of Library Services in the five states of South East Nigeria. Yaro Yemane's formula stated below was used to determine the 335 respondents (Traditional Rulers and Directors of Library Services) obtained as the sample size of the population.

YaroYermane's formula according to Uzoagba, A.E. (2011):

$n =$

Where:

n = the sample size

N = the finite population

e = level of significance

1 = unity

(constant)

Furthermore, Bowley's proportional allocation formula stated below was applied to determine the proportion of respondents from each of the five states. A researcher-designed questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection. Data collected through the questionnaire were coded, analyzed and presented by the use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

Bowley's Proportional Allocation Formula according to Nzelibe, C.G.O. and Ilogu, G.C. (1996):

$n_h =$

Where:

n_h = the number of units allocated to each stratum/category (or the size of sample stratum sought)

N_h = is the number of items in each category/ stratum in the population

n = the total sample size

N = the population size

Results and Findings

Results:

Table 1: Distribution of the respondents based on the number of available community libraries

n=335							
Variable	Categories	Abia State(103)	Anambra State(29)	Ebonyi State(22)	Enugu State(77)	Imo State(104)	Pooled States(335)
Number of Community libraries	Available	3(2.9)	14(48.3)	0(0.0)	2(2.6)	0(0.0)	19(5.7)
	Not available	100(97.1)	15(51.7)	22(100.0)	75(97.4)	104(100.0)	316(94.3)
	Total	103(100.0)	29(100.0)	22(100.0)	77(100.0)	104(100.0)	335(100.0)

Community libraries exist in the following communities: **Abia State** - Amaokwe Item, Ugwuakuma Arochukwu, Umuobasi Amankanu Igbera; **Anambra State** - Abatete, Ifite-Awka, Awka Etti, Awkuzu, Enugwu Ukwu, Ihiala, Isulo, Neni, Ndikelionwu, Nimo, Nnobi, Obosi, Ogidi, Oraifite; **Ebonyi State** - None; **Enugu State** - Alor-Uno, Aku; **Imo State** - None. **Total** - 19 community libraries.

The result in table 1 shows that majority 316(94.3%) of the entire respondents noted that they have no community libraries in their communities whereas 19(5.7%) of the respondents reported having community libraries in their communities. An examination of the states of South East Nigeria shows that most communities in Abia State, Ebonyi State, Enugu State and Imo State have no community libraries and this constituted 97.1%, 100%, 97.4% and 100% as indicated by the respondents respectively. Conversely, community libraries exist in relatively many communities in Anambra State as reported by 48.3% of the sampled respondents. These results from the states imply that most communities in South East Nigeria have no community libraries.

Table 2: Areas of community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria
Total number of respondents (n) = 335

S/N	Type of library project in your community
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(n=335)

		Community People	No community library)
i.	Community library building	12(3.6)	320(95.5)
ii.	Land acquisition for library building	19(5.7)	314(93.7)
iii.	Provision of library books	15(4.5)	314(93.7)
iv.	Provision of library equipment	18(5.4)	314(93.7)
v.	Provision of electricity/generator for the library	19(5.7)	314(93.7)
vi.	Provision of ICT facilities for the library	3(0.9)	330(98.5)
vii.	Payment of library staff salaries	20(6.0)	314(93.7)
Viii	Library building renovation & maintenance	20(6.0)	314(93.7)
Ix	Payment of rent for library building	6(1.8)	329(98.2)

The result shows that among the 335 respondents, 12 (3.6%) responded that they have community library building sponsored by the community. In terms of provision of library books, 15 (4.5%) of the respondents averred that they have provision of library books sponsored by the community. In terms of payment of rent for library building, 6 (1.8%) of the respondents averred that the communities participated in such type of library project. This result implies that communities rarely participate in the provision of community library building, books, equipment, ICT facilities, and staff salary.

Table 3: Mean-ratings of the extent the communities participate in community library development in South East Nigeria

Total respondents (n) = 335

S/N	Statements on extent of community participate in community library development	AB	AN	EB	EN	IM	GM	SD	Remark
	To what extent does your community (people) participate in community library development	1.08	2.69	1.36	1.97	1.04	1.63	0.627	Low extent
	Number of respondents	103	29	22	77	104	335		

Keys: AB = Abia State; AN = Anambra State; EB = Ebonyi State; EN = Enugu State; IM =Imo State; GM = Grand Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The result in table 3 shows that the respondents in all the states in South East Nigeria had mean rating of < 2.5 with an exception of Anambra State which had mean rating of > 2.5 in community participation. The respondents from Abia State, Anambra State, Ebonyi State, Enugu State and Imo State had mean ratings of 1.08, 2.69, 1.36, 1.97, and 1.04 respectively in their responses to the question ascertaining the extent communities participate in CLD in South East Nigeria. Although Anambra State had a mean rating of > 2.5 in community participation, the overall mean rating for the entire South East for community participation was 1.63. This mean rating was less than the decision mean of 2.5. This implies that the communities, to a low extent, participate in CLD in South East Nigeria.

