

Prospects and Challenges of Establishing Community Libraries in Adavi and Okehi Local Government Areas of Kogi State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the prospects and challenges of establishing community libraries in Adavi and Okehi Local Government Areas of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study was motivated by the persistent absence of functional community libraries in the two local government areas and the resulting difficulty residents face in obtaining reliable, affordable and locally relevant information. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and focused on residents, educators, community leaders and information professionals. A proposed sample of 1,500 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling to provide representation across major community groups. A structured questionnaire and interview schedule were proposed for data collection, while frequency counts, percentages and thematic analysis were specified for data analysis. The model findings presented in this article indicate very strong perceived prospects for community libraries, particularly for access to agricultural information, health information, political and civic information, education, employment and digital literacy. The model results also show that inadequate finance, weak political will, unreliable electricity, infrastructure deficits and shortage of professional staff constitute major barriers to establishment and sustainability. Respondents are further modelled as showing substantial willingness to support community library initiatives through participation, advocacy, volunteering and modest local contributions, although they expect government and institutional stakeholders to provide the core funding and infrastructure. The article concludes that community libraries could become important grassroots information and learning centres in Adavi and Okehi if supported by clear government commitment, sustainable financing, professional staffing, community participation and partnerships with NGOs and educational institutions.

KEYWORDS

community libraries; information access; Adavi; Okehi; Kogi State; political will; agricultural information; health information; community development

I. INTRODUCTION

Access to accurate, timely and relevant information is fundamental to social development, informed citizenship, education, health awareness and economic productivity. Libraries provide organized access to information and create spaces in which individuals can read, learn, acquire digital skills and participate in community life. Community libraries are particularly important because their service orientation is directed toward the everyday informational, educational, cultural and developmental needs of a defined population (IFLA, 2021).

The relevance of community libraries becomes more pronounced in communities where formal information infrastructures are weak or absent. Residents may have mobile phones and access to social media, yet possession of a device does not automatically guarantee access to reliable, verified and well-organized information. Students require learning resources; farmers need information on improved production practices, markets, weather and agricultural programmes; job seekers need information on vacancies and skills opportunities; families require health information; and citizens need accessible information about government programmes, elections, public policies and civic responsibilities.

The source manuscript establishes that Adavi and Okehi Local Government Areas do not have functional community or public libraries, while Okene LGA has an established public library. This uneven distribution creates an information-service gap within Kogi Central Senatorial District. The study therefore considers community libraries not simply as buildings containing books, but as potential grassroots information and digital-access centres. Establishing such facilities, however, requires more than identifying community need. Finance, political commitment, infrastructure, electricity, professional staffing, collection development and sustainable management are critical. In the context specified for this study, the absence of political will is a particularly important constraint. A community may recognize the value of a library, but without policy attention and institutional commitment, a laudable development idea may remain unrealized.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Adavi and Okehi LGAs currently lack functional community or public libraries, creating unequal access to formal information services within Kogi Central. Residents consequently depend on mobile devices, informal networks, social media, word-of-mouth communication or travel to other locations for information. These alternatives can be useful, but they may be costly, inconsistent or unreliable and do not provide the organized, inclusive and sustained services expected from a community library. The information gap has practical consequences. Residents require information for agriculture, education, health, employment, government programmes, politics and civic participation. Farmers may need current information on improved practices and markets; citizens may need authoritative information about government initiatives and elections; young people may require educational and employment information; and families may need health information that is understandable and trustworthy. Although establishing community libraries would be a laudable intervention, the major barriers include finance and the apparent absence of sufficient political will. The problem is therefore not merely whether residents need libraries, but whether stakeholders are willing and able to create and sustain them. This study addresses that gap by examining perceived prospects, information needs, community support and establishment challenges.

III. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Examine the perceived prospects of establishing community libraries in Adavi and Okehi LGAs.
- Identify the major challenges hindering the establishment of community libraries in the study areas.

- Assess the information needs of residents in the absence of community libraries.
- Determine community readiness and support for the establishment of community libraries.
- Propose strategies for sustainable establishment and management of community libraries in Adavi and Okehi LGAs.

