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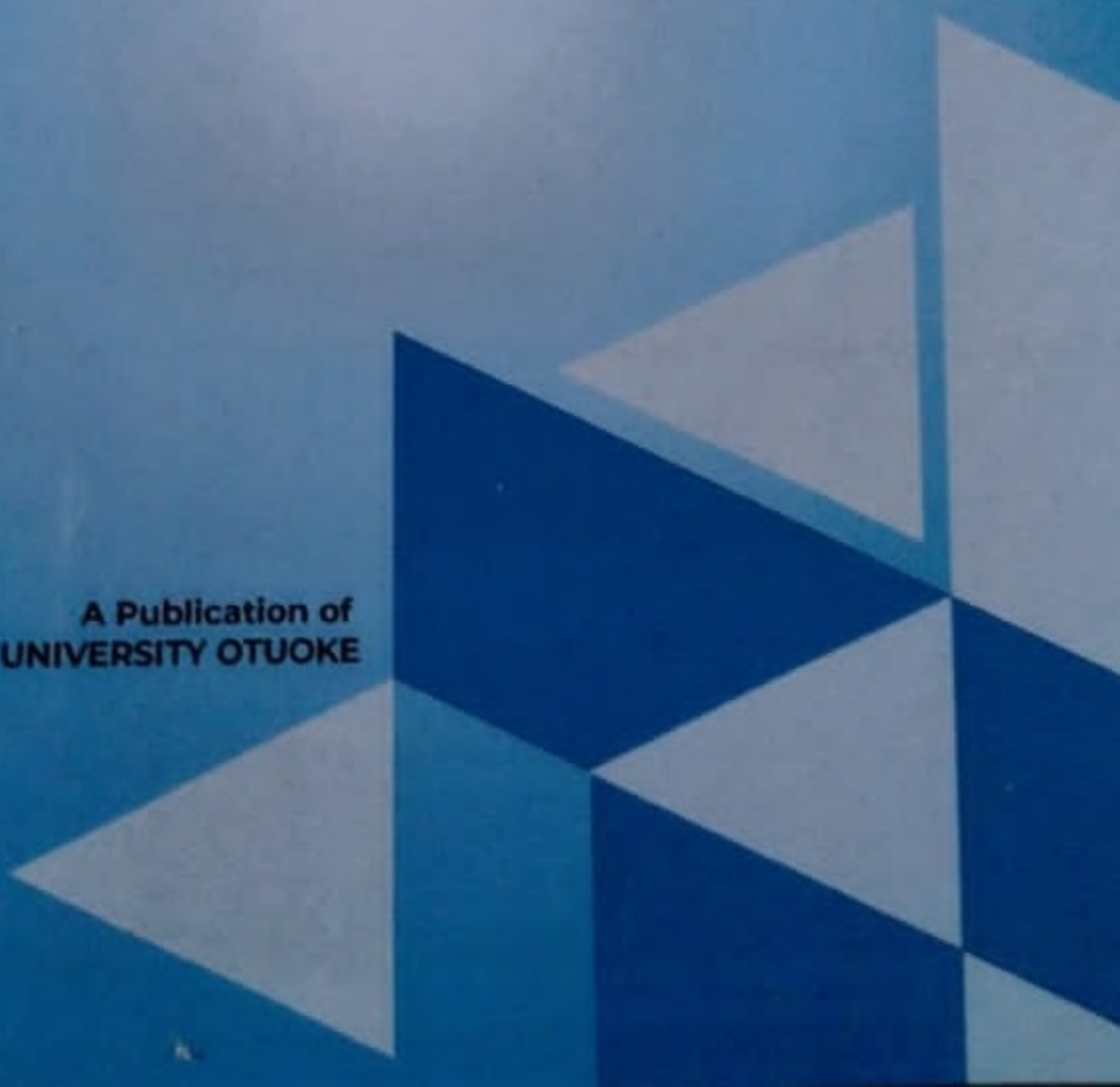
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# Vol. 3 No. 1 (2022): Niger Delta Journal of Library and Information Science

