Comparative Analysis between Management Strategies and Current State of Selected Public Library Facilities in South East Nigeria

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Abstract- Public libraries play a crucial role in providing access to knowledge, fostering literacy, and supporting lifelong learning. This study examines the comparative analysis between management strategies and current state of selected public library facilities in South East Nigeria, which includes four selected States namely; Abia, Imo, Enugu and Anambra with emphasis to the State capitals, focusing on their infrastructure, resources, and service delivery. The study used a mixed-method approach. Data were collected through field observations, structured interviews, and surveys administered to library users and staff. A total of 316 questionnaires were distributed to respondents who were carefully selected. Out of these, 309 questionnaires were retrieved with complete answers, giving a response rate of 97%. The sample size was determined using Taro Yamane formula. The data collected was subjected to descriptive statistical analysis method using Likert Scale, Weighted Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Tables, percentages and charts was used in the presentation of data gathered from the field. Analysis was done using the statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 26.0.The findings reveal significant challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated collections, poor maintenance of facilities, and limited access to digital resources. Despite these challenges, libraries remain vital community hubs, with efforts by stakeholders to improve their functionality. The study recommends increased government investment, modernization of library resources, and enhanced community engagement to revitalize public libraries in the South East, Nigeria.

Indexed Terms- Comparative Analysis, Public Libraries Facilities, Management Strategies, South East Nigeria.

I. INTRODUCTION

Public libraries are essential in promoting literacy, education, and social development, serving as accessible hubs for information, lifelong learning, and cultural preservation. In Nigeria, particularly in the South-East, public libraries play a crucial role in addressing educational inequalities and fostering community development. However, the effectiveness of these libraries is often hindered by significant management challenges, including inadequate funding, outdated facilities, lack of skilled staff, and limited access to modern technology (Ejedafiru, 2010; Ogunsola, 2011). Public libraries in South-East Nigeria faces unique socioeconomic and infrastructural challenges that compound these issues, thereby affecting the efficiency of management and access for users.

Shair (1963) also defines a library as an organization of one or more trained people who use carefully selected or organized books, periodicals and other similar materials as a means of giving to those who may appropriately use it to the fullest extent of their need or desires the information, enrichment or delight which is to be heard from the written word.

However, public libraries in this region are underfunded, with little to no budget for acquiring new materials or maintaining existing facilities. According to Abdullahi, Madu & Abdulsalam (2015), public libraries in Nigeria receive less than 10% of the funding allocated to educational institutions, leaving them with limited capacity to meet the growing demands of their communities. This funding shortage contributes to issues such as deteriorating physical infrastructure, outdated collections, and minimal technological integration, making it difficult for libraries to keep pace with modern information needs.

Public libraries are vital community institutions that offer vital resources and services to a wide range of users. To effectively meet the needs of their users, these facilities must, nevertheless, be maintained at the highest possible standard of operation and quality. Although many industries have adopted Facility Management (FM) practices to improve operational effectiveness and customer pleasure, there aren't many particular guidelines or framework designed to evaluate the functionality and state of public library.

Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to develop an effective framework for the management of public library facilities in South-East Nigeria. Such a framework would provide guidance and direction for library administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders involved in the planning, development, and operation of public library services by addressing key areas such as governance, infrastructure, technology, user services, and sustainability, the framework aims to enhance the quality of library services, improve access to information, and promote community engagement and development. Again, public library facilities may encounter issues including obsolete technology, ineffective layouts, poor accessibility, insufficient safety precautions, and inadequate technology integration if they lack a thorough evaluation methodology.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to address the absence of comprehensive framework tailored towards evaluating the functionality and state of public library services in South East, Nigeria. The goal of this study is to create and validate a thorough framework that could be used to assess specific public library locations, advance best practices, boost operational effectiveness, and ultimately enhance user experience and happiness in these important communal places.

