

Evaluation of Public Library Services towards the Education of People with Special Needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the library services provided to people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States public libraries. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 98 professional and para-professional staff of the public libraries studied. The entire population was involved in the study. A structured questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequencies and percentages were used to analyse objectives one, two and six while research questions three-five were analysed with mean and standard deviation. Findings of the study revealed that: the people with special needs that make use of the public libraries are: the physically challenged, visually impaired, and the hearing impaired; the resources provided are mainly for those with visual impairment; generally, the services are provided at a low level; there is also low level of outreach initiatives by public libraries for the education of people with special needs; most assistive technologies are not provided to a high level in the libraries studied among others. Based on the findings, the researchers recommend that: the public library should collaborate with stakeholders such as: local disability organizations, support groups, and advocacy agencies for awareness in their various groups and advocacy to ensure that effective services are provided for the education of people with special needs, and there should be adequate provision of assistive technologies to people with special needs among others.

KEYWORDS

- Public libraries
- Library resources
- Assistive technologies
- Special needs

Introduction

Public library is a library that is open to the general public and provides access to a wide range of materials, including books, magazines, newspapers, DVD's, and electronic resources. According to Stipanor (2017), public libraries are libraries which serve the population of a community or region, providing information for all classes of persons irrespective of status. In the opinion of Nwalo (2018), public library is primarily set up to acquire, organize, store and make accessible to users, within the

quickest possible time all forms of information materials they require. They are typically funded by states/local governments and offer free services to their users. Public libraries make significant contribution in providing services and resources to individuals with special needs, ensuring equal access to education and information. These libraries offer a range of services tailored to meet the unique needs of people with disabilities, promoting their educational development and inclusion in society. One of the primary services provided by public libraries is the provision of accessible materials. Libraries often offer a wide variety of formats, such as large print books, audio books, e-books, and braille materials, to cater to individuals with visual impairments. These resources enable people with special needs to access educational content and participate in learning activities. However, it is important to note that people with special needs may include those with physical disabilities, visual and hearing impairments, intellectual disabilities, and mental health conditions.

Disability is a condition that is linked with the discrimination of people having sensory, physical and cognitive impairments (Farooq and Manzoor, 2021 citing Goodly et al.; Oliver and Barnes, 2012). Goodley cited in Farooq and Manzoor (2021:3) posited that 'disability becomes recognized when impairments interact with their environment'. Iroanusi (2019) observed that the Act of National Policy on Disability in Nigeria (NPDN) prohibits all forms of discrimination against persons with disability. Public libraries also offer assistive technologies to enhance the educational experience for individuals with disabilities. Adaptive technologies according to Lipson (2022) refer to special versions of already existing technologies or tools that provide enhancements or different ways of interacting with the technology by the physically challenged. It is an item that is specifically designed for persons with disabilities; devices which would seldom be used by non-disabled persons. These technologies include screen readers, text-to-speech software, magnification tools, and adaptive keyboards, among others. By providing access to these assistive technologies, libraries empower people with special needs to engage with educational materials and overcome barriers to learning.

Public libraries frequently organize specialized programs and events for individuals with special needs. According to the American Library Association (2020), public libraries are instrumental in fostering inclusive environments that support diverse populations, including individuals with disabilities. Libraries offer various programs and services tailored to enhance access to information, such as adaptive technologies, specialized collections, and community outreach initiatives. These initiatives aim to create a welcoming and inclusive environment where individuals can learn, socialize, and develop their skills. In addition to these services, public libraries often collaborate with local schools, organizations, and support groups to ensure that the educational needs of people with special needs are met. They may provide resources and support to education and caregivers, offer training sessions on inclusive teaching practices, and host workshops on disability awareness. Despite the importance of the public libraries in the education of people with special needs, there are factors that militate against its effectiveness. These include inadequate funding of public libraries, lack of recognition of public libraries as agents in education of people with special need, lack of skills to use assistive technologies provided among others.

Despite efforts to promote accessibility and inclusiveness in public libraries, there is a lack of understanding and evaluation regarding the efficacy and effectiveness of library services in catering for the educational needs of individuals with special needs. This lack of evaluation may lead to inadequate support and resources for the population,

hindering their ability to access and benefit from library services. According to a study by Afolabi and Oduwole (2021), individuals with disabilities often face discrimination and exclusion from community activities, including library programmes. This social barrier can discourage individuals from utilizing library services, even when they are available. This knowledge gap hinders the development of targeted strategies and interventions to ensure equitable access to educational resources and services, ultimately impeding the overall educational outcomes and opportunities for people with special needs. Thus; there is a pressing need to critically evaluate the existing public library services in the Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria; their alignment with the educational requirements of individuals with special needs and their potentials to enhance inclusive educational practices. This research was conducted to address this gap, provide evidence-based recommendations for improvement, and contribute to the advancement of inclusive education for individuals with special needs in Anambra and Imo States.