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## Contents

A Comparative Study of Information Literacy Skills among Students of Library and Information Science and Computer Science in Nigerian Universities Aduba, Doris Emetarom, Obot, Imaobong N., (PhD) & Baro, Ebikabowei Emmanuel	Page 7
Ethical Issues in Library and Information Science: A Cursory Look at the Nigerian Practice Afolayan Oluyinka Titilope	Page 38
A Study of Institutional Repository Development, Policies and Challenges in University Libraries in Nigeria Ebiwolate Bassil Posigha (Ph.D.) & Confidence Reghagwa Idjai	Page 25
Social Media in Library Services: A Viable Tool to satisfy User Information Needs in Tertiary Institutions Oyetika, F. A. & Amalaka, Chinyere PhD	Page 39
Influence of ICT Capabilities and Information Services on Empowerment of Rural Dwellers in Two States and the FCT-Abuja, Nigeria Karamba Abubakar Saka, Abubakar Ahmad Edris & Rose Late Mmammb	Page 43
Use of Webinars by Librarians in Nigeria for Professional Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic Thompson Ebilanga Ovworor & Okunribido Mayowa-Adedara	Page 54
Job Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Graduates in Bayelsa State Ebi, Eunice Beany & Nwanda W. Iwu-George	Page 66
Influence of Information Sharing on the Incidence of Depression among youths in Samaru, Zaria, Nigeria Ramsko Ovworor Ovworor (PhD), Abdulmalik Ad Oyeleji, Abubakar & Bakay at Adedolu Titilope	Page 78
Use of Social Media as a Marketing Strategy for Promoting Effective Library Services Delivery in Two Private Universities in Ekiti State Chikere Kingsley Oshinubi, Amalaka Precious Ashoke, Chikere Cecilia Oloru & Chika Patrick Bar	Page 87
An Investigation into the Web Presence of Academic Staff of Universities in Nigeria: Impact on University Ranking Yusuf Oluwalagun, C.I.N., PhD & Chikere Chikwema Oluji C.I.N., PhD	Page 106
Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Indigenous Students of Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria Dasha Tangkat Yusuf & Nancy Ejike Ad	Page 117
Assessment of Records Management Practices of Administrative Staff of the Delta State College of Health Technology Otuoke, LGA Egweni Tadejola A. Akande Ovworor	Page 126
Enhancing Information Service Delivery through Effective Information Repackaging in Colleges of Education Libraries Fatai David Ogunrin, Agostino Bonifacio Vaidin & Yehanna Idrissa Fatai	Page 134
Records Management Systems in University Health Centres in State Universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria Fadhila I. Uwallo & Emmanuel Okwa (PhD)	Page 142

NDJLIS - Vol. 3 (1)

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## Articles

### A Comparative Study of Information Literacy Skills among Students of Library and Information Science and Computer Science in Nigerian Universities

Doris Emetarom Aduba, Imaobong N. Obot Ph.D, Ebikabowei Emmanuel Baro

 1-15.pdf

### Ethical Issues in Library and Information Science: A Cursory Look at the Nigerian Practice

Oluyinka Titilope Afolayan

 16-25.pdf

### A Study of Institutional Repository Development, Policies and Challenges in University Libraries in Nigeria

Ebiwolate Bassil Posigha Ph.D, Confidence Reghagwa Idjai

 26-38.pdf

### **Social Media in Library Services: A Veritable Tool to satisfy User Information Needs in Tertiary Institutions**

F. A. Oyesiku, Chinyere Amalahu Ph.D

 39-44.pdf

### **Influence of LIS Curriculum and Information Services on Empowerment of Rural Dwellers in Two States and the FCT-Abuja, Nigeria**

Katamba Abubakar Saka, Abdulkadir Ahmed Idris, Rose Lade Mommoh

 45-53.pdf

### **Use of Webinars by Librarians in Nigeria for Professional Development During the COVID-19 Pandemic.**

Theophilus Ebifagha Oweipere, Okeoghene Mayowa-Adebara

 54-65.pdf

### **Job Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Graduates in Bayelsa State**

Ufuoma Beauty Efe , Nnenda W. Tom-George

 66-73.pdf

### **Influence of Information sharing on the incidence of depression among youths in Samaru, Zaria, Nigeria**

Romoke Opeyemi Quadir Ph.D, Abdulmuta'ali Oyedeji Abdulkadir, Rukayat Adebola Tijani

 74-86.pdf


### **Use of Social Media as a Marketing Strategy for Promoting Effective Library Service Delivery in Two Private Universities in Enugu State.**

Chimezie Kingsley Okoroafor, Adaolisa Precious Achuka, Chimezie Cecilia Offor; Chika Patricia Ike

