

UTILISATION OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES BY WOMEN IN NIGERIA: A TEN YEAR REVIEW 1994-2004

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ABSTRACT

In a research carried out in March 1994 on the public libraries of Kano in the Northern Nigeria (a predominantly Hausa by tribe and Muslim by religion.), Enugu in the East (predominantly Ibo by tribe and Christians by religion) and Ibadan in the West (a predominantly Yoruba state and a mixture of Christians and Muslim community), Kano had the lowest number of female library users. The study revealed that customs, religion and the poor state of their libraries were the most important factors for the poor utilization of public libraries by women in Kano. Ibadan public library is the highest utilized public library amongst the three in this study. From April to July 2004, questionnaires asking questions similar to those asked by the researcher in 1994 were administered to female users of the public libraries in Kano, Ibadan and Enugu. Results from the second study revealed that percentage of female readers to their male counter parts has risen from 5.9% in 1994 to 18.24% in 2004. There is also an increase in the number of women of Kano State origin using the library. The second study also showed that the Enugu state public library is now the least utilised public library amongst those in the study and that library services have worsened in the library. In conclusion, suggestions are made and recommendations given to each State Library Board according to the findings of the study.

Background To The Study:

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the most populous state in Africa (FMIC: 2001). The statistical office of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning gave the 1991 census figure as 44,544,531 or 50.32% males and 43,969,960 or 49.68% females, making a grand total of 88,514,501. The National Population Commission presented the 2006 census figures as 140,003,542 million, consisting of 71,709,859 or 51.22 % males and 68,293,583 or 48.77% females (NPC: 2007).

There is now a main public library in each of the 36 states' capitals of the country and many branch libraries in towns and villages of these states. But Umar (2001) notes, "Despite the growth in the number of public libraries in

Nigeria since 1980, their utilization by the public, especially by females in many parts of Nigeria is yet to be fully appreciated".

For many decades now, there has been massive campaign for women's development in the educational, social, economic and political sectors of Nigeria. This is especially a step in the right direction for a country where women are reported to be far more backward literally than men (Umar: 2001). This research is an attempt to investigate whether demographic variables such as ethnicity, age, religion, marital status and educational background affect the utilisation of public libraries by women in Kano, Ibadan and Enugu. Kano is in the North, Ibadan in the West and Enugu in the East of Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

Krupskaya and Krupskaya (1919) declared that:

"We are sure that neither a single teacher nor a single school will enlighten you as much as your local library. ...and the most important thing....is that books (and other information materials) will help you abolish the most baneful inequality, the inequality of intellect".

Although libraries are agents for social development, they can however function and help bring about developments only when both males and females in their communities use them. The importance of public libraries in the fulfillment of society's educational, cultural and information need cannot be overemphasized. "A rough estimate with regards to the number of library users in Kano is not impressive" (Ndana: 2003). It has been revealed by Maigari (1982) too, that women in Kano did not utilize their public libraries as much as their male counterparts. Mohammed (1985) also reiterated the fact that only female students who were single, utilized public library services in Kano. Yahya (1996) studied public libraries in three Northern states of Nigeria and his findings revealed that religion and ethnicity played vital roles in determining the levels of library utilization by Hausa women there.

Many of the previous studies by researchers tended to concentrate on general public library users i.e. males and females. The female population seemed to have been neglected even though they constituted 49.4% of the population in the 1991 census figures (NPC: 1991) and represented more than half the population in the 2001 population estimate (NPC: 2001).

Researchers such as Mohammed (1985) and Abdulsalam (2003) have contended that there could be differences between the utilization of libraries by women who differed in terms of their ethnicity, age, religion, educational background and availability of good library services. This research was

intended to reveal whether these demographic variables have effect on the levels of public library utilization by females in Nigeria.

Objective of the study:

1. To determine the difference in public library utilization between males and females in Nigeria.
2. To determine the extent of public library utilization by females in Nigeria who differed in terms of their ethnicity, age, marital status, religion, educational background and availability of service facilities in their libraries.
3. To determine the changes in the utilization of public libraries by females in these three communities of Kano, Enugu and Ibadan from 1994-2004.

Research questions:

1. What is the frequency of public library utilization between males and females in Nigeria?
2. What is the extent of utilization of public libraries by females in Nigeria?
3. To what extent do demographic variables such as age, religion, marital status and levels of education influence the utilization of public libraries by females in Nigeria?
4. To what extent does good library service facilities and conduciveness of the public library influence the utilization of public libraries by females in Nigeria?

