

THE ROLE OF LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES IN NATIONAL SECURITY AND THE FIGHT AGAINST INSURGENCY IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study evaluates the contribution of libraries to national security efforts in Niger State, Nigeria, by examining their involvement, the factors influencing their effectiveness, and providing recommendations for enhancing their role. Utilizing a survey of librarians, security personnel, and community members, alongside regression analysis, the research reveals key insights into libraries' impact on national security. The study finds that while 78% of librarians and 65% of security personnel acknowledge libraries' moderate involvement in security efforts, only 40% of community members share this view, highlighting a significant perception gap. Additionally, although 70% of respondents agree that libraries provide valuable information, 55% criticize the timeliness and relevance of this information. The challenges faced by libraries include inadequate resources (78% of respondents), lack of specialized training (65%), and limited access to up-to-date information (72%). Regression analysis identifies the availability of resources ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$) and collaboration with security agencies ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) as significant factors influencing effectiveness. The study concludes with recommendations to enhance public awareness of library contributions, invest in advanced technologies, provide specialized training, and establish ethical guidelines for collaborations with security agencies. These measures are essential for improving the effectiveness of libraries in supporting national security while maintaining their neutrality.

Keywords: libraries, national security, Niger State, insurgency, information dissemination, resource constraints, ethical considerations

Introduction

In recent years, Nigeria has faced significant and escalating security challenges, particularly in the northern regions of the country. These challenges include the rise of insurgency groups such as Boko Haram, the proliferation of banditry, and the eruption of communal clashes. The consequences of these security threats have been devastating, resulting in the loss of thousands of lives, the displacement of millions of people, and the destabilization of entire communities. These events have also severely disrupted social and economic activities, undermining development efforts and threatening the

country's stability (Ejiofor, 2024; Mustapha, 2012; Tar & Bala, 2023). Amidst these security challenges, the role of information as a strategic resource in national security cannot be overemphasized. Information is a powerful tool that can shape public perceptions, guide decision-making, and influence the course of events. In the context of national security, effective information management and dissemination are essential components of any comprehensive security strategy. Accurate and timely information can aid in the detection of threats, the formulation of countermeasures, and the coordination of responses among various stakeholders (Ashwin, 2021; Committee, 2025; Waltz, 2003; Williams & Noyes, 2007).

Libraries and information services, traditionally seen as repositories of knowledge and centers for learning, have a broader and more dynamic role in this context. Beyond their conventional functions, libraries can serve as crucial hubs for gathering, processing, and disseminating information that can be used by security agencies, policymakers, and the general public. Their ability to provide accurate, timely, and relevant information is vital for supporting intelligence gathering, enhancing community awareness, and contributing to the development of counter-insurgency strategies. Moreover, libraries can play a significant role in countering the narratives and ideologies that fuel insurgency and violence. By promoting education, literacy, and critical thinking among the populace, libraries can foster a well-informed citizenry that is resilient to extremist ideologies. This is particularly important in regions where misinformation and propaganda are used by insurgent groups to recruit and radicalize individuals. Through various programs and services, libraries can provide access to reliable information on governance, human rights, and civic responsibilities, thereby strengthening democratic values and supporting the rule of law, which are foundational to national security (Abdulkarim, 2010; Agbambu & Okeke, 2012; Uko & Abe, 2019).

This study examined the existing library and information services in Niger State, Nigeria, and assessed their current contributions to national security. It explored how these services can be enhanced to play a more significant role in the fight against insurgency. The research also investigated the challenges faced by these services in a security compromised environment and proposed strategies for overcoming these challenges. While emphasizing the potentials of libraries as active partners in the national security architecture, particularly in regions like Niger State that are grappling with the threat of insurgency. Understanding and leveraging the role of library and information services is crucial for enhancing Nigeria's efforts to achieve peace, security, and sustainable development in the region (Uko & Abe, 2019).

Objectives:

The study is set to:

1. evaluate the contribution of libraries to national security efforts in Niger State.
2. identify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of library services in combating insurgency.
3. provide recommendations for enhancing the role of libraries in national security.