 87-105.pdf

### **An Investigation into the Web Presence of Academic Staff of Universities in Nigeria: Impact on University Ranking.**

Victor Okeoghene Idiedo Ph.D, Clement Chukwuma Okeji Ph.D

 106-116.pdf

### **Information Needs and Seeking Behaviour of Indigent Students of Federal University Otuoke, Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Tangkat Yusuf Dushu , Nkoyo Ejike Ani

 117-125.pdf

### **Assessment of Records Management Practices of Administrative Staff of the Delta State College of Health Technology Ofuoma-Ughelli**

Eguono Tadaferua, Antonia Omehia Ph.D

 126-133.pdf

### **Enhancing Information Service Delivery through Effective Information Repackaging in Colleges of Education Libraries**

Peter David Dogara, Augustine Boniface Yashim, Yohanna Livinus Peter

 134-141.pdf

### **Records Management Systems in University Health Centres in State Universities in Bayelsa State, Nigeria**

Emilian I. Uwaifo, Emmauel Okwu Ph.D

 142-155.pdf

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## Influence of LIS Curriculum and Information Services on Empowerment of Rural Dwellers in Two States and the FCT-Abuja, Nigeria

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### Abstract

*The study investigated the influence of LIS curriculum and information services on empowerment of rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive research design was used with the target population of the staff of public libraries, agriculture and community health extension services as well as rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state and FCT, Abuja. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to purposively select nine Local Government Areas/Area Councils from the two states (Jigawa and Niger) and FCT Abuja, there and then selected 18 rural communities from the nine sampled LGAs/ACS. The researchers randomly select few respondents (rural dwellers) from 18 rural communities in the selected LGAs for the purpose of interviews. Interview guide and document examination were the data collection instruments. Interview sessions were conducted for the selected respondents. Information was gathered through narration using interview guides and document analysis of National Universities Commission (2018) Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS). Results showed that the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards for undergraduate programmes in Nigerian Universities contains rich aspects of library and information services to rural communities. Interview conducted for public libraries and agriculture/community health extension staff revealed that document delivery services, public enlightenment, and translation services were mostly provided through outreach/extension services unit of Agriculture and Community Health sectors though not regular. Public libraries provided little or no information services in the areas of outreach/extension and document delivery services. Challenges to information service delivery identified include: absence of libraries in rural communities, transport and mobility, language barrier, telephone service, road network, dilapidated primary schools. It was concluded that with little or absence of public library services to rural dwellers result to widespread illiteracy, low income/productivity, etc. The study recommended that the responsible Ministries and Agencies should ensure that the social amenities like road, schools, community libraries, rural hospitals and farm centres be provided.*

**Keywords:** Empowerment, Information services, LIS Curriculum, Public libraries, Rural communities

### Introduction

Information is an essential commodity which generality of mankind benefited from and public libraries and other information agencies contribute to the development of society through various forms

of information service delivery. Public libraries should not be over-burden in the provision of information service to rural dwellers in particular rather, the complimentary effort or collaborative approach of the extension service units of agricultural and health sub-sectors be employed and charged with the responsibilities of providing information services thus empowering rural dwellers in the areas of boosting agricultural output, healthy living and peaceful co-existence among rural dwellers or communities. This category of disadvantaged groups are referred to people in the society who as a result of their location are marginalized and accessibility to social amenities are reduced due to lack of adequate information services (Ozioko, 2015).

The concept of information can be derived from data-meaning raw facts, while information is the processed data through which meaning can be derived. Aguolu and Aguolu, (2002) maintain that the four factors of production (land labour, capital and entrepreneurship) have been in existence though with prominence attached to information, it was ranked as the fifth factor of production which now become dominant factor of production globally and top the list among other factors of production and hence other factors of production depends on information as vital resource, essential commodity and being used in decision-making process; enhanced higher productivity level in organization and thus reduces uncertainty in decision making process. Because of the value of information as concept, ingredient and vital resource, every organization and facets of human life is being govern by information and as such public libraries, agricultural extension department/unit as well as community health extension or primary healthcare centres can be referred as information agencies since there are aspect of information which they deliver/disseminate to mankind e.g. agriculture and health information services.