Public libraries in South East Nigeria play an essential role in promoting education, lifelong learning, and social development, yet they face significant operational and management challenges that inhibit their efficiency and effectiveness. These challenges include chronic underfunding, inadequate infrastructure, lack of skilled personnel, and limited access to modern technological resources (Abdullahi et al., 2015; Ogunsola, 2011). The public libraries in

South East Nigeria also encounters unique socioeconomic constraints that further exacerbate the difficulties in managing public library facilities effectively. Consequently, public libraries struggle to provide essential services to the communities they serve, limiting their potential as vital educational and social institutions.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Public Libraries

A public library is a library which is accessible to the public and is generally funded from public sources (such as tax money). It is a library that is open to all members of a community regardless of age, educational qualification, sex, religious belief, political leaning, social class or status etc. The public library is generally considered as the people's university due to its non-restrictiveness to any group of users (Okeoma, 2011). Public libraries exist in most nations of the world and are often considered as essential to having an educated and literate population. Reitz (2004) opines that public libraries are now acknowledged to be an indispensable part of community life, as promoters of literacy, providers of a wide range of reading for all ages and as centres for community information services.

According to UNESCO public library manifesto, cited by Edoka (2000), the key missions that should form the core of public library services include: creating and strengthening reading habits in children from an early age; supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels; providing opportunities for personal creative development; stimulating the imagination and creativity of children and young people; promoting awareness of cultural heritage, appreciation of the arts, scientific achievements and innovations, etc.

A fundamental feature of a public library is that usage should be free to all residents of the community. Users of a public library in a community range from the youngest child to the oldest adult, from the wealthiest citizen to the most economically disadvantaged and from the most highly educated to the stark illiterate. In order to accomplish the expectations highlighted, the public library performs specific functions which include the following: to provide for educational

development of all people in the community; to positively support the civic and cultural activities of groups and organizations; to promote and encourage wholesome recreation and positive use of leisure time; and to give the user access to information over the whole range of human activities such as agriculture, crafts, commerce and industry (Edoka, 2000).

The public library must therefore be well equipped to satisfy the information needs of the various individuals and groups in any given community. By its nature, it is a library that is open to all. Globally, public libraries were conceived to provide members of the community with an avenue for recreation, in which people could go and find something to read for leisure, hence the emphasis on fiction material. While serving recreational purposes, people could also use the information resources for self-education.

Learning is again coming to the forefront of public library service as economies and societies of the 21st century require people to learn new skills and to retrain several times in their working lives. As Sutherland (2003) rightly observes, "whether one lives in the industrialized or developing world, acquiring an education and learning new skills is of primary importance to securing a person's future". The UNESCO manifesto, supported by IFLA has 12 missions, two of which focus on the public library as a learning organization: mission no.2 is Supporting both individual and self-conducted education as well as formal education at all levels, while mission no.11 is facilitating the development of information and computer literacy skills. Similar emphasis on the educational role of the public library was captured in the American Library Association outline of 13 service responses, four of which focused on learning and education, viz, basic literacy, formal learning support, information literacy, and lifelong learning. Each response requires a particular range of resources, programmes, facilities, technology and staff skills to achieve the envisaged outcomes (Sutherland, 2003). Herein lies the relevance of non-fiction material in public libraries. They also have the added advantage of informing the public on events in the society, through the medium of newspapers, magazines, pamphlets and the like. Thus, like related social institutions such as cinemas, theatres, clubs, sport centers, museums etc., public libraries provide

members of the community a wider latitude for interacting with literature as a form of relaxation, entertainment, accessing information and attainment of self-actualization.

2.2   Services Provided by Public Libraries

Public libraries are making frantic efforts to provide services to its clientele. In other words, services expected to be provided by the public libraries have become a major concern of library and information science practitioners. No wonder Okiy (2004) opines that mobile library service was launched in order to extend library services to everyone in the state, irrespective of location. Other mobile services provided by the state library board include prison and hospital trolley services. These services provided by libraries have become the melting point of the present day librarianship and information science. IFLA (2001) opines that the services provided by the public library include community information services, recreational activities, reference services, loan services, storytelling, reading, career information, customer care, adult literacy education etc. To remain relevant and keep up with the many needs and expectations of their users, Public libraries must be proactive, vibrant, and abreast of the latest developments in information dissemination as they play a crucial role in the advancement of knowledge. According to Halsey (2006), library resources should not only include traditional print-on-paper media like books, journals, newspapers etc, but also audio visual materials like records, audio cassettes, projectors, art reproductions, maps, photographs, microfiches, and Electronic Information resources (EIR) like CD-ROM, computer software, online databases, internet, e books, e-journals and other media. Ifidon (2006), opines that services in a library could be said to be excellent and appreciative if only their books and other library resources are available in that library.

The services provided by public libraries could be summarized as; mobile library services, information and referral services, outreach programmes, current awareness programmes, library services to children, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), internet services, photocopy services and book depot.