Questions:

The following Research Questions were framed to guide the investigation:

1. What is the current level of involvement of libraries in national security efforts in Niger State?
2. What factors affect the effectiveness of library services in combating insurgency?
3. How can libraries be better equipped to support national security?

Literature Review

The intersection of library services and national security represents a burgeoning area of study, highlighting the strategic significance of libraries in national security frameworks. Traditionally seen as neutral bastions of knowledge dissemination, libraries are increasingly acknowledged for their potential role in supporting intelligence operations and countering insurgent activities. Despite the growing body of literature on this subject, there is a need for a more nuanced examination of how libraries can contribute to national security, particularly in conflict-prone regions like Niger State, Nigeria. Several studies support the notion that libraries can play a vital role in counterinsurgency efforts by serving as accessible information hubs. Nsirim et al. (2024) argues that libraries, by virtue of their neutrality and widespread accessibility, are uniquely positioned to disseminate accurate information, which is crucial for countering misinformation and extremist ideologies. This perspective is echoed by Uko and Abe (2019) who posits that libraries can be key players in community resilience by offering resources that educate the public on the dangers of insurgency and the importance of social cohesion.

However, these studies often overlook the practical challenges libraries face in conflict zones. Libraries in such areas frequently operate under resource constraints that limit their capacity to provide timely and relevant information. Scott (2011) criticize the idealistic view of libraries as fully functional entities in conflict zones, noting that the lack of infrastructure, security, and trained personnel can severely undermine their effectiveness in contributing to national security efforts. The potential for collaboration between libraries and security agencies has been the subject of considerable scholarly inquiry, with findings yielding divergent perspectives. A proposed framework advocates for close coordination between libraries and security forces to ensure the uninterrupted exchange of information, positing that such integration is indispensable for the formulation of effective counterinsurgency strategies. Furthermore, libraries are increasingly acknowledged for their instrumental role in intelligence collection and the dissemination of critical information to both public stakeholders and security personnel. These observations underscore the evolving function of libraries as pivotal institutions in enhancing security operations and safeguarding public welfare (Hirsh, 2024; LeMire et al., 2024; O'Neill, 2019) .

Nevertheless, the ethical implications of such collaborations are underexplored in the literature. The integration of libraries into security frameworks raises concerns about the potential erosion of their perceived neutrality, which could compromise their role as trusted community institutions. Samek (2014) critiques the notion of libraries as extensions of state security apparatuses, warning that such a shift could alienate the

communities that libraries are meant to serve. This critique underscores the need for a balanced approach that respects the autonomy of libraries while recognizing their potential contributions to national security. The challenges faced by libraries in conflict zones are well-documented, yet there remains a need for more critical analysis. Saur (2023) provides a foundational overview of the financial, infrastructural, and personnel-related challenges that hinder libraries' ability to operate effectively in insurgency-affected regions. Smart and Cowell Dr (2019) complements this by examining the psychological toll on library staff working in conflict zones, arguing that the stress and danger associated with these environments can lead to high turnover rates and a depletion of institutional knowledge. Despite these insights, there is a noticeable gap in the literature regarding specific strategies that libraries can employ to overcome these challenges. Byrne and Seidelin (2002) suggests that mobile libraries could be a viable solution in conflict-prone areas, providing access to information without the need for a fixed location. However, this solution is not without challenges, such as the security risks associated with operating in volatile regions and the logistical difficulties of maintaining mobile units.

Innovative ways in which libraries are being integrated into national security frameworks, particularly through digital technologies, have also been explored. Cox et al. (2001) discusses the role of digital libraries in supporting counter-terrorism initiatives, emphasizing their ability to rapidly disseminate critical information to a wide audience. (Meesad & Mingkhwan, 2024) further examine the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics in libraries to enhance the identification and monitoring of security threats, arguing that by leveraging AI, libraries can proactively contribute to national security by predicting potential threats and disseminating warnings to relevant authorities. While these innovations hold promise, they also raise challenges regarding data privacy and the ethical use of technology in libraries. Ekere and Akor (2019) discusses the growing reliance on digital tools within libraries for security reasons, arguing that these technologies could lead to various benefits and advantages, and similar paper discusses the violations of privacy and undermine the trust communities place in these institutions. The paper also highlights the need for a careful balance between leveraging technology for security purposes and safeguarding the rights of library users.