Like other libraries, public library being unique agency or centre as people's university has a number of services to offer which included: translation, user education, outreach/extension services, public enlightenment services and the sources of information to rural dwellers include: clinic nurses, television and radio, extension staff in agriculture and health (Ozioko, 2015). Library schools directly or indirectly play significant roles towards improving the socio-economic and healthy status and condition of rural communities in Nigeria. This has been documented in the National Universities Commission (NUC) Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS) of 2018 edition with course code/title as LIS 223: Library and Information Services to Rural Communities (2 credit unit) contains synopsis on p.242 as:

*The Nigeria rural settling, occupation and recreation, needs assessment, library and information programme and resources; identification of and co-operation with other change agents and local power elites (BMAS, 2018: 242).*

Library and information science curriculum as contain in the BMAS (2018) emphasized the occupation of rural dwellers which is predominantly the agricultural activities is been supported with various LIS programmes; resources and services to be rendered thus being the major roles, and expectation from public libraries. Despite the ideal enumerated roles of public libraries, change agencies and library schools, the socio-economic, health and social well-being of rural dwellers particularly agricultural output and healthy condition are worrisome as these are attributed to the opinion shared by Ode and Ibrahim (2018) that the impediments to the provision of information literacy to rural communities in Nigeria include: digital divide, funds, poor policy implementation, Internet facilities, ignorance, awareness, etc.



**Statement of the Research Problem**

Nigeria being a multi-ethnic group-country has reasonable percentage of population being concentrated in rural areas (Aboyadeet.al, 2016) whose major occupation is agriculture and to certain extent petty trading. To keep life moving and to progress in their economic activities, they need some pieces of information which are expected to be provided by public libraries/community libraries, extension agents/service unit of agriculture and health particularly by agriculture and community health extension workers. They are to be active in variety of service delivery in order to boost the agriculture productivity and maintain the healthy status of rural dwellers in Nigeria.

Unfortunately, rural dwellers are characterized by abject poverty, prevalence of high level of illiteracy and sickness and above all they lack social amenities (Ozioko, 2015). This situation can be attributed to ineffective, in adequate and irregular provision of information service delivery by the public libraries; on one hand and absence of rural/community libraries and well-equipped agriculture and health agencies on the other hand. In order to resolve this unfortunate situation, there is the need to investigate whether or not information services are being delivered or provided to rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger State, and FCT Abuja in Nigeria as well as the influence of information provision or otherwise on the socio-economic and well-being of the rural dwellers in Nigeria respectively.

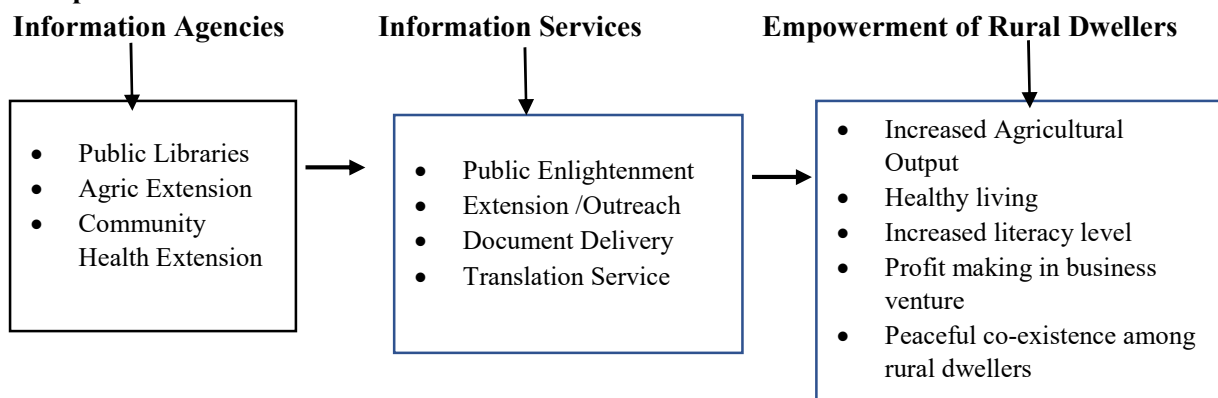
**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study: -

- i. How does LIS curriculum influence the economic and health status of rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state, and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?
- ii. Are there any types of information service being provided for the benefit of rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state, and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?
- iii. Are there constraints to information service delivery to rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state, and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

**Literature Review**

**Conceptual model**



Source: Researchers' Developed Model (2021)

The schema showed the various information services which public libraries and agriculture/health extension services unit need to provide for rural dwellers. The three agencies are expected to provide enlightenment programme couple with outreach/extension services, document delivery and translation services. When these services are provided, the deplorable condition of rural dwellers will change positively and improved with increased agriculture output, and literacy level; healthy living, profit-making in business venture and peaceful co-existence among rural dwellers. These

empowerment indices/dependent variables are related to United Nations Development Programmes (2015) on Sustainable Development Goals numbers 2, 3, 4 and 8 (Zero hunger, good health and well-being for all ages; quality education and decent working and economic growth). The 17 SDGs are to be achieved between year 2020 or 2030.