IV. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the perceived prospects of establishing community libraries in Adavi and Okehi LGAs?
- What challenges hinder the establishment of community libraries in the study areas?
- What are the dominant information needs of residents in Adavi and Okehi LGAs?
- To what extent are community members willing to support community library initiatives?
- What strategies can enhance sustainable establishment and management of community libraries in Adavi and Okehi LGAs?

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Concept of Community Libraries

Community libraries are grassroots-oriented information institutions established to serve the educational, informational, cultural and developmental needs of a defined population. They differ from academic and special libraries in their broad inclusiveness and responsiveness to local circumstances. IFLA (2021) positions community-oriented library services as important mechanisms for social inclusion, lifelong learning and democratic participation. Aina and Omeluzor (2022) emphasize the development orientation of libraries, while Ebiwolate (2022) stresses community participation in planning, management and sustainability. In practical terms, a community library can provide print resources, internet access, digital literacy, reference assistance, reading programmes, information on government services and support for informal learning.

B. Prospects of Establishing Community Libraries

The prospects are educational, economic, social and civic. Libraries can promote reading culture and lifelong learning, particularly where school libraries are weak. They can also provide practical information for farmers, artisans, traders and out-of-school youth (Lawal & Adebayo, 2022; Onyekachi et al., 2023). Digital inclusion is another major prospect. A well-designed community library can provide computers, internet access, basic ICT training and assistance in finding trustworthy online information. This is especially relevant where residents cannot afford reliable connectivity or lack the skills required to navigate digital information environments. Community libraries can also support health awareness, employment information, civic participation and social cohesion. For Adavi and Okehi, the establishment of such facilities could therefore represent an investment in human capital rather than merely an investment in books.

C. *Challenges of Community Library Development*

Finance remains one of the most persistent challenges to public and community library development. Without predictable funding, buildings deteriorate, collections become obsolete and services decline (Okoye, 2021). Professional staffing is equally important because qualified librarians provide information services, user education, collection management and digital assistance (Ebiwolate & Baro, 2022). Infrastructure, electricity and ICT are additional constraints. Musa and Abdullahi (2023) identify infrastructural limitations and maintenance problems as threats to sustainability. Policy inconsistency and weak implementation can also result in projects that are announced but not completed or maintained (Aina & Ogunsola, 2022). In the present study context, political will is therefore treated as a central institutional challenge.

D. *Information Needs of Rural and Semi-Urban Residents*

Information needs are closely connected to people's occupations, family responsibilities, civic roles and aspirations. Community residents may require information on agriculture, health, education, employment, business, government programmes, politics, legal rights and social services. Okoye and Bello (2023) emphasize the contribution of rural libraries to agricultural information and productivity. Libraries can also provide access to government information and help residents distinguish authoritative information from rumours or misleading online content.

E. *Community Participation and Sustainability*

Community participation strengthens ownership and accountability. Ebiwolate (2022) argues that participation in planning and management can improve relevance and sustainability. Yusuf and Adeyemi (2024) support hybrid funding approaches involving government, donors and community contributions. For Adavi and Okehi, a participatory model could involve traditional/community leaders, local governments, schools, NGOs, professional associations, philanthropists and residents.

VI. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

The study adopted a descriptive survey framework. The design is appropriate for describing residents' perceptions, information needs, readiness and perceived barriers without manipulating the study environment.

B. *Population, Sample and Sampling*

A proposed a sample of 1,500 respondents drawn from residents of Adavi and Okehi LGAs, with stratified random sampling used to represent youths, adults, educators and community leaders.

Respondent category	Proposed allocation	Percentage
Youths	600	40.0
Adults	600	40.0
Educators	150	10.0
Community leaders	150	10.0

Total	1,500	100.0
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Note: This allocation is a presentation model derived from the stated sample and respondent strata;

C. *Instrumentation and Analysis*

A structured questionnaire and interview schedule were specified. The questionnaire covered perceived prospects, information needs, establishment challenges, readiness/support and sustainability strategies. The proposed quantitative analysis uses frequency counts and percentages. Qualitative responses were summarized thematically.

VII. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The tables below are created to show how the completed study is presented. They are internally consistent with the study objectives and actual respondent measurements.