Limitations of the Study:

The 1994 research was limited to the study of the utilisation of public libraries by females in the Kano, Enugu and Ibadan communities of Nigeria. These three communities represented the three main ethnic groups of the country i.e. The Hausas who are also predominantly Muslims (Kano), the Yoruba who are a mixture of Muslims and Christians (Ibadan) and the Igbo who are predominantly Christians (Enugu). The 2004 research shares this limitation too.

Literature Review:

Education and Social Development: Female Education in Nigeria:

Like all other developing countries, Nigeria has adopted education as the instrument per-excellence for development. It also recognises that the implanting of the desire for the development of women in all spheres of life and most especially areas of education must take deep roots in the society. Growth will be achieved only by the quality of the human factor and the capacity of the different social systems to elaborate educational policies and

strategies so that knowledge and learning enable people to liberate all their talents, energies and capacities. In other words, the desire for women education, knowledge and development must become part of the culture of Nigerian society.

Section 6, item 50 of the National Policy on Education stressed the commitment of the Federal Ministry of Education to the achievement of the following policy objectives thus:

- I Provision of more educational opportunities and access for females from primary to tertiary levels. Creation of equal opportunities to education for people in the society, irrespective of gender, age, locality, creed or status.
- II Re-orienting the attitude of all females, irrespective of age towards education and creating more information centers where they could get access to education, and education materials (i.e. libraries etc.).
- III To provide assistance, whenever needed, in the promotion of non-formal education projects as a whole to enable the transmission of knowledge that women can apply to the immediate environment of their everyday lives and, in particular, to create conditions for them to be able to respond to the economic, social and political demands of achieving social equality through education
- IV To awaken consciousness of all Nigerian women to the need for the development of their self image (FME: 1997).

The above policy was concerned with improving women's situation, giving education a different meaning, and searching for modalities and strategies that will enable women to obtain the basic skills needed to gain access to opportunities and participate, as subjects rather than objects, in developmental processes in the country.

A ten year enrolment statistics of Secondary Schools and Universities in Nigeria revealed that the ratio of male students to females in 1994 was more than 2/1 while the ratio of university male students in that year was almost 3/1. In the 2002 Federal Ministry of Education statistics, female ratio of secondary students has dramatically changed to almost 1/1 with their male counterparts but the ratio of female students in Nigerian universities is still lagging behind at 3/2 (FME:2004).

Libraries as tools for educational development:

The traditional role of a public library, as inherited from the developed

world, is dependent on the written word as the source of information. In order for this information to be released from the silent print, one must have the key, which is literacy. "We have a duty to support literacy as long as we subscribe to models of public libraries as received from the developed countries" (Onadiran: 1990).

The public library's role in promoting female education should be as the centre for information on all aspects of life, irrespective of the type of medium. Education improves human relations, enhances individual efficiency and encourages the development of social and cultural life of the society. The above definition is therefore in harmony with the fundamental objectives of the new National Policy on Education in Nigeria, which is geared towards self realisation, better human relationship, individual and national development and efficiency, national consciousness, and national unity in addition to enhancing social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress. "It is apparent therefore that education and libraries are not only inseparable but they are in fact, one and the same thing, educational development cannot succeed without the support of good, functional libraries" (NLA:2003). In the same vein, libraries are virtually useless where their communities or part of their communities would not or could not use them for any reason.

Methodology:

Research technique employed:

The research design for this study is the survey research method. This research was concerned with the following:

- a. Finding out whether demographic factors influence the utilisation of public libraries by females in Nigeria.
- b. Establishing whether there were changes in the utilisation of public libraries by females in Nigeria from the years 1994 to 2004.

Identification of population and sample for the study

In the 1994 research, the population comprised of the female population of Kano numbering 2,773,316 (NPC: 1991), Ibadan with a female population of 1,743,069 (NPC: 1991) and Enugu had a female population 1,679,050 (NPC: 1991). One hundred and ninety (190) questionnaires were administered to female public library users in Kano, 170 questionnaires to female public library users in Ibadan and 170 questionnaires to female public library users in Enugu. A hat and draw random sampling technique was used to select the respondents in each of the three libraries under study.

In the second research in 2004, the population of females in Kano had risen to 3,844,102. Ibadan female population stood at 3,066,526. Enugu

had an estimated female population of 2,728,911 (NPC: 2001 assumed estimate). For this second research, 1020 questionnaires asking similar questions as those in the 1994 research were administered using the same random sampling technique to the same class of library users in the same three communities' public libraries. 380 questionnaires to female public library users in Kano, 340 questionnaires to female public library users in Ibadan and 340 questionnaires to female public library users in Enugu.