### **Review of Related Empirical Studies**

A study was conducted to determine the attitude of rural dwellers residing at the bank of river in relation to adult literacy programme in Warri South West of Delta State, Nigeria. Ejedafinu and Toyo (2017) reported that the respondents were aware of adult literacy programmes has enhanced personal development couple with personal interest in adult literacy programme as well as call for adult literacy programme in the country. However, there were absence of literacy programme and its policy; functional primary and post-primary institutions, to promote literacy; motorable roads; inadequate qualified teachers, lack of physical faculties; non-recognition of riverine areas by government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as well as urban migration by large number of youths. This study failed to address issues connected to the attitude of riverine dwellers towards adult literacy programmes in Delta State.

Kingsley and Otubeli (2017) examined ways by which rural farmers can be repositioned through dissemination of agricultural information in Ezza North Local Government Area of Ebonyi State. The study found that public libraries, market places and churches, radio and television, town criers, lectures, sermon and worship as well as social/political meetings were the effective ways of disseminating agricultural information to rural farmers. In a telephone interview with 36 Directors of State Library Boards in Nigeria, Ogbonna (2018) reported lack of government recognition, operational vehicles, power supply, information resources and staffing as major problems to public library administration in Nigeria. Musa, Solomon and Kudu (2018) conducted a study to determine the availability, adequacy and effectiveness of information resources and services in some selected public libraries in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study was guided by five (5) specific objectives. Survey research design was used with population of 2,667 users in three public libraries and 10% sample was used for the study. Questionnaire was the only data collection instrument used for the study. Part of the findings revealed that: reference, extension and lending services were effective in the selected public libraries. Funding, inadequate trained security personnel and government neglect of public libraries were the challenges to public library services in Nassarawa State, Nigeria.

Ibraheem and Aduku (2018) conducted a study to assess the undergraduate programme in Library and Information Science of University-based library schools in Northern States of Nigeria. BMAS and questionnaire were the instruments used to collect data. Part of the results showed that seventeen core courses of the curriculum including “Library and Information Services for Rural Communities” are adequate for the production of librarians. Boniface, Ahmad, Tinat and Muhammed (2021) conducted a study to determine the “Influence of Information Resources Provision on Users Satisfaction in College of Education Libraries in Kaduna State, Nigeria.” The study was guided by three (3) research questions to capture types of collections provided, frequency of usage of collection and level of users’ satisfaction with the collection provided in college libraries. Three (3) null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance. Survey research design was used and the population census of 7,199 registered users of the college libraries. Sample size of 379 respondents was used through Taro Yamane formula. Questionnaire was the only data collection instrument used, while memo and standard deviation, and chi-square was used to analyse data. Results showed that all the

printed resources were provided, though electronic resources were not provided. Most of the collections were frequently used. On the level of satisfaction, users indicated satisfaction with the use of 12 different types of collection and dissatisfaction with five collections respectively. All the null hypotheses formulated were tested and rejected.

### Research Methodology

The study employed qualitative research design and the population consisted of NUC/BMAS (2018), rural dwellers, staff working in public libraries; agriculture and community health extension units in LGAs/ Area Councils of Jigawa and Niger state and Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja Nigeria respectively. According to Chike-Okoli, (2020), qualitative research has to do with collection of narrative data (narration) through observations, interviews and focus group discussion and thus are reported in the form of narratives or verbal descriptions. This research methodology has to do with examination of document (BMAS, 2018) and conducting interview session for respondents (rural dwellers, public libraries, agriculture and health extension staff). The actual figure of the subjects of study was in-determinant.