Objectives of the Study

The general purpose of this study is the evaluation of public library services towards the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Identify the people with special needs that use public libraries in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria.
2. Assess the range of resources available in the public libraries to cater for people with special needs.
3. Examine the types of services provided to people with special needs in the public libraries.
4. Investigate the outreach initiatives employed by public libraries in the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria.
5. Find out the assistive technologies provided for people with special needs.
6. Identify the challenges faced by public libraries in serving people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria.

Literature Review

Public libraries are essential part of the educational system; providing access to information and resources to all members of the community including people with special needs. They serve as a hub for learning, discovery and cultural enrichment. People with special needs have disabilities or conditions that may affect their physical, cognitive, or emotional abilities. They are people that are in a state that restricts their ability to function physically, mentally or socially. This includes but is not limited to individuals with autism spectrum disorder, visual or hearing impairments, learning disabilities, and mobility limitations. Ananya (2013) identified those with physical challenges to include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others, hence, their need for special attention. The common disabilities include blindness, deafness, deformity, loss of limbs, mental illness, mental retardation, muscular nervous and sensory disorders. Udo-Anyanwu (2022) broadly categorized them into four, namely: physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment and mental retardation.

Disability can be defined as a physical or mental condition that in some way prohibits an individual from performing daily tasks (Chaputula and Mapulanga, 2017 citing Todaro, 2005). Disabilities include autism, hearing difficulties and deafness, speech and language disorders, limited vision and blindness. People with special needs are a worldwide concern, public libraries work as service organizations which facilitate all their users without discrimination including person with special needs. In Nigeria, people with special needs face significant challenges in addressing education and other essential services. According to the World Health Organization (2020), in 2018, about 29 million of the 195 million people who comprise Nigeria's national population were living with a disability. and many of them face discrimination and exclusion from the society. Public libraries can play significant roles in addressing these challenges by providing access to information and resources that can help people with special needs to learn and develop their skills.

Idoko (2024) on National Policy on Education (NPE) (revised 2004) emphasized inclusive education by promoting equal access to education for all individuals, irrespective of their disabilities. The discrimination against persons with disabilities (Prohibition, Act 2018) is a crucial legislation that aims to protect the rights of individuals with disabilities. However, people with special needs face challenges in accessing library services due to physical, sensory, or cognitive, disabilities. Some challenges include accessibility to physical structures, formats, web-pages, materials, exclusion in employment/programs, social relationships, public misconceptions around disabilities, lack of support services, stigmatization, societal abuse, poor health care services delivery, unavailability of education training, isolation etc. Public libraries can become more inclusive and accessible to people with special needs, ensuring that everyone has equal access to the resources and services they provide.

The persons with special needs are actively participating in all spheres of life and as result of United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), many initiatives have been taken to provide accessible learning environment to individuals with special needs. The United Nations Organization (UNO, 2006) states that persons with special needs should live independently and contribute fully to all facts of life. Some researches have been conducted on library services to people with special needs. Mamafha, Ngulube, Dube and Ngubane (2023) examined availability and use of assistive technologies at selected South African public libraries. The findings of the study point towards inadequate availability of computers with internet services, audiotapes, screen magnifying and reading software, and these were used for, among others, leisure, research, job searching and communication.

A study was conducted by Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) on the provision of library services to people with disabilities in Malawi. The result of the study revealed that lack of equipment to support disabled access to library and information resources, despite an increase in the number of people with disabilities, majority of the libraries do not offer specialized training such as induction sessions or market services that cater for those with disabilities.

The study of Khasseh, Rahimi-Yamchi, Azimi, Ghazizadeh, and Alipour (2020) evaluated the status of East Azerbaijan Public Libraries' services to the users with disabilities. Findings revealed that most of the public libraries in East Azerbaijan province (56.9%) lack sufficient budget for serving the disabled. There is no established policy to provide services to the users with disabilities in libraries. Most of

library buildings (51.6%) do not have favourable conditions for serving the disabled. Based on the managers' comments, most of the libraries lack the information resources and facilities for the disabled. Generally, the results of this research show that information services for the disabled are poor in East Azerbaijan public libraries. They stressed on the importance of providing special facilities such as free transportation for greater access to library resources and services and to design the map of the library building in Braille to use all parts of the library, and to employ specialized and trained staff to provide services to people with disabilities.