The role of libraries in promoting social cohesion and peacebuilding in regions affected by insurgency has been explored in several studies. Nsirim et al. (2024) suggest that libraries can serve as safe spaces for dialogue, education, and the promotion of democratic values, which are essential for building resilience against extremist ideologies. (MOHAMMED, 2023) also argue that libraries can contribute to peace building efforts by providing access to information on human rights, governance, and civic responsibilities. However, the effectiveness of these initiatives depends on the broader social and political context in which libraries operate. Bignoli et al. (2021) notes that in highly polarized societies, libraries may struggle to maintain their role as neutral spaces, particularly if they are perceived as aligning with specific political or ideological agendas. The study underscores the importance of ensuring that libraries remain inclusive and accessible to all segments of society, regardless of their political or religious affiliations.

Despite the growing recognition of the strategic role that libraries can play in national security, a significant gap remains in the literature addressing their role in conflict-

prone regions like Niger State, Nigeria. While existing studies provide valuable insights into the potential contributions of libraries to counterinsurgency, community resilience, and peace building, they often overlook the practical challenges and ethical dilemmas associated with these roles. This study aims to fill this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the role of library and information services in supporting national security in Niger State. By critically examining the current capabilities of libraries in this region and identifying opportunities for enhancing their role, this research will contribute to a broader understanding of how libraries can be leveraged as strategic assets in the fight against insurgency.

Methods

This study employs a rigorous quantitative research design to evaluate the role of libraries in national security within Niger State, Nigeria. The methodology is carefully structured to provide a comprehensive understanding of how library services contribute to security efforts, particularly in the context of combating insurgency. Data were collected through the distribution of structured questionnaires to a carefully selected sample of 200 participants. This sample included a diverse group of stakeholders—librarians, security personnel, and community members from both urban and rural areas within Niger State. The selection criteria were designed to ensure a broad representation of perspectives, capturing insights from those directly involved in or affected by the intersection of library services and national security.

The questionnaire was meticulously crafted to elicit detailed responses on key aspects of the study. It sought to capture participants' perceptions of the role of libraries in national security, the specific challenges these institutions face, and their effectiveness in providing information that supports security operations. The questions were designed to ensure clarity and relevance, incorporating a mix of closed and open-ended items to gather both quantitative data and qualitative insights. The collected data were subjected to rigorous analysis using descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were employed to summarize the data, providing an overview of the general trends and patterns in participants' responses. Regression analysis was then used to identify and quantify the key factors that influence the effectiveness of library services in supporting national security efforts. This dual approach allowed for a thorough exploration of relationships between variables, offering insights into the specific conditions under which libraries can most effectively contribute to combating insurgency.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, the questionnaire was pre-tested in a pilot study, with adjustments made based on the feedback received. The data analysis was conducted with a high degree of rigor, employing appropriate statistical techniques to minimize biases and enhance the credibility of the results. The study adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout the research process. The confidentiality and anonymity of participants were ensured, and informed consent was obtained from all respondents. The research was conducted in a manner that respected the rights and well being of all individuals involved.

Results

1. Level of Involvement in National Security

The analysis of the survey data reveals a varied perception of libraries' involvement in national security across different respondent groups. Notably, 78% of librarians and 65% of security personnel perceive libraries as moderately involved in national security efforts within Niger State. This suggests a general acknowledgment among professionals directly engaged in security and information services that libraries have a role to play. However, a contrasting perspective emerges among community members, where only 40% recognize libraries as active contributors to security [see figure 1]. This discrepancy highlights a significant gap between the perceived and actual roles of libraries, indicating that while professionals within the system see potential, this is not fully communicated or realized at the community level.