Multi-stage sampling procedure was used in the first instance purposively select nine LGAs/ Area Councils within Jigawa and Niger state and FCT Abuja, there and then used random sampling technique to select two rural communities from each of the nine selected LGAs/Area Councils and then select few respondents from the 18 rural communities with the assumption of having public libraries; agriculture and community health workers in LGA/Area Council headquarters or state capitals. The criteria for purposive sampling are based on researcher's discretion and choice. The researcher has the right to select any respondent and hence, subjective to the decision of the researcher (Otaha, 2015). The criteria used for selecting the nine LGAs/Area councils was based on the senatorial zone i.e. from one LGA/Area council, Six respondents were selected and a total of 108 samples from 18 LGAs/Area councils respectively. These processes and stages adopted to involve purposive and random sampling techniques were in line with the opinion shared by Otaha (2015) using multi-stage sampling technique in a study.

**Table 1**

State/FCT	Selected LGAs/ACS	Selected Rural Communities/Villages	Tribes/Dialectics
Jigawa	Hadejia	Gudinchi, Aguyeka	Hausa Kanuri
	Auyo	Ayama, Juza	Hausa Fulani
	Kafin Hausa	Aguzo, Gafara	Hausa Fulani
Niger	Agaie	Baro, Zago	Nupe Hausa and Dibbo
	Katcha	Kashe, Kudogi	Nupe
	Bosso	Jikuchi, Yikangbe	Gbagyi and other tribes
FCT Abuja	Kwali	Yangoji, Piri	Gbagyi and other tribes
	Gwagwalada	Giri, Gwako	Gbagyi and other tribes
	Kuje	Rubochi, Kiyi	Gbagyi and other tribes

Source: Preliminary Survey, March 2020

Documentary source mainly NUC/BMAS (2018) for undergraduate programme in Nigerian Universities particularly LIS curriculum was used, while interview sessions were conducted for the selected rural dwellers; staff from public libraries; agriculture and community health extension services in Jigawa and Niger State/FCT and LGAs council headquarters and villages respectively were used for the study. Qualitative data was collected through interview guide and document analysis, though Ogbonna and Owusu-Ansah (2019) used telephone interview and document examination to investigate issues, trends and challenges in public library administration in Nigeria as well as cloud computing for university libraries: the security dilemma respectively.

## Discussion of Findings

Result was obtained through document analysis and narration from interviews.

**Research question one:** How does LIS curriculum influence the economic and health status of rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Documentary analyses were conducted upon using BMAS (2018) a publication of NUC. The curriculum content analysis of LIS 223 (Library and Information Services to Rural Communities), a 2-credit unit core course looked at Nigeria rural setting i.e. linear and spatial; their occupation is mostly agriculture (farming and fishing) and their recreational activities include: dances and festivals. Their needs include: healthy living, higher productivity in farm products, security, etc. The LIS programme includes: public enlightenment program, information literacy, outreach, current awareness service, translation and document delivery services, etc. Resources needed include: Agriculture, Primary Health Care Staff and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are parts of the change agents. The village heads, herbalists, traditional medical practitioners are among the local elites.

**Research question two:** Are there any type of information service being provided for the benefit of rural dwellers in the two states and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Interview session conducted with selected staff from public libraries, agriculture and community health extension services unit revealed the following narration:

- a. Document Delivery Service (DDS): From the interview conducted, extension workers from agriculture and community health revealed that they occasionally distribute pamphlets and posters on agricultural productivity and health care delivery service to rural communities for them to read and watch. As for public libraries, the selected staff opined that the registered users are not only given reading materials to read in libraries but are also loaned out for home consultation. Though majority of the studied communities lack libraries or reading rooms in their domain.
- b. Translation service: It was discovered from the interview narration for the extension workers that pamphlets and books are now translated from English language to Hausa and local languages in Nigeria.
- c. Extension/Outreach service: From the interview conducted, the community health extension workers do provide health talk as well as health education programme. These are made possible by gathering rural dwellers in particular location within the village or merge villages in one village. During the outreach, villages are enlightened about the prevalence of a particular disease and how to cure it. Drugs are provided after health talk and brief talk was given on how to use the drugs. Agriculture extension workers act as coordinators or liaison officers by disseminating latest

agricultural information to rural farmers and report back to government the farmers complain/problems.