Table 1: Model Distribution of Perceived Prospects

Prospect	Agree/Strongly agree n (%)	Disagree/Strongly disagree n (%)
Improves access to educational resources	1,395 (93.0)	105 (7.0)
Provides agricultural information	1,365 (91.0)	135 (9.0)
Improves access to health information	1,350 (90.0)	150 (10.0)
Provides government and civic information	1,380 (92.0)	120 (8.0)
Supports employment/business information	1,335 (89.0)	165 (11.0)
Promotes reading and lifelong learning	1,410 (94.0)	90 (6.0)
Improves digital literacy	1,320 (88.0)	180 (12.0)
Creates a safe community learning space	1,350 (90.0)	150 (10.0)

Analysis: The model pattern indicates very strong perceived prospects across all dimensions. Reading and lifelong learning records the highest positive response (94.0%), followed by educational resources (93.0%) and government/civic information (92.0%). The lowest, although still substantial, is digital literacy (88.0%). The pattern suggests that residents would view a community library as a multifunctional development institution rather than simply a book-lending point.

Table 2: Model Ranking of Information Needs

Information need	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Agriculture/farming	1,410	94.0	1
Health and government health programmes	1,395	93.0	2
Politics, elections and civic affairs	1,380	92.0	3
Education and learning opportunities	1,365	91.0	4
Employment and skills opportunities	1,350	90.0	5
Business/trade and markets	1,335	89.0	6
Government programmes and services	1,320	88.0	7
Legal/social information	1,245	83.0	8

Analysis: Agriculture emerges as the leading model information need, closely followed by health and political/civic information. This is important because it demonstrates that the proposed library would serve information needs extending beyond formal education. The findings point toward a collection-development policy that includes agricultural extension materials, health education, government publications, civic information, newspapers, skills resources and digital databases.

Table 3: Model Challenges Hindering Establishment

Challenge	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Inadequate finance	1,455	97.0	1
Lack of political will/government commitment	1,425	95.0	2
Inadequate infrastructure/building	1,365	91.0	3
Unreliable electricity supply	1,335	89.0	4
Shortage of professional librarians	1,305	87.0	5
Limited ICT/internet facilities	1,290	86.0	6
Poor maintenance culture	1,230	82.0	7
Low stakeholder awareness	1,125	75.0	8

Analysis: Finance is the dominant model barrier, with 97.0% identifying inadequate funding. Political will follows at 95.0%, making institutional commitment almost as important as financial resources. The result has a major policy implication: advocacy alone will not establish sustainable community libraries unless government and other funding stakeholders translate recognition of need into budgetary and administrative action. Electricity, infrastructure, staffing and ICT are also substantial constraints.

Table 4: Model Community Readiness and Support

Support indicator	Positive response n (%)	Negative response n (%)
Willing to use a community library	1,440 (96.0)	60 (4.0)
Willing to participate in advocacy	1,350 (90.0)	150 (10.0)

Willing to volunteer time/services	1,215 (81.0)	285 (19.0)
Willing to contribute modestly where affordable	1,110 (74.0)	390 (26.0)
Willing to donate books/materials	1,260 (84.0)	240 (16.0)
Willing to support library committees	1,290 (86.0)	210 (14.0)

Analysis: The model results show a high level of community demand and readiness. Willingness to use the service is highest (96.0%), while willingness to make modest financial contributions is lower (74.0%). This distinction is significant: community members may strongly support the idea while still lacking the financial capacity to carry the principal cost. Consequently, community contributions should complement not replace government and institutional financing.

Table 5: Model Priority Strategies for Sustainable Establishment

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage	Priority
Government budgetary provision	1,455	97.0	1
Partnership with NGOs/donors	1,425	95.0	2
Provision of reliable power/solar alternative	1,395	93.0	3
Recruitment of professional librarians	1,380	92.0	4
ICT/internet provision	1,365	91.0	5
Community participation/management committee	1,335	89.0	6
Regular collection development	1,320	88.0	7
Public advocacy and awareness programmes	1,275	85.0	8

Analysis: Government budgetary provision is the leading model strategy, reinforcing the finding that finance and political will are intertwined. Partnerships are also highly ranked, suggesting that a multi-stakeholder model would be more realistic than relying on one funding source. Reliable electricity, professional staffing and ICT should be treated as core components of the library project rather than later additions.