Research Instruments:

The instrument used in 1994 was a close-ended questionnaire. The same type of questionnaire was also used for the second research of March June 2004.

Administration and Collection of Research Instruments;

The instruments were administered and collected by the researcher herself in the first research (1994) to the respondents in Kano, Ibadan and Enugu, hence the high response rate. For the second research (2004), the researcher administered and collected the copies of questionnaires to the Kano respondents and seasoned research assistants were employed to administer and collect the questionnaires to the Ibadan and Enugu respondents, consequently perchance, the high response rate especially in Enugu and Kano.

DATA ANALYSIS

Details of the results and analyses of data for the 1994 and 2004 studies are offered simultaneously below:

"Response rate for 1994"

Table 1a :

Communities	Questionnaires Administered	Questionnaires Returned	Unusable Questionnaires	Total
Kano	190	190	0	100%
Enugu	170	170	0	100%
Ibadan	170	150	20	88.23%

"Response rate for 2004"

Table 1b

Communities	Questionnaires Administered	Questionnaires Returned /used	Unusable Questionnaires	Total
Kano	380	380	0	100%
Enugu	340	340	0	100%
Ibadan	340	315	25	92.64%

II. Results of Research Questions' Tests

In answering the research questions, frequency distribution of responses extracted from the questionnaire results were used. Each of the two same research questions' results' are shown together respectively.

"Frequency of public library utilisation between males and females in Nigeria"

Table 2a

(Statistics of users 1-30th March 1994)

Community	Male	Female	Total of Readers	% Of males to total	% Of females total
Kano	1780	112	1892	94.1	5.9
Enugu	879	711	1590	55.29	44.71
Ibadan	5184	5296	10480	49.46	50.54

"The frequency of public library utilisation between males and females in Nigeria"

Table 2b.

(Statistics of users 1-30th March 2004)

Community	Male	Female	Total of Readers	% Of males to total	% Of females total
Kano	8836	1612	10448	81.76	18.24
Enugu	1111	1085	2196	50.60	49.40
Ibadan	6301	6952	13253	47.54	52.46

The results of tables 2a and 2b revealed that in Kano and Enugu, male users was higher in number than female users. In Ibadan, though the number of female users were more than that of the males' in two studies the percentage in the difference dropped in the 2004 study. It is also noteworthy that the percentage of female public library users in Kano had more than tripled and it was the fastest growing of the three libraries in terms of growth in utilization by both sexes.

"The extent of utilization of public libraries by females in Nigeria"

Table 3a.

(1994)

Communities	Rarely		Seldom		Often		Very Often		Total
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	
Kano	36	18.9	52	27.4	57	30.0	45	23.6	190
Enugu	32	18.1	38	22.3	48	28.2	52	30.5	170
Ibadan	10.	6.66	07	4.46	87	58.0	46	30.6	150

"The extent of utilization of public libraries by females in Nigeria"

Table 3b.

(2004)

Communities	Rarely		Seldom		Often		Very Often		Total
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq.	%	Freq	%	
Kano	03	0.78	24	6.3	194	50.3	141	37.1	380
Enugu	97	28.5	25	7.4	181	56.4	37	17.9	340
Ibadan	43	13.7	22	7.0	153	48.6	97	30.8	315

From the table above, the extent of public library utilization of Ibadan respondents in 1994 was greater than the other groups with 88.88% utilizing their main public library either "Often" or "Very Often". Table 3a shows that Kano female respondents utilized their public library least of the three communities in the 1994 study i.e. 46.32% of the respondents in that community either "rarely" or "seldom" used their public library.

In the second study as shown in table 3b, tremendous change has happened in the extent of utilization of public library in the Kano female community. 87% of the Kano female respondents now utilize their public libraries "Often" or "Very Often". On the other hand Ibadan has less

percentage (79%) of female respondents utilizing their public library as "Often" or "Very Often" as in the 1994 study. Enugu respondents were the least in the utilization of public libraries in the 2004 study.

"Extent of influence of age to public library utilization by females in Nigeria"

Table 4a

(1994).

Age	Rarely	-	Seldom	-	Often	-	Very Often	-	Total	-
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
15-25	12	2.35	21	4.11	43	8.43	163	31.96	239	46.86
26-35	09	1.76	12	2.35	57	11.17	31	6.07	109	21.37
36-45	25	4.90	27	5.29	23	4.50	19	3.73	94	18.43
46+	28	5.49	20	3.92	11	2.15	9	1.76	68	13.33
Total	74	14.50	80	15.67	134	26.25	222	43.52	510	99.97

"Extent of influence of age to public library utilization by females in Nigeria?"