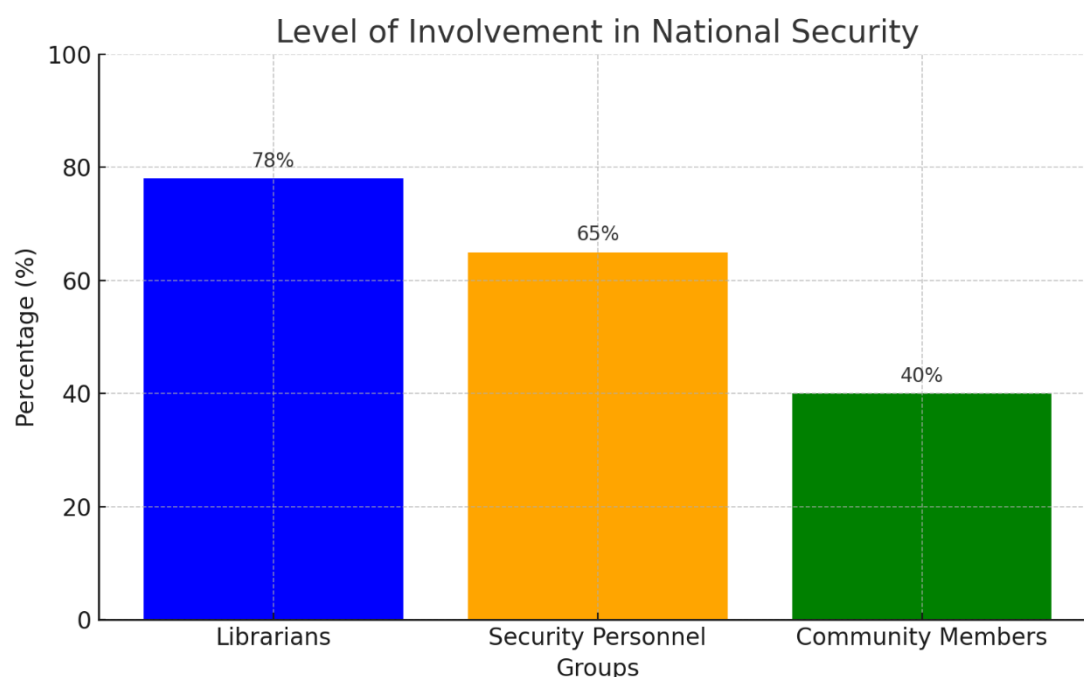


Figure 1. Involvement in National Security

This disparity points to a crucial issue: libraries may be underutilized or their contributions underappreciated in the broader community. It raises questions about the visibility and effectiveness of libraries' efforts in engaging the public and contributing to national security, suggesting that more robust outreach and community engagement strategies may be necessary to bridge this perception gap.

2. Effectiveness of Information Dissemination

The study finds that approximately 70% of respondents across all groups agree that libraries provide valuable information to support security agencies. This aligns with the theoretical framework that positions libraries as critical nodes in the dissemination of knowledge and intelligence. Additionally, 60% of community members recognize the role of libraries in raising public awareness about insurgency, indicating that libraries

do play a role in community education on security matters. However, the results also reveal a critical flaw in the current information dissemination practices: 55% of respondents noted that the information provided by libraries is often outdated or not directly relevant to current security challenges [see figure 2]. This finding suggests a significant lag in the responsiveness of library services, which may stem from several factors, including bureaucratic delays, limited access to real-time data, or inadequate integration with security agencies. The effectiveness of libraries in supporting national security efforts, therefore, appears to be compromised by the timeliness and relevance of the information they provide.