Majinge and Msoney (2020) conducted research on the integration of special needs for people living with disabilities into Tanzania's LIS curriculum. The study used five institutions in three administrative regions of Dar es Salaam, Morogoro, and Pwani for participants. The study found that special needs in the LIS programme are integrated at one university as an elective but not covered as a core subject. As well the integration of special needs into LIS curriculum is important in improving library services. Igbinala, Sanni, Olatunde and Oyebanji (2024) in their study on relevance of public libraries on people with disabilities in Osun State, Nigeria discovered that libraries that organize inclusive events have seen positive engagement from individuals with disabilities, fostering a sense of belonging and community and recommended that libraries should engage in community outreach efforts to raise awareness about the services available for individuals with disabilities. Advocacy campaigns can help combat social stigma and promote the importance of inclusivity in library services.

Adetoro (2014) conducted a research titled: "information provision to the visually impaired in alternative formats in Nigeria: Are public libraries up to the task?". The result revealed that alternative formats availability were inadequate and, e-resources were not available while access to formats and information desired by the users were limited. Bashir, *et al* (2017) conducted research on library resources for persons with special needs. The study used survey method. The findings revealed that ramps and elevators were available, directional signs in large print, book call numbers converted into Braille for blind students and telecommunication devices had not been provided to the deaf persons in the libraries.

Okechukwu (2024) examined the availability and utilization of adaptive technologies by the physically challenged students in special education centres in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria. The findings revealed that the proportion of available adaptive technologies for the physically challenged students in special education centres is not significant; the proportion of available adaptive technologies utilized by physically challenged students in special education centres is not significant and the mean response score on the extent of utilization of adaptive technologies by physically challenged persons is at a low extent.

Methodology

This study adopted survey research design to gather data on the evaluation of public library services towards the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria. A total population of this study was 98 professional and para-professional library staff comprising 66 library staff in Prof. Kenneth Dike Anambra State Library Board and 32 library staff in Imo State Library Board both in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. Total enumeration was used to include the entire population in the study. Instrument for data collection was a Likert type questionnaire designed on a four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly

Disagree (1) for research questions three to five while research questions one, two and six were addressed with multiple choice questions. Out of 98 copies of questionnaire distributed to the library staff of the public libraries, a total of 72copies were returned showing 73% return rate. The data obtained from the respondents were analyzed using percentages for research questions one, two and six while mean and standard deviations were used for research questions three to five. The decision rule is: 3.26 – 4.00 = Very High, 2.51 – 3.25 = High, 1.76 – 2.50 = Low and 1.00 – 1.75 = Very Low.

Results

Table 1: The People with Special Needs that Use the Public Libraries in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. N=72

| S/N | people with special needs that use the public libraries | Frequencies | % |
|-----|---|-------------|------|
| 1 | Visually impaired individuals | 68 | 94% |
| 2 | Individuals with hearing impairments | 64 | 89% |
| 3 | Physically challenged individuals | 72 | 100% |
| 4 | Individuals with learning disabilities | 09 | 13% |
| 5 | Individuals with mental health conditions | - | 0 |

Analyses in Table 1 reveals that the types of people with special needs that make use of the public libraries studied are mainly the physically challenged individuals (100%), the visually impaired individuals (94%), and individuals with hearing impairments (89%). It is clear from the results that individuals with mental health conditions do not use the use the public libraries studied at all. This is shown by the 0% score. Also individuals with learning disabilities sparingly use the public libraries as shown by the high percentage of 87. It can be deduced that main people with special needs make use of public libraries in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria are: the physically challenged individuals, the visually impaired, and the hearing impaired.