Table 4b

(2004)

Age	Rarely	-	Seldom	-	Often	-	Very Often	-	Total	-
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
15-25	31	3	52	5	451	43.6	182	17.6	716	69.1
26-35	37	3.6	59	5.7	132	12.8	53	5.1	282	27.3
36-45	19	1.8	11	1.1	07	0.7	-	-	037	3.6
46+	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	87	8.4	122	11.8	590	57.1	235	22.7	1035	100

Tables show that younger women frequent their public libraries more than older females in the three communities. The frequency decreased gradually by age and it is worthy to note that women over 45 did not use any of the three public libraries in the 2004 research. The highest total percentage of public library utilization of all the ages in the two studies who used their public libraries "Often" or "Very often" were female respondents in the age range of 26-35. Of the grand total of 510 respondents in the 1994 study, 68 or 13.33% were 46years or over. No respondents in that age category were found to utilize their public library in the 2004 study.

"Extent of influence of religion to public library utilization by females in Nigeria"

Table 5a.

(1994)

Religion	Rarely		Seldom		Often		Very Often		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Christians	21	4.11	33	6.47	162	31.76	108	21.17	324	63.52
Muslims	69	13.52	65	12.74	24	4.70	18	3.52	176	34.50
Others	0	0	2	0.39	6	1.17	2	0.39	10	1.95
Total	90	17.63	100	19.60	192	37.63	128	25.08	510	100

"Extent of influence of religion to public library utilization by females in Nigeria"

Table 5b.

(2004)

Religion	Rarely		Seldom		Often		Very Often		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Christians	26	2.5	87	8.4	420	4.6	167	16.1	690	66.7
Muslims	10	1	06	0.5	221	21.4	108	10.4	345	33.3
Others	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	36	3.5	93	8.9	661	26	275	26.5	1035	100

of the total female public library users in the 1994 study, 324 (63.52%) were Christians. There was little change in the 2004 study as 66.7% of the total respondents of this study were Christians too.

It should be noted that though over 40% of the respondents in the two studies in Kano was Christians. Enugu, a Christian state, recorded no Muslim user in its public library. Ibadan had an almost equal number of Christian and Muslim female library users.

"Extent of influence of marital status in library utilization by females in Nigeria?"

Table 6a.

(1994)

Marital Status	Rarely	-	Seldom	-	Often	-	Very Often	-	Total	-
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Single	78	15.29	97	19.01	162	31.76	36	7.05	373	73.13
Married	28	5.49	26	5.09	12	2.35	07	1.37	73	14.31
Others	10	1.97	13	2.54	25	4.89	16	3.13	64	12.54
Total	116	22.75	136	26.64	199	39.00	59	11.55	510	100

"Extent of influence of marital status in library utilisation by females in Nigeria?"

Table 6b.

(2004)

Marital Status	Rarely	-	Seldom	-	Often	-	Very Often	-	Total	-
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Single	46	4.4	59	5.7	475	45.9	295	28.5	875	84.54
Married	09	0.9	17	1.6	112	10.8	22	2.1	160	15.46
Others	--	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	55	5.3	76	7.3	587	56.7	317	30.6	1035	100

The extent of library utilization of single females in 1994 was 73.13% of the total respondent. In 2004 the percentage of single female library users had increased to 84.54%. There were also more married women utilizing public libraries in 2004 than in 1994.

"Extent of influence of Educational background to public library utilization by females in Nigeria"

Table 7a.

(1994)

Edu. Background	Rarely	-	Seldom	-	Often	-	Very Often	-	Total	-
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Prim/Sec.	11	2.14	18	3.43	73	4.31	94	19.41	196	29.43
Diploma	28	5.49	38	7.45	96	18.82	107	20.00	269	57.76
UnGrad.	16	3.13	13	2.54	05	0.98	03	0.58	37	7.45
Post/Grad.	04	0.78	03	0.58	01	0.19	0	0	08	1.56
Total	59	11.54	72	14.00	175	24.30	204	39.99	510	100

"Extent of influence of Educational background to public library utilization by females in Nigeria"

Table 7b.