- d. Public enlightenment programme: This service is related to the extension or outreach service only that this service involves the use of electronic Mass Media such as Radio, Public Address System (PAS), Television and Film show to be sponsored by State library board, State Ministries/Local Government Department of Agriculture and Health to inform rural dwellers on the current happenings that affect the life of rural dwellers and positive directions to be taken. Interview conducted for the respondents (rural dwellers) revealed that these agencies actually used electronic Mass Media to create awareness in the minds of rural dwellers on activities that affect their lives.

**Research question three:** Are there constraints to information service delivery to rural dwellers in two States and FCT Abuja, Nigeria?

Through the interview conducted, with Public library staff and the Extension Service staff in agriculture and health subsector revealed that the challenges they faced in the information service delivery to rural dwellers include those of: road network, transport, language barriers, telephone services among others. On the part of rural dwellers, the challenges they faced include those of: Irregular visit by the extension agents, Lack of Library Services, Dilapidated Primary Schools and so on.

### Reponses from selected rural dwellers

Interview conducted with selected rural dwellers showed that the Agriculture and Community Health Extension workers do provide them with pamphlets and posters to read though the visits by extension workers were not regular. Extension workers also enlighten the rural dwellers on how to boost their agriculture; the outbreak of a particular disease(s); enlighten pregnant women and provide medical advice/treatment. According to rural dwellers, neither public nor community libraries exist in their localities nor do they enjoy public libraries services.

Research question one sought to find out ways by which or whether LIS curriculum influence the economic and health status of rural dwellers in Jigawa and Niger state, and FCT Abuja in Nigeria. It was discovered that the NUC/BMAS (2018) contain 2-credit unit core course titled: LIS 223: Library and Information Services to Rural Communities. It was found to be comprehensive to cater for the needs of rural dwellers in Nigeria at large. This finding is in line with the findings of Ibraheem and Aduku (2018) as the co-researchers reported comprehensive and adequacy of 17 - core courses in undergraduate LIS curriculum including LIS 223 that is expected to produce prospective librarians.

Research question two sought to investigate the provision or availability of any type of information services provided to and benefited by rural communities though not regular as expected. It was discovered that the extension services unit of agriculture and health provide document delivery, translation, extension/outreach services to rural communities. This finding does not agree to that of Kingsley and Otubeli (2017) and Boniface et al (2021). The former co-researchers reported various methods of disseminating agricultural information to rural farmers such as: public libraries, meetings, mosques/churches, radio and television, market places, town crier, etc. The latter co-researchers reported types of information resources provided and the frequency and otherwise used of resources as well as absence of users' satisfaction on some of the collections being used.

Research question three tries to find out the constraints to provision/dissemination and benefits of information services and results revealed included: road networking, telephone services and absence of public/community library services. Poor or absence of good road network, telephone services and inadequate or absence of library services in the rural communities can have adverse effects on public

libraries and extension services to rural communities not only in the studied areas but Nigeria at large. This finding does not agree with those of Musa, Solomon and Kudu (2018) who reported funding, security personnel as challenges, while Ogbonna (2018) who reported lack of government recognition, operational vehicles, power supply, information resources and staffing as major problems to public library administration in Nigeria.

The study concluded that public library services are neither effectively offered to rural communities nor available in the two states (Jigawa and Niger) and FCT Abuja in Nigeria respectively and this can cause information poverty, illiteracy, conflict, among rural dwellers, etc. The widespread illiteracy level, low income, prevalence of diseases and low productivity level are functions of the absence or inadequate information delivery services among public libraries and other information agencies.

## Conclusion

The study has revealed inadequate information services in rural areas of the two states and FCT Abuja which can further be attributed to lack of functional public primary schools and community libraries. This was further worsened by the absence of good road network, telephone couple with poor or absence of modern communication facilities. These have negatively affected the level of information service delivery and utilization among information providers and rural dwellers respectively.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommended that: -

1. Although the BMAS/ LIS curriculum and LIS 223 course in particular is comprehensive and has addressed the rural communities' issues, but there is the need for regular and timely review of the curriculum by injecting the current trends in the information industry notably in the area of ICT.
2. The State Ministries of Education and Information should establish Public/community libraries and stock them with adequate collection to include ICT facilities such as computers, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), satellite dish, television and video set as well as Internet facilities, etc in all the rural communities.
3. The responsible ministries and agencies should provide necessary social amenities (good road, network, static telephone booth, etc) to link the rural communities within and outside the local government areas so as to have easy access to rural communities, there and then provide current and reliable information services for the benefit of rural dwellers.

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