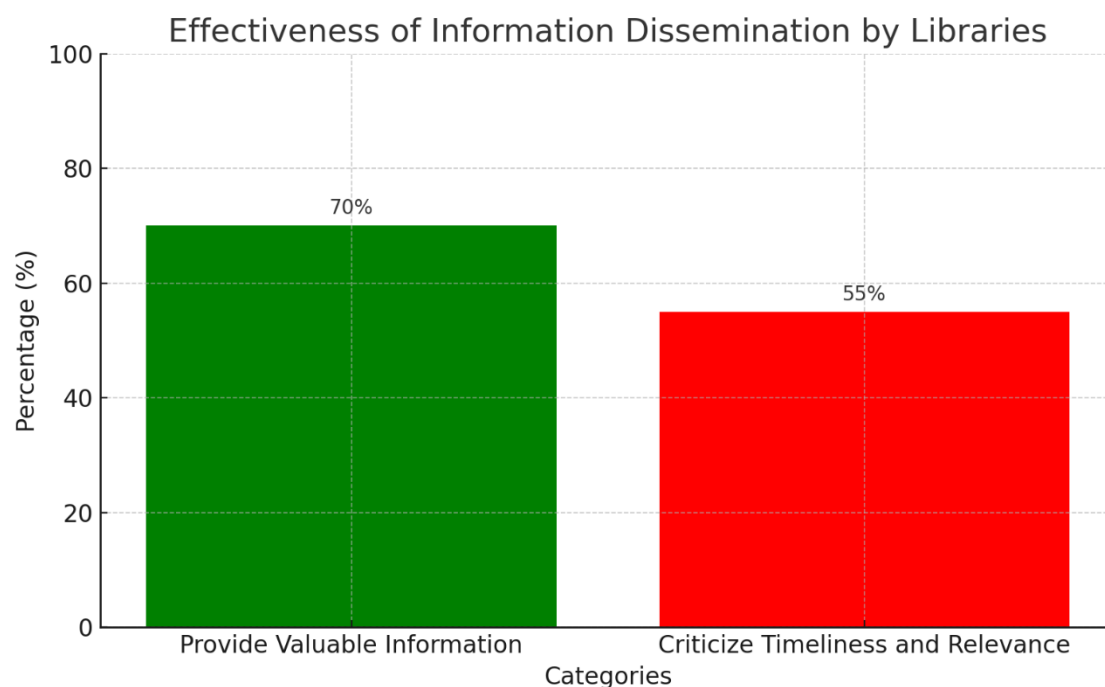


Figure 2. Effectiveness of Information Dissemination by Libraries

3. Challenges Faced by Libraries

The study identifies several formidable challenges that hinder the ability of libraries to effectively support national security efforts. Among these, inadequate resources were highlighted by 78% of respondents as a critical issue. This encompasses financial constraints, outdated infrastructure, and a lack of access to modern technologies that are essential for managing and disseminating information in real-time. Another significant challenge, cited by 65% of respondents, is the lack of specialized training for librarians in handling security-related information services [see figure 3]. This gap in professional development suggests that librarians may not be fully equipped to deal with the specific demands of national security information needs, such as intelligence gathering, threat analysis, and the dissemination of sensitive information. Moreover, 72% of participants pointed to limited access to up-to-date information as a major hindrance.