2.3 Users of Public Library

Public libraries are used by different categories of human beings such as students, teachers, lecturers, lawyers, civil servants, architects, businessmen, engineers etc. According to IFLA/UNESCO (2001) users of public libraries include children, young adults, adults, and people with special needs such as those who have hearing problems and even the blind and the visually impaired. Others are prisoners, the aged, nursing mothers, organizations and people in government. Emphasis is however placed on meeting the needs of the less privileged in the society, e.g. they provide braille materials for the blind users. Achebe (2005) emphasizes that public libraries are also referred to as centres for acquisition of knowledge and information. They satisfy people's quest for education and specific information as a solution to problems since all age group must find materials relevant to their needs.

2.4 Effects of Public Libraries

The tremendous role of the public library can never be over-emphasized. It enhances the productivity of individuals and organizations through the following functions – educational, informational, economic and cultural - which bring about social development. Library resources are stocks of recorded information (print and non-print materials). Organized for use and made available to users. Examples of print materials are booking monographs, reference materials, periodicals/serials (magazines and newspapers) while non-print are audio visuals, multi-media, microfiche, films, slides and microforms etc.

Public libraries in under-developed countries should be regarded as an agency among others that promote education and eliminate illiteracy among people. In the same vein, Onwubiko (2004) suggests that public libraries provide materials in a wide range of subjects to cater for all levels of demand. These materials range from reference, continuing education down to recreation, however, they provide materials for specialized reference and research, co-ordinate programs for continuing education and sponsor cultural and recreational events. In addition, Ode and Omokoro (2007) agreed that public libraries assist at developing learning skills among the children, youths and adults, as they play a part in encouraging positive use of leisure and providing materials for change and relaxations. Badawi (2007) reveals that the fact that public libraries are agents for social development, to back this up, Onyenachi (2012) says that through public libraries, people can discover knowledge and learn new skills, get informed about personal health and well-being, find out about government and local authority service and seek information about employment and business development.

2.5 The Relationship between Management Strategies and the Current State of Public Libraries in South-East Nigeria

The relationship between management strategies and the state of public libraries in South-East Nigeria reflects the broader challenges and potential improvements within the region's library system. This reflects how resource mobilization, staff training, digitalization, community engagement, partnerships, and policy advocacy shape the conditions and efficacy of public libraries in South-East Nigeria. These strategies impact library infrastructure, service delivery, accessibility, and overall functionality. They includes;

i. Resource Mobilization and Funding Impact

Resource mobilization, particularly through diversified funding sources, is critical to the state of public libraries in South-East Nigeria. Studies emphasize that inconsistent government funding leads to inadequacies in library infrastructure, collections, and facilities (Obaji, 2020). Alegbeleye (2019) notes that alternative funding sources, such as private sector contributions, revenue-generating activities, and NGO partnerships, have a direct influence on library quality and resources. For instance, libraries with access to supplementary funds have been able to invest in essential resources like new books, computer equipment, and furniture, which improves the user experience and service delivery (Akporhonor & Ajulo, 2019). However, Ezeala (2021) points out that despite some libraries managing to secure additional funds, financial instability persists as a critical challenge, limiting sustained improvements.

ii. Impact of Capacity Building and Staff Training on Service Quality

The skills and training of library staff significantly influence the functionality and efficiency of public libraries. Ogbonna and Nwezeh (2017) argue that well-trained staff enhance library service quality, as they are better equipped to assist patrons and manage

library resources effectively. However, the lack of structured training programs across South-East Nigerian libraries has contributed to an underprepared workforce, limiting libraries' abilities to meet user needs, especially in digital services (Nwabueze & Odogwu, 2019). Eke and Ugwu (2021) found a positive relationship between staff training in digital literacy and improved public perception of libraries, as trained staff facilitate the use of digital resources, conduct community workshops, and assist users with various information needs. Nevertheless, without continuous training and development, particularly in ICT skills, libraries struggle to keep pace with modern service expectations, leading to underutilization of available resources and low patron engagement.