Table 2: Resources Available in Public Libraries to Cater for People with Special Needs N=72

| S/N | Range of resources available in public libraries | Frequencies | % |
|-----|---|-------------|------|
| 1 | Collections of large printed books in larger fonts to accommodate individuals with visual impairments | 72 | 100% |
| 2 | Varieties of audiobooks for people with visual impairments or reading difficulties | 45 | 63% |
| 3 | Collections of braille materials for blind or low vision of individuals | 72 | 100% |

| | | | |
|----|---|----|-----|
| 4 | Collections of accessible digital resources | - | - |
| 5 | Specialized collections focusing on topics related to disabilities, mental health, or specific conditions | 10 | 14% |
| 6 | Sensory-Friendly spaces for individuals with sensory processing disorders or autism | - | - |
| 7 | Provision of personalized accommodations | 38 | 53% |
| 8. | Creation of accessible facilities services for individuals with special needs like ramps, elevators, accessible restrooms and designated parking spaces | 26 | 36% |

In Table 2, data analyses showed that libraries in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria provide some resources to people with special needs. Items 1, 2, 3 and 7 are provided to a high level as shown by their percentages which are 100, 63, 100 and 53 respectively while items 4, 5, 6 and 8 are not adequately provided. A cursory look at the resources available indicates that they mainly cater for those with visual impairment.

Table 3: Types of Services Provided to People with Special Needs in Public Libraries in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria. N=72

| S/N | Types of services provided to people with special needs in public libraries | SA (4) | A (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Mean | Std | Rem. |
|-----|--|-----------|----------|----------|----------|------|------|-----------|
| 1 | Provision of sign language interpretation for library programs and events | 10 40 | 12 36 | 26 52 | 24 24 | 2.11 | 2.37 | Low |
| 2 | Sensory-friendly programming for people with autism or other sensory processing disorders | - | - | 30 60 | 42 42 | 1.42 | 3.11 | Very Low |
| 3 | Library staff are to provide personalized assistance to find materials, navigating the library, and using technology | 30 120 | 24 72 | 10 20 | 08 08 | 3.06 | 2.50 | High |
| 4 | Home services delivery for people unable to visit the library due to mobility challenges or severe disabilities | - | 12 36 | 38 76 | 22 22 | 1.86 | 2.58 | Low |
| 5 | Specialized training such as induction sessions | 18 72 | 12 36 | 20 40 | 22 22 | 2.36 | 2.25 | Low |
| 6 | Marketing services that cater for those with disabilities. | 6 24 | 8 24 | 32 64 | 26 26 | 1.92 | 2.52 | Low |
| 7 | Organizing exhibitions, cultural shows, film shows: | 08 32 | 18 54 | 22 44 | 24 24 | 2.14 | 2.35 | Low |
| 8 | Readers' advisory services | 40 160 | 24 72 | 08 16 | - | 3.44 | 2.92 | Very High |
| 9 | Speech drills | 12 | 10 | 32 | 18 | 2.22 | 2.31 | Low |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|---|----|----|----|----|-------------|------|------------|
| | | 48 | 30 | 64 | 18 | | | |
| 10. | Organizing group activities according to mental age | 18 | 24 | 24 | 06 | 2.75 | 2.29 | High |
| | | 72 | 72 | 48 | 06 | | | |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | 2.33 | | Low |

The grand mean of 2.33 indicates that generally, the services are provided at a low level. Furthermore, it is clear from the analyses in Table 3 that only readers' advisory services are provided at a very high level; those provided at high levels are: personalized assistance to find materials, navigating the library, and using technology (3.06), and organizing group activities according to mental age (2.75). The other services are provided at a low level with the exception Sensory-friendly programming for people with autism or other sensory processing disorders that is at a very low level.

Table 4: Outreach Initiatives Employed by Public Libraries in the Education of People with Special Needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. N=72

| S/N | Outreach initiatives employed by public libraries | SA (4) | A (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Mean | Std | Rem. |
|-------------------|---|-----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|------|------------|
| 1 | Public libraries invest in staff training to enhance their understanding of disabilities, and develop inclusive practices | 18 72 | 24 72 | 22 44 | 08 08 | 2.72 | 2.28 | High |
| 2 | Public libraries often form partnerships with local disability organizations, support groups, and advocacy agencies | 8 32 | 12 36 | 28 56 | 24 24 | 2.06 | 2.40 | Low |
| 3 | Outreach to special education institutions | 30 120 | 22 66 | 14 28 | 16 16 | 3.19 | 2.63 | High |
| 4 | Inclusive programming for people with special needs | 18 72 | 22 66 | 24 48 | 08 08 | 2.69 | 2.27 | High |
| 5 | Public libraries curate specialized collections of books, and other resources | 21 84 | 20 60 | 25 50 | 06 06 | 2.78 | 2.31 | High |
| 6 | Collections of a range of adaptive technologies and assistive devices to support people with special needs | 12 48 | 16 48 | 24 48 | 20 20 | 2.28 | 2.28 | Low |
| 7 | Public libraries organize sensory-friendly programs to cater for people with sensory disorders | 6 24 | 10 30 | 28 56 | 28 28 | 1.92 | 2.68 | Low |
| 8 | Organization of community or inclusive programs or events that cater for people with special needs | 06 24 | 10 30 | 38 76 | 18 18 | 2.06 | 2.45 | Low |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | 2.46 | | Low |