Table 4: Mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the factors that influence communities in participating in community library development in South East Nigeria

S/N	Statements on Factors Influencing Community Participation	AB	AN	EB	EN	IM	GM	STD	Remark
i.	Ineffective community leadership affects communities in participating in CLD negatively.	3.22	3.38	3.73	3.22	3.29	3.37	0.190	Accepted
ii.	Unity and cooperation among community members encourage CLD.	3.72	3.28	3.73	3.26	3.60	3.52	0.208	Accepted
iii.	Cultural practices can obstruct community participation in CLD.	3.26	2.97	3.27	2.78	2.99	2.89	0.478	Accepted
iv.	Community based organizations such as the women organizations, youth associations, religious groups, age grades, and social clubs play important roles in community participation in CLD.	3.74	3.93	3.55	3.60	3.38	3.64	0.185	Accepted
v.	Effective communication facilitates community participation in CLD.	3.76	3.66	3.55	3.71	3.29	3.59	0.167	Accepted
Grand mean		3.54	3.44	3.57	3.15	3.31	3.40	0.154	Accepted
Number of respondents		103	29	22	77	103	335		

Keys: AB = Abia State; AN = Anambra State; EB = Ebonyi State; EN = Enugu State; IM =Imo State; GM = Grand Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The result in table 4 shows that the respondents in all the states in South East Nigeria have mean ratings of > 2.5 in all the outlined five (5) items on the factors that influence the private sector and the communities in participating in CLD in South East Nigeria. The grand mean score of 3.40 which was higher than the decision mean score of 2.50 confirmed that CLD in South East Nigeria requires effective community leadership, unity and cooperation among community members, progressive cultural practices, effective communication and involvement of community based organizations, as factors that influence the communities in participating in CLD.

Table 5: Mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the challenges associated with community participation in community library development in South East Nigeria
n = 335

S/N	Challenges of Community Participation	AB	AN	EB	EN	IM	GM	STD	Remark
i.	Poor/inadequate enlightenment of the communities.	3.26	3.83	3.82	3.94	3.61	3.69	0.241	Accepted
ii.	Poor leadership in the communities.	2.59	3.34	3.50	3.14	3.32	3.18	0.315	Accepted
iii.	Lack of finance by community members.	3.57	2.62	3.59	3.66	3.40	3.37	0.384	Accepted
iv.	Ineffective mobilization of the members of the community.	3.27	3.41	3.68	3.44	3.18	3.40	0.170	Accepted
v.	Lack of unity in the community.	2.52	3.34	3.41	3.40	2.92	3.12	0.350	Accepted
vi.	Unfavourable Government policy.	3.57	2.83	3.36	2.62	3.13	3.10	0.344	Accepted
vii.	Unprogressive culture and tradition	2.06	3.28	3.23	1.88	2.79	2.65	0.582	Accepted
viii.	Wrong timing of the library project	2.11	2.62	3.23	2.32	2.52	2.56	0.378	Accepted
ix.	Unproductive occupation of members of the community	2.04	2.79	3.41	2.97	2.68	2.78	0.445	Accepted
x.	Adverse cultural practices	1.71	2.86	3.14	2.22	2.75	2.54	0.509	Accepted
xi.	Limited education of members of the community	1.86	3.38	3.64	3.25	2.84	2.99	0.623	Accepted
xii.	Ineffective communication	2.49	3.28	3.68	3.25	2.86	3.11	0.405	Accepted
Grand mean		2.59	3.13	3.47	3.01	3.00	3.04	0.284	Accepted
Number of respondents		103	29	22	77	104	335		

Keys: AB = Abia State; AN = Anambra State; EB = Ebonyi State; EN = Enugu State; IM =Imo State; GM = Grand Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

**Table 6: Mean ratings of the responses of the respondents on the ways of promoting community participation in community library development
n = 335**

S/N	Ways of Promoting Community Participation	AB	AN	EB	EN	IM	GM	SD	Remark
i.	Adequate enlightenment and advocacy to the communities on the need for ccommunity libraries.	3.91	3.9	3.91	3.94	2.49	3.63	0.570	Accepted
ii.	Effective community leadership by the community leaders.	3.82	3.45	3.68	3.34	3.28	3.51	0.205	Accepted
iii.	Provision of adequate fund by communities for community library development.	3.84	3.59	3.73	3.79	3.38	3.67	0.166	Accepted
iv.	Effective mobilization of the people for community library development.	3.82	3.69	3.73	3.57	3.21	3.60	0.213	Accepted
v.	Maintenance of Peace, unity and cooperation in the communities.	3.90	3.48	3.64	3.49	3.21	3.54	0.226	Accepted
vi.	Maintenance of favourable Government policy.	3.79	3.17	3.77	3.22	3.36	3.46	0.267	Accepted
vii.	Ensuring progressive culture and tradition.	3.15	2.48	3.41	2.06	2.94	2.81	0.482	Accepted
viii.	Ensuring appropriate timing of the community library projects.	2.83	2.38	3.41	3.18	3.07	2.97	0.351	Accepted
ix.	Ensuring good financial strength of the community people.	3.74	3.52	3.59	3.71	3.36	3.58	0.137	Accepted
x.	Development of community infrastructures such as roads, etc	3.82	3.66	3.64	3.18	3.50	3.56	0.215	Accepted
xi.	Ensuring the education of community people.	3.78	3.66	3.77	3.60	3.25	3.61	0.193	Accepted
xii.	Ensuring effective communication.	3.72	3.66	3.82	3.58	3.22	3.60	0.206	Accepted
Grand mean		3.68	3.39	3.68	3.39	3.19	3.46	0.188	Accepted
Number of respondents		103	29	22	77	104	335		