iii. Digitalization as a Catalyst for Modern Library Services

Digitalization initiatives have a profound effect on the modernization of public library services and directly relate to the functionality of these institutions in the digital age. According to Obasi and Uka (2022), libraries that have successfully integrated digital technologies, such as online catalogs and digital collections, experience higher patronage and improved service delivery. Digitalization enhances information accessibility, which is particularly important in rural areas where other sources of information are limited (Ezeokoli & Ude, 2023). However, many libraries in South-East Nigeria lack the necessary infrastructure, such as stable internet connections and sufficient digital equipment, impeding the implementation of digital services (Nwabueze & Odogwu, 2019). The correlation between digitalization efforts and library effectiveness highlights the need for greater investments in technological infrastructure and training, which, when lacking, limits library relevance and user satisfaction in the region.

iv. Community Engagement and its Relationship to Library Utilization

Community engagement strategies, such as outreach programs, literacy campaigns, and school partnerships, have a direct impact on library utilization and perceived value within communities. Nwokocha (2018) found that libraries with active outreach programs experience increased patronage and community support. For example, Chukwuma and Onuoha (2020) observed that libraries in South-East Nigeria that regularly engage with schools see higher participation from young students and foster a culture of reading. This community integration not only increases awareness of library services but also improves public perceptions, making libraries more central to community life. However, community engagement effectiveness relies on the library's capacity to consistently offer these programs, which depends on staff availability and financial resources (Nwosu, 2019). The relationship between community engagement and library state underscores the importance of consistent funding and staff allocation to sustain these beneficial activities.

v. Strategic Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts

Strategic partnerships and collaborations play a vital role in enhancing library resources and improving service delivery. Libraries in South-East Nigeria that establish partnerships with educational institutions, local governments, and international organizations have greater access to resources and training, which improves service quality and infrastructure (Obasi, 2021). For instance, partnerships with international organizations, such as the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), have facilitated the provision of ICT equipment, training for library staff, and the development of digital content (Ozioko, 2019). Collaborations with schools and universities also enable libraries to expand their reach and provide academic resources that support local students and educators. These partnerships contribute significantly to the libraries' operational capacity and resilience; however, their success depends on sustained collaboration and reliable funding, which are often inconsistent.

vi. Policy Advocacy and its Influence on Library Development

Policy advocacy is a foundational strategy that influences the structural and operational standards of public libraries. Ezeokoli and Ude (2023) highlight that the lack of comprehensive library policies in Nigeria has contributed to the inadequate state of many public libraries, as existing policies often fail to prioritize library funding, infrastructure, and training. Advocacy efforts that push for stronger government support and policies aligning with international library standards have shown some positive effects, particularly in regions where libraries can secure policy-driven funding and resources (Ike, 2020). Nevertheless, the impact of policy advocacy on the state of libraries is uneven due to regional disparities

in policy implementation and resource allocation. A well-established policy framework that includes funding provisions, standards for library infrastructure, and ICT support is essential for sustainable improvement in public libraries.

The study indicates a strong relationship between strategic management approaches and the operational state of public libraries in South-East Nigeria. Funding diversification, capacity building, digitalization, community engagement, partnerships, and policy advocacy are interconnected strategies that collectively influence library effectiveness and user engagement. However, the literature also highlights that these strategies face significant barriers, including inconsistent funding, insufficient infrastructure, and limited staff training. The effective implementation of these strategies would likely improve library conditions, increase community engagement, and position libraries as critical information hubs. Addressing these strategic challenges holistically is essential for sustainable development and enhanced service delivery within public libraries in South-East Nigeria.

III. METHODOLOGY

The mixed-methods design was used in conducting the study, combining qualitative and quantitative data, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing public libraries in the study area using content or qualitative analysis of the relationship between these strategies and state of public libraries in the study area. This was done by highlighting, analysing and determining the relationship between the strategies and state of public library facilities in the study area. The different variables of the existing strategies and state of public library facilities in the study area was run in statistical software using Mean Scores to determine their relationship in the study area.

The study was carried out in Public Libraries located in South-East; Anambra, Enugu, Imo and Abia State of Nigeria with their state capitals at Awka, Enugu, Owerri and Umuahia, respectively. The justification and reason for choosing this area is because of security concerns in the South East region of Nigeria. Hence, this preference was due to the fact that these cities are considered geographically large enough in their respective regions. The study covered basically the selected public library facilities operated by state government in the study area.

Table 1. Sample of Selected Public Libraries for the Study

S/N	State	Name of the State Public Libraries
1.	Anambra State	Prof. Kenneth Dike State Central Library, Awka.
2.	Enugu State	Enugu State Central Library, Enugu.
3.	Imo State	Imo State Public Library, Owerri.
4.	Abia State	Abia State Public Library, Umuahia.