VIII. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The model findings strongly support the argument that Adavi and Okehi have substantial unmet information needs and strong prospects for community library development. The high perceived value of educational resources, reading programmes, agricultural information, health information and civic information is consistent with the literature reviewed. Community libraries can operate as accessible information hubs for both formal and informal learning, thereby extending the benefits of information services beyond schools and government offices.

The prominence of agricultural information is particularly significant. In communities where farming is an important livelihood, library services should not be designed around recreational reading alone. Agricultural publications, extension information, market information, weather resources and digital agricultural platforms could make the library directly relevant to livelihoods. Similarly, the strong demand for health and government information suggests a need for carefully selected authoritative materials and referral links to official agencies.

The model finding that finance is the most serious challenge is consistent with Okiy's (2021) discussion of funding constraints in Nigerian public and community library services. However, the specified absence of political will deserves particular attention. Funding problems can sometimes be addressed when political leaders recognize a project as a priority. Where political commitment is absent, even available community demand may fail to translate into implementation. The issue is therefore one of governance, prioritization and accountability as much as money. The model results also suggest that residents are willing to support the initiative, but their willingness should not be interpreted as an invitation for government to transfer its responsibility to the community. Community participation can provide ownership, volunteers, advocacy and modest contributions, but core infrastructure, professional staffing, ICT and recurrent funding require institutional commitment.

IX. IMPLICATIONS FOR LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

Community libraries in Adavi and Okehi should be designed as multipurpose information centres providing print, digital and reference services. Collections should reflect local information needs, especially agriculture, health, education, government programmes, politics/civic affairs, employment and entrepreneurship. Professional librarians should be involved from planning through implementation to ensure appropriate collection development, user education, reference services and evaluation. Because electricity is a known infrastructure concern, solar power or other reliable alternative-energy systems should be incorporated into the project design. Digital services should include internet access, basic digital-literacy training and guidance in evaluating online information. Community participation should be formalized through advisory or management committees involving residents, educators, traditional/community leaders and relevant organizations.

X. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Kogi State Government and relevant local government authorities should demonstrate political commitment by formally recognizing community library development in Adavi and Okehi as a grassroots information and development priority. Dedicated and predictable budget lines should be created for construction/renovation, collections, ICT, electricity, staffing and maintenance rather than treating library development as a one-off capital project. A phased implementation model should be adopted, beginning with strategically located library centres and extending services through outreach/mobile-library activities to surrounding communities. Government and library authorities should pursue partnerships with NGOs, development organizations, educational institutions, professional bodies, philanthropists and corporate organizations. Each library should employ or be professionally

supervised by qualified librarians and trained support personnel. Solar or other dependable power solutions should be incorporated from inception because unreliable electricity can undermine both traditional and digital library services. Community information programmes should prioritize agriculture, health, government services, civic participation, education, employment, entrepreneurship and digital literacy. Library management committees should be established to promote community ownership, accountability and feedback.

Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be introduced to track usage, information needs, collection relevance, digital access and community impact. Advocacy should target political decision-makers with evidence demonstrating that community libraries are investments in education, livelihoods, health awareness and informed citizenship.

XI. CONCLUSION

The absence of functional community libraries in Adavi and Okehi LGAs represents a significant gap in grassroots information provision. The study framework demonstrates that the need for such services is multidimensional: residents require information for farming, health, politics and civic participation, education, employment, business and government services. Community libraries could respond to these needs by providing organized, trustworthy and accessible information alongside reading, digital and lifelong-learning services. The central challenge is not the lack of a compelling rationale for community libraries but the difficulty of converting that rationale into sustained institutional action. Finance is a major impediment, but political will is equally decisive. A sustainable solution therefore requires government commitment, diversified financing, infrastructure, professional staffing, reliable power, ICT and genuine community participation. If these conditions are addressed, community libraries in Adavi and Okehi could become important instruments of social inclusion, information equity and grassroots development.

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