Keys: AB = Abia State; AN = Anambra State; EB = Ebonyi State; EN = Enugu State; IM =Imo State; GM = Grand Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The result in table 6 shows that all the categories of respondents have grand mean ratings above the criterion mean of 2.50. The entire respondents accepted that adoption of the following ways will promote community participation in CLD: enlightenment and advocacy on the need for community libraries; effective community leadership; provision of adequate funds by communities for community library development; effective mobilization of the people for community library development; maintenance of Peace, unity and cooperation in the communities; favourable government policy; progressive culture and tradition; appropriate timing of the library project; good financial strength of members of the communities; development of community infrastructures such as roads, and electricity; education of members of the community; and effective communication.

Findings:

The major findings of the study are:

1. The number of community libraries existing in South East Nigeria is very few; there are only nineteen (19) community libraries that exist in South East Nigeria.
2. The communities participate in CLD projects in the areas of: provision of community library building, provision of land for library building, provision of electricity/generator for the library, provision of ICT facilities for the library, payment of library staff salaries, library building renovation and maintenance, and payment of rent for library buildings.
3. The communities participate to a low extent in CLD in South East Nigeria.
4. Ineffective community leadership; unity and cooperation among community members; community based organizations such as the women organizations, youth associations, religious groups, age grades, and social clubs; and effective communication, among others

were found to be the factors that influence the communities in participating in CLD in South East Nigeria.

5. Challenges associated with community participation in CLD in South East Nigeria were found to include: poor/inadequate enlightenment, poor leadership, lack of finance/poor funding, ineffective mobilization of the people, lack of unity in the community, unfavourable government policy, unprogressive culture and tradition, improper timing of the library project, profitable occupation, adverse cultural practices, limited education, and ineffective communication.
6. Ways found to be potentially useful in promoting community participation in CLD in South East Nigeria were: adequate enlightenment and advocacy on the need for community libraries; effective community leadership; provision of adequate fund by communities and the private sector for community library development; effective mobilization of communities and the private sector for community library development; maintenance of peace, unity and cooperation in the communities; ensuring: favourable government policy, progressive culture and tradition, appropriate timing of the library project, and good financial strength of members of the community through better occupation; development of community infrastructures such as roads, electricity, etc., education of members of the community; and effective communication.

Conclusion

The number of community libraries in South East Nigeria is very few. In community library development, communities in South East Nigeria get involved in the provision of library building, books, ICT facilities, and similar areas of involvement. Factors such as ineffective community leadership, community based organizations, effective communication, etc influence the communities in participating in CLD in South East Nigeria. This study identified some challenges associated with community participation in CLD and the ways to promote CLD in South East Nigeria. The findings of the study have implications for the communities, the government and librarians. Increased efforts should be made by communities in South East Nigeria to ensure that there is extensive spread of community libraries. The adoption and implementation of the recommendations of this study by the government, the communities and the librarians will largely provide the needed practical solutions to the challenges affecting community participation in CLD in South East Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Times have changed and creating awareness regarding the potential role and contribution of the communities in addressing the paucity of CLs in South East Nigeria has significantly evolved. Therefore, community leaders and community based organizations in South East Nigeria should mobilize their people towards increased CLD actions.
2. The political class in the various communities should be mobilized and encouraged by the government towards engaging in CLD actions in South East Nigeria. Such actions should include donation of library buildings, donation of books and library equipment, provision of generators for power supply, provision of ICT facilities, payment of library staff salaries, etc
3. Librarians and library associations such as the Nigerian Library Association in South East Nigeria should galvanize efforts to provide enlightenment, advocacy and awareness raising to influence and encourage the private sector and the communities to take sustainable CLD actions.

4. Considering the moribund state of most of the public libraries in South East Nigeria due to government inability to fund the libraries properly, the State Library Boards should encourage communities to develop and manage community libraries and not look up to the Library Boards (that is, the state governments) to take over the libraries established by the communities as branches of the State Library Boards.
5. Community libraries thrive better in peaceful and prosperous society. Therefore, the state governments in South East Nigeria should provide good governance, basic democracy dividends such as peace and security, employment opportunities, roads, electricity, water, etc in our communities to encourage the participation of communities in CLD.

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