Generally, the grand mean score of 2.46 shows that there is low level of outreach initiatives by public libraries for the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria. It is further observed from analyses in Table 4 that the outreach

initiatives employed by public libraries in the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria in the order of ranking include: Outreach to special education institutions (3.19), Public libraries curate specialized collections of books, and other resources (2.78), they invest in staff training to enhance their understanding of disabilities, develop inclusive practices (2.72) and inclusive programming for people with special needs (2.69). However, the respondents disagreed with outreach initiatives such as: Collections of a range of adaptive technologies and assistive devices to support people with special needs (2.28), Public libraries often form partnerships with local disability organizations, support groups, and advocacy agencies (2.06), organization of community or inclusive programs or events that cater for people with special needs (2.06) and Public libraries organize sensory-friendly programmes to cater for people with sensory disorders (1.92).

Table 5: Assistive Technologies Provided for People with Special Needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria.

N=72

| S/N | assistive technologies provided for people with special needs | SA (4) | A (3) | D (2) | SD (1) | Mean | Std | Rem . |
|-------------------|---|--------|-------|-------|--------|------------|------|------------|
| 1 | Screen readers software applications | 08 | 06 | 32 | 26 | 1.94 | 2.50 | Low |
| 2 | Braille displays devices | 32 | 18 | 64 | 26 | 2.69 | 2.27 | High |
| | | 18 | 24 | 20 | 10 | | | |
| | | 72 | 72 | 40 | 10 | | | |
| 3 | Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices | - | - | 18 | 54 | 1.25 | 3.35 | Very Low |
| | | | | 36 | 54 | | | |
| 4 | Wheelchairs and mobility aids | 21 | 18 | 24 | 11 | 2.74 | 2.29 | High |
| | | 84 | 54 | 48 | 11 | | | |
| 5 | Hearing aids | 24 | 26 | 10 | 12 | 2.86 | 3.77 | High |
| | | 96 | 78 | 20 | 12 | | | |
| 6 | Closed captioning and subtitles | - | 12 | 32 | 28 | 1.78 | 2.66 | Low |
| | | | 36 | 64 | 28 | | | |
| 7 | Adaptive switches | 12 | 10 | 28 | 22 | 2.17 | 2.33 | Low |
| | | 48 | 30 | 56 | 22 | | | |
| 8 | Text-to-speech software | 18 | 21 | 24 | 09 | 2.67 | 2.26 | High |
| | | 72 | 63 | 48 | 09 | | | |
| 9 | Environmental control systems | 08 | 06 | 28 | 30 | 1.89 | 2.55 | Low |
| | | 32 | 18 | 56 | 30 | | | |
| 10 | Assistive listening devices | 22 | 24 | 18 | 18 | 2.97 | 2.42 | High |
| | | 88 | 72 | 36 | 18 | | | |
| Grand Mean | | | | | | 2.3 | | Low |

The grand mean of 2.3 is low indicating that most assistive technologies are not provided to a high level in the libraries studied. People with special needs require assistive technologies to effectively use library resources. The results on Table 5 reveal that some of these assistive technologies are provided by the public libraries to a high level while others are at a low level. The ones provided at a high level are: Assistive listening devices (2.97), Hearing aids (2.86), Wheelchairs and mobility aids (2.74), Braille displays devices (2.69), and Text-to-speech software (2.67). The ones provided at a low level are: adaptive switches (2.17), Assistive listening devices (1.94),

environmental control systems (1.89), closed captioning and subtitles (1.78), and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices (1.25).

Table 6: Challenges Faced by Public Libraries in Providing Services for the Education of People with Special Needs in Anambra and Imo States Nigeria
N =72

| S/N | Challenges | Frequencies | % |
|-----|------------------------------------|-------------|-----|
| 1 | Inadequate funding | 53 | 74% |
| 2 | Lack of community partnership | 50 | 69% |
| 3 | Inadequate programme and services