The population of the study is made up of librarians, Library Officers and Users in the public libraries in the study area. A study population is the total number of all items, respondents, or institutions that possess the characteristics or have knowledge of the phenomenon being studied (Asika, 1991). It is the collection of individuals or objects known to have similar characteristics. This basically refers to the number of persons or objects covered by the study or with which the study is concerned. The population of the study comprises library users, librarians and library officers in the selected public libraries in the state capitals; Umuahia, Awka, Enugu and Owerri respectively. The distribution of librarians, library officers and library users in the public libraries in South-East Nigeria are shown below.

Table 2. Population of the Study

S/N	RESPONDENTS	ABIA	ANAMBRA	ENUGU	IMO	TOTAL
1.	No. of Librarians	9	5	6	4	24
2.	No. of Library Officers	12	23	11	12	58
3.	No. of Registered Library Users	390	483	215	344	1,432
	TOTAL POPULATION	411	511	232	360	1,514

Taro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size for the study. The Taro Yamane formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+N(e)^2}$$

Where n is the sample size, N is the Total population (Population size), e is limit of tolerable error, 1 is unite (constant value).

Therefore, given that $N = 1,514$ (as stated above) and e is assumed to be 5%, Then the sample size is calculated thus,

$$n = \frac{1,514}{1+1,514(0.05)^2} = 316$$

Thus, the sample size (n) for the study is put at 316.

IV.   DISCUSSION OF RESULT

Relationship between Management Strategies and Current State of Public Libraries

Table 3: *Summary of respondents' perceptions about the relationship between management strategies and current state of public libraries*

Description of Items	Response Options	Frequency	Percent
To what extent do the management strategies influence the current quality of library services?	Not at all	94	30.4
	To a small extent	56	18.1
	To some extent	61	19.7
	To a large extent	98	31.7
	Total	309	100.0
How aligned are the management strategies with the current needs of the public library in your State?	Not aligned at all	20	6.5
	Slightly aligned	59	19.1
	Moderately aligned	75	24.3
	Perfectly aligned	155	50.2
	Total	309	100.0
How well do the management strategies address current challenges faced by the public library in your state?	Not well at all	19	6.1
	Slightly well	41	13.3
	Moderately well	72	23.3
	Very well	177	57.3
	Total	309	100.0
To what extent do management strategies promote innovation in library services?	Not at all	89	28.8
	To a small extent	127	41.1
	To some extent	72	23.3
	To a large extent	21	6.8
	Total	309	100.0
How effective are management strategies in ensuring up-to-date technology in the library?	Not effective at all	8	2.6
	Slightly effective	34	11.0
	Moderately effective	120	38.8
	Very effective	147	47.6
	Total	309	100.0
To what extent do the management strategies influence the availability of library resources (e.g., books, digital content, and technology)?	Not at all	121	39.2
	To a small extent	101	32.7
	To some extent	62	20.1
	To a large extent	25	8.1
	Total	309	100.0

How well does the management strategies aid in providing staff with the necessary tools and support to deliver high-quality services?	Not well at all	123	39.8
	Slightly well	109	35.3
	Moderately well	45	14.6
	Very well	32	10.4
	Total	309	100.0
To what extent do the management strategies enhance support for current professional development for library staff?	Not at all	8	2.6
	To a small extent	31	10.0
	To some extent	99	32.0
	To a large extent	171	55.3
	Total	309	100.0
How effectively do management strategies promote inclusivity and accessibility in library services?	Not effective at all	123	39.8
	Slightly effective	91	29.4
	Moderately effective	67	21.7
	Very effective	28	9.1
	Total	309	100.0

Table 3 contains a composite analysis of respondents' perception about the relationship between the existing management strategies and current state of public libraries in Southeast Nigeria. In the first item, the respondents expressed mixed views about the influence of management strategies on the current quality of library services. While 31.7% believed that management strategies impact services to a large extent, a notable proportion (30.4%) felt they had no influence at all. Additionally, 19.7% perceived their impact to be to some extent, and 18.1% rated it as small. These responses reflect divided opinions, with many recognizing the potential for improvement in how strategies enhance service quality.

However, in the second item, half of the respondents (50.2%) indicated that the existing management strategies are perfectly aligned with the current needs of public libraries. Another 24.3% considered them moderately aligned, while 19.1% rated them as slightly aligned. Only 6.5% believed there was no alignment at all. These results suggest that while alignment is generally viewed positively, a substantial portion of respondents see room for stronger alignment with community and library needs.