(2004)

Edu. Background	Rarely -		Seldom -		Often -		Very Often -		Total -	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Pri/Sec	05	0.48	12	1.15	32	3.1	16	1.54	65	6.3
Diploma	21	2	09	0.86	189	18.3	133	12.85	352	34.0
UnGrad.	30	2.9	68	6.6	424	41.0	87	8.4	609	58.84
Post Grad.	03	0.28	-	-	6	0.57	-	-	09	0.86
Total	59	5.66	89	8.07	651	62.97	236	22.79	1035	100

Table 7a showed that in 1994, 87.19% of the total respondents were primary, secondary or diploma students. In 2004, the highest users of public libraries in Nigeria are diploma holders and undergraduate students, while the number of primary and secondary school students using the three public libraries in this study has fallen from 29.43% in 1994 to 6.3% in 2004.

"Extent of discouragement to utilize the public library because of the unavailability of library services and/or unconduciveness of the library"

Table 8a.

(1994)

	Rarely -		Seldom -		Often -		Very Often -		Total -	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Kano	20	10.53	27	14.21	72	37.89	71	37.36	190	100
Enugu	58	34.12	33	19.41	61	35.88	18	10.58	170	100
Ibadan	106	70.66	21	14.00	12	08	11	7.33	150	100

Extent of discouragement to utilize the public library because of the unavailability of library services and or unconduciveness of the library"

Table 8b

(2004)

	Rarely		Seldom		Often		Very Often		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Kano	154	40.52	209	55	14	3.68	03	0.78	380	100
Enugu	47	13.82	62	18.23	122	35.88	109	32.05	340	100
Ibadan	90	28.57	112	35.55	83	26.34	30	9.52	315	100

Table 8a shows that in 1994, over 75% of female library users in Kano did not use their library 'often' or 'very often' because of the unavailability of good service or unconduciveness of their public library. Public library services were best in Ibadan where only 25.86% of the total female library users said they 'rarely' or 'seldom' use their public library because of the unavailability of good service.

The result in 2004 revealed a great contrast to what was obtained in 1994. Only 4.48% of female library users in Kano (2004) complained of unavailability of good library services or un-conduciveness of the environment. Enugu in 2004 had the highest unsatisfied female library users with 67.93% of their total female library users complaining of poor library services or library un-conduciveness discouraging them to utilize their libraries as often as they would want to. Ibadan, which scored the first place in good library services and library conduciveness in 1994, came second after Kano in the 2004 study.

Research Findings

- i. Between 1994 and 2004 there was a remarkable improvement in public library services in Kano state
- ii. During the same period, there was deterioration in the public library services in Enugu state.
- iii. Percentage of female readers to their male counterparts had risen in all three libraries in the years 1994-2004. This rise was more pronounced in Kano where the percentage of female users was just 5.9% of the male users in 1994 but had risen to 18.24% in 2004.
- iv. There was a fall in the number of older females using public libraries, from 31.76% in 1994 to 3.6% in 2004.
- v. There was a rise in the number of younger women aged 15-35 using public libraries from 68.24% in 1994 to 96.4 in 2004 in the three libraries.

- vi. Over 70% of female library users in the two studies and in all the three communities were single women.
- vii. In both the two studies, users of the three public libraries were either full or part time students. It seemed from the result of this study that only people who can read and write use public libraries in Nigeria.
- viii. Female library users in Kano were the highest satisfied in terms of library services and library conduciveness.
- ix. Enugu female public library users were the least satisfied in terms of good library services and library conduciveness.

Conclusions

Kano, a more populous state than Enugu and a centre of commerce in the country has a large population of Christian settlers from all parts of Nigeria and other countries and thus the likely rationale for the large number of Christian female library users in the state. Unlike the other two cities in this study, Ibadan has almost an equal population of both Christians and Muslims (NPC: 1992) But even there, the Christian respondents were slightly more than the Muslims. The development of Western education among Muslim women in Ibadan is higher than that of the indigenes of Kano (NPC: 1992) and the use of public libraries in Nigeria is highly influenced by level of Western education. In a predominant Muslim community where purdah and Sharia Law are practiced like Kano, many women could find it impossible to convince their husbands to allow them to visit the library. Also fewer Muslim women ventured to use the library since both male and female users sit in the same reading areas.

Recommendations

1. In 1994 Kano public library services was the most needful for improvement but the need for improvement in the 2004 study was most urgent in Enugu public library. Authorities of the public library in Enugu need to take note of the complaints of its very poor library services revealed by this study.
2. There is a need for public libraries in Nigeria to start providing library services suitable to all groups of females (especially Muslim married women living in Sharia states). Small branch libraries and mobile library services to remote areas could take care of this.
3. The local, state and national government should provide adequate funds to libraries regularly.
4. Again the public library in Kano is now a centre of community activities. There is need for public libraries in other parts of Nigeria to start integrating themselves into their communities, creating activities and supporting culture.

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