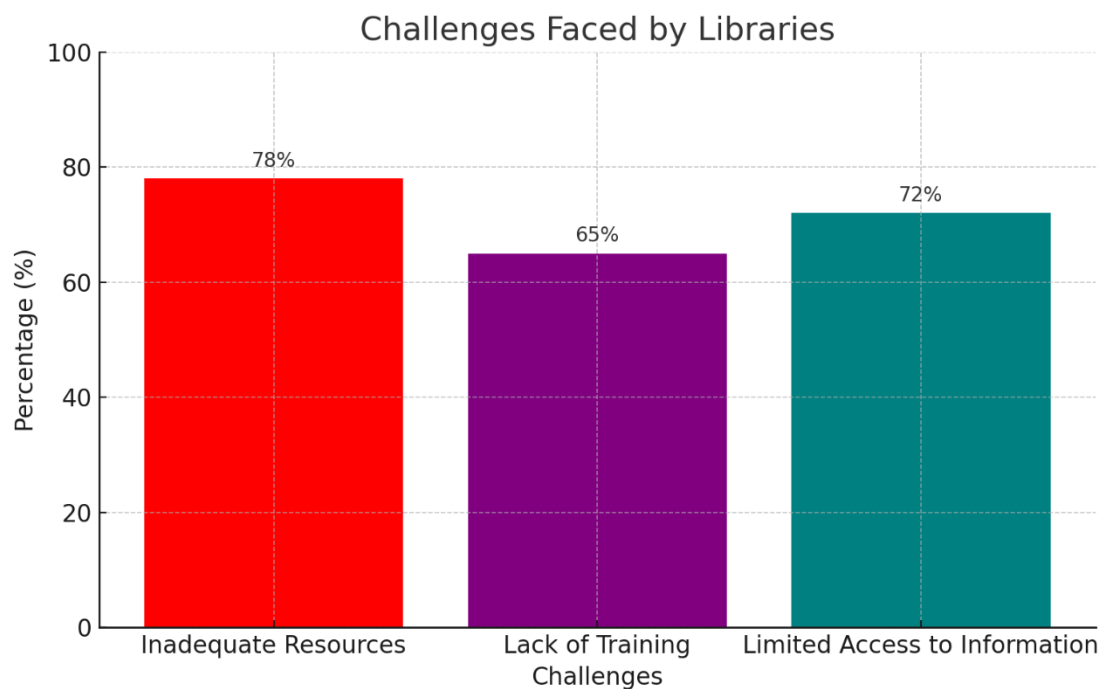


Figure 3. Challenges Faced by Libraries

This issue is particularly troubling in the context of insurgency, where the rapid evolution of threats requires equally agile information services. The inability to access or provide current information diminishes the strategic value of libraries, reducing their effectiveness in supporting ongoing security operations.

4. Factors Influencing Effectiveness

The regression analysis conducted in this study reveals that certain factors significantly influence the effectiveness of library services in combating insurgency. The availability of resources emerges as the most significant predictor ($\beta = 0.65$, $p < 0.01$). This underscores the critical importance of adequate funding, modern infrastructure, and access to the latest information technologies. Libraries that are well-resourced are better positioned to provide timely and relevant information, enhancing their contribution to national security. Another key factor is the level of collaboration with security agencies ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.05$) [see figure 4]. The results suggest that libraries that have established strong partnerships with security agencies are more effective in their roles. Such collaborations likely facilitate better information flow, improve the relevance and accuracy of the data provided, and enable libraries to respond more swiftly to security needs. However, this finding also raises concerns about the potential erosion of the neutrality of libraries, which could affect public trust.