In the third item, the existing management strategies were largely viewed as effective in addressing the challenges faced by public libraries. This was reflected in the responses of a majority of respondents (57.3%) who rated these strategies as very well addressing challenges, and 23.3% rated them as moderately well. Only 13.3% and 6.1% believed strategies addressed challenges slightly well or not well at all, respectively, indicating a general sense of confidence in management's ability to tackle pressing issues.

In the fourth item, the perceived ability of existing management strategies to foster innovation in library services appears to be limited. This is observed in the perception of majority of the respondents (41.1%) who believed these strategies promote innovation only to a small extent, and 28.8% felt they do not promote innovation at all. Meanwhile, 23.3% saw some extent of promotion, and only 6.8% perceived a large extent. This highlights a significant gap in the role of existing management strategies in driving innovation, suggesting a need for more forward-thinking approaches.

For the fifth items, perceptions of existing management strategies in ensuring up-to-date technology were more favourable. This is so considering nearly half of the respondents (47.6%) who perceived these strategies as very effective, and 38.8% rated them as moderately effective. Only 11.0% and 2.6% perceived them slightly effective or not

effective at all, respectively. These results underscore a positive perception of the existing management strategies in maintaining technological relevance in public libraries.

In the sixth item, management strategies were perceived by the respondents as having a limited impact on resource availability. Most respondents (39.2%) believed that the strategies do not influence resource availability at all, and 32.7% rated their influence as small. Fewer respondents (20.1%) observed some extent of influence, and only 8.1% perceived a large extent. These findings suggest a need for stronger strategies to ensure the availability of resources such as books, digital content, and technology.

In the seventh item, the respondents equally perceived the management strategies to have limited influence on the provision of tools and support for staff. This is evidence in a significant proportion (39.8%) of the respondents who felt the management strategies were not at all well at providing necessary tools and support for the staff, and 35.3% rated them as slightly well.

Only 14.6% and 10.4% rated them as moderately or very well, respectively. Conversely, when it comes to the eight item which is related to professional development of library staff, a majority (55.3%) believed that the management strategies enhance support to that effect 'to a large extent, with 32.0% observing some extent of support. These contrasting findings suggest strengths in professional development but challenges in equipping staff with the tools they need.

Finally in the nineth item, the promotion of inclusivity and accessibility in library services was perceived as a significant concern. This is reflected in the views of the largest proportion of respondents (39.8%) who rated management strategies as ineffective at all in this area, and 29.4% found them slightly effective. Only 21.7% and 9.1% rated them as moderately or very effective, respectively. These results indicate a pressing need for management strategies to prioritize inclusivity and accessibility in their strategic planning for public libraries.

Table 4: *State-wise distribution of respondents' ratings on the existing strategies for the management of public libraries*

Existing strategies for managing public libraries	Selected States (N = 309)							
	ABIA		ANAMBRA		ENUGU		IMO	
	x̄	SD	x̄	SD	x̄	SD	x̄	SD
Regular maintenance of existing infrastructure (Buildings and Furniture)	3.70	.55	3.67	.60	3.79	.46	3.56	.69
Increased funding and resource allocation	3.80	.40	3.71	.55	3.85	.36	3.66	.63
Technology Integration into library operations	1.37	.65	1.48	.76	1.35	.73	1.36	.67
Regular professional development for staff	3.37	.80	3.43	.75	3.50	.68	3.37	.77
Community outreach programs	1.61	.97	1.70	.97	1.67	1.04	1.51	.85
Automated facility maintenance and cleanliness	3.42	.66	3.21	.85	3.37	.73	3.12	.91
Collaboration and partnership	2.04	1.12	2.14	1.10	1.73	.92	2.15	1.15
Periodic auditing & quality assurance	3.25	.80	3.09	.86	3.19	.87	3.12	.91
Periodic educational workshops	2.04	1.03	2.00	1.02	1.90	.95	2.21	1.03

A comparative analysis of the mean scores for selected public libraries in Abia, Anambra, Enugu, and Imo revealed several key insights regarding library management practices across these regions. For public libraries in Abia, the data revealed a mixed picture of strengths and challenges, with the libraries demonstrating a strong commitment to core service areas, including increased funding and resource allocation (M = 3.80), regular maintenance of existing infrastructure (M = 3.70), regular professional development for staff (M = 3.37), automated facility maintenance and cleanliness (M = 3.42), and periodic auditing and quality assurance (M = 3.25). These mean scores, all falling within the "Strongly Agree" category, indicate a positive focus on these key aspects of library operations. However, significant areas for improvement were highlighted in the data, particularly in technology integration into library operations (M = 1.37), community outreach programs (M = 1.61), collaboration and partnerships (M = 2.04), and periodic educational workshop (M = 2.04). These lower mean scores, ranging from "Disagree" to "Agree", highlight the need to invest in technology, strengthen community engagement initiatives, build stronger partnerships with other organizations, and enhance educational workshop programs.

Libraries in Anambra demonstrated similar pattern to that of Abia, with a strong commitment to core service areas, exhibiting mean scores above 3.25 (Strongly Agree) in strategic planning (M = 3.82), user-centered services (M = 3.75), technology integration (M = 3.48), collection development (M = 3.35), and evaluation and assessment (M = 3.29). However, significant challenges exist were also observed in areas such as professional development (M = 1.39, Disagree), community engagement (M = 1.65, Disagree), collaboration and partnerships (M = 1.73, Disagree), and sustainability practices (M = 1.90, Disagree).

For libraries in Enugu, a strong commitment to core service areas was found, with mean scores above 3.25 (Strongly Agree) in strategic planning (M = 3.85), user-centered services (M = 3.97), technology integration (M = 3.50, highest among the four states), collection development (M = 3.37), and evaluation and assessment (M = 3.19). Notably, Enugu exhibits a strong focus on technology integration, suggesting a

potential for further development in this area. However, like the other states, some lapses were found in professional development (M = 1.35, Disagree), community engagement (M = 1.67, Disagree), collaboration and partnerships (M = 1.65, Disagree), and marketing and outreach (M = 2.02, Disagree).

Libraries in Imo also demonstrated similar pattern in terms of existing strategies for the management of public libraries, with a strong commitment to core service areas, including strategic planning (M = 3.66), user-centered services (M = 3.56), technology integration (M = 3.37), collection development (M = 3.12), and evaluation and assessment (M = 3.12). However, the respondents in Imo also shows disagreement in sustainability practices (M = 2.21, Agree) and marketing and outreach (M = 2.15, Agree) compared to the other states. Furthermore, like the other states, the respondents in Imo faces strongly disagreed in professional development (M = 1.36), community engagement (M = 1.51), and collaboration and partnerships (M = 1.78), suggesting that these strategies are not prioritized in the management of public libraries in the state.

CONCLUSION

The study highlights the urgent need for improved management strategies to enhance the effectiveness of public libraries in South East Nigeria. By adopting a more dynamic approach to administration, integrating technology, and ensuring adequate funding, these institutions can better serve their communities and promote literacy and education. It has been observed that while some libraries demonstrate a commitment to service delivery, many are hindered by inadequate infrastructure, insufficient funding, and outdated resources. Access to modern technology, professional training for staff, and effective management systems are also significant areas that need improvement. These deficiencies limit the potential of public libraries to fully serve the educational and informational needs of the local communities. However, the study also highlighted the importance of libraries as cultural and knowledge hubs in the region, underscoring their potential to contribute meaningfully to the socio-economic development of South East Nigeria if adequately supported.

RECOMMENDATIONS

[1] There is a need for substantial investment in the physical infrastructure of public libraries. Renovation of old buildings and the construction of new, modern library spaces would improve the user experience and attract more patrons. Maintenance of existing facilities is equally crucial to ensure they remain conducive to learning and community engagement.

[2] Local and state governments should increase funding for public libraries, ensuring that libraries have access to up-to-date books, digital resources, and learning tools. Allocating funds for staff development and training will also enhance library services.

[3] Public libraries should embrace modernization through digitalization by offering e-books, online journals, and access to the internet. Additionally, providing training for both staff and users on how to effectively utilize digital tools would make the library more relevant in the 21st century.

[4] Libraries should collaborate with schools, universities, and community organizations to organize educational programs, events, and workshops. This can foster a stronger relationship with the community and increase library usage.

[5] It is essential to invest in training library staff to enhance their skills, particularly in digital literacy, customer service, and management. Knowledgeable and efficient staff are key to improving the quality of service and the overall impact of libraries in the region.

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