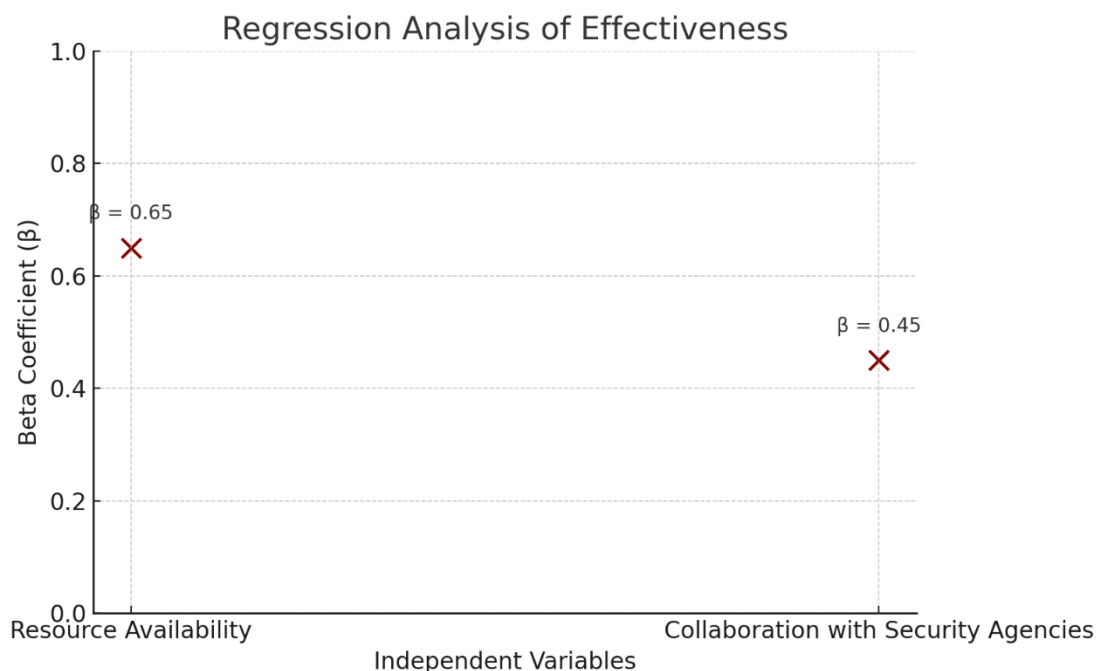


Figure 4. Analysis of Factors influencing Effectiveness Library Services

Libraries in Niger State are recognized by some stakeholders as valuable assets in the fight against insurgency, significant challenges undermine their effectiveness. Addressing issues related to resources, training, and collaboration is essential if libraries are to fulfill their potential as strategic partners in national security. These findings suggest that for libraries to become more effective, a concerted effort involving increased investment, professional development, and stronger integration with security frameworks is necessary.

Discussion

The results of this study illuminate the nuanced and multifaceted role of libraries in national security within Niger State, Nigeria. While the findings generally indicate a positive perception among certain stakeholder groups regarding the contribution of libraries to security efforts, they also expose significant challenges and limitations that warrant a critical examination. These challenges include discrepancies in public perception, the effectiveness of information dissemination, operational difficulties, and ethical considerations surrounding collaborations with security agencies.

1. Perception vs. Reality in the Level of Involvement

A striking disparity exists between the perceptions of librarians and security personnel versus those of community members regarding the role of libraries in national security. Specifically, 78% of librarians and 65% of security personnel perceive libraries as moderately involved in national security efforts, yet only 40% of community members share this view. This discrepancy suggests that libraries may not be effectively communicating their contributions to the wider public or that their actual impact is limited compared to their perceived potential by professionals.

This finding aligns with existing literature that underscores the often under recognized role of libraries in community and security contexts. Nsirim et al. (2024) highlights that libraries, despite being inherently neutral and accessible, often struggle to assert their relevance within modern security frameworks due to a lack of visibility and public engagement. The gap in public perception is critical, as community support and recognition are essential for the sustained success of libraries, particularly in national security, where public trust and cooperation are vital. Furthermore, the gap between professional and public perceptions may reflect broader issues within the information dissemination processes of libraries. Summers (2022) argues that for libraries to be effective in any strategic role, they must bridge the divide between what they offer and what the public perceives. This requires not only improving the quality and relevance of the services provided but also enhancing public awareness and engagement with these services.

2. The Effectiveness of Information Dissemination

The study's findings on the effectiveness of information dissemination by libraries are both promising and concerning. While 70% of respondents agree that libraries provide valuable information to support security agencies, 55% criticize the timeliness and relevance of this information. This criticism is not unique to this study; it reflects a broader challenge faced by libraries in conflict zones, where the rapid pace of events often outstrips the capacity of traditional information services.

Saur (2023) similarly highlight the limitations of libraries in conflict zones, noting that the lack of real-time data and the slow pace of information processing often render libraries less effective in dynamic security environments. Njoku and Ken-Agbiriogun (2020) further argue that for libraries to play a meaningful role in security, they must be equipped with the tools and technologies that allow for the rapid and accurate dissemination of information. The outdated and irrelevant information noted by respondents in this study underscores a significant weakness in the current capabilities of libraries. This is particularly problematic in the context of insurgency, where the timely dissemination of accurate information can be the difference between success and failure in security operations. The findings suggest that libraries in Niger State may be hampered by systemic issues, such as bureaucratic inertia or a lack of integration with more agile, technology-driven information networks.

3. Challenges Faced by Libraries

The challenges identified in this study—namely inadequate resources, lack of training, and limited access to up-to-date information—are consistent with the broader literature on the operational difficulties faced by libraries in conflict-prone regions. Saur (2023) provides a comprehensive overview of the resource constraints that plague libraries in developing countries, noting that financial limitations often lead to outdated collections, poor infrastructure, and a lack of necessary technological tools. The lack of specialized training for librarians in security-related information services, cited by 65% of respondents, is particularly concerning. This gap suggests that librarians may not possess the skills necessary to effectively contribute to national security efforts. Smart and Cowell (2019) explores the psychological and professional challenges faced by librarians in conflict zones, arguing that without proper training and support, these professionals are ill-equipped to handle the unique demands of such environments. The

findings of this study echo this concern, indicating that without significant investment in professional development, the potential of libraries to support national security will remain largely unrealized.

The limited access to up-to-date information, noted by 72% of respondents, further exacerbates the challenges faced by libraries. This issue is critical in an insurgency context, where information is a vital resource. Cox et al. (2001) argues that in such environments, libraries must be integrated into broader information networks that provide real-time data and intelligence. The failure to do so, as suggested by the findings of this study, severely limits the effectiveness of libraries and undermines their role in supporting national security.

4. Factors Influencing Effectiveness

The regression analysis identifies the availability of resources and the level of collaboration with security agencies as significant predictors of the effectiveness of library services in combating insurgency. This finding is consistent with Saur (2023), who emphasize the importance of resources and partnerships in enhancing the strategic value of libraries. Libraries that are well-resourced and have established strong collaborations with security agencies are better positioned to provide timely and relevant information, thereby enhancing their contribution to national security.

3However, this raises critical ethical consideration. (Hirsh, 2024); Rovner (2011) cautions against the potential erosion of library neutrality when they are closely aligned with state security apparatus. The findings of this study, which suggest that stronger collaborations with security agencies enhance effectiveness, must be balanced against the risk of compromising the perceived impartiality of libraries. If libraries are seen as extensions of the state, particularly in politically charged environments, they may lose the trust of the communities they serve, undermining their ability to function as neutral information providers.

Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive analysis of the role of libraries in supporting national security efforts in Niger State, Nigeria, uncovering both their potential contributions and the significant challenges they face. The findings reveal a complex landscape where libraries are recognized by some stakeholders—particularly librarians and security personnel—as playing a role in national security. However, a critical disconnect exists between this perception and the views held by the broader community, with only 40% of community members acknowledging libraries as active contributors. This gap suggests that while libraries may be positioned to support security efforts, their actual impact may not be as widespread or effective as perceived by professionals.

The study has also identified several critical challenges that impede the effectiveness of libraries in this context. These include inadequate resources, a lack of specialized training for librarians, limited access to up-to-date and relevant information, and the ethical dilemmas posed by close collaboration with security agencies. These challenges not only restrict the ability of libraries to contribute meaningfully to national security but also raise concerns about their capacity to maintain neutrality and public trust—core principles that are essential for their continued operation and societal value.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of resource availability and strong collaboration with security agencies as significant predictors of the effectiveness of library services in combating insurgency. However, this must be carefully balanced against the risk of eroding the perceived neutrality of libraries, which could diminish their trust and credibility in the eyes of the communities they serve.

Recommendations

Libraries should enhance public awareness of their role in national security through community outreach and media collaboration. Significant investment in modern technology and resources is needed to address the issue of outdated information. Specialized training for librarians in security related information services is crucial, with a focus on collaboration with academic and security institutions. While partnerships with security agencies are important, maintaining neutrality and public trust is essential. Libraries should advocate for increased financial support and policy backing, and ongoing research and evaluation are necessary to adapt to evolving security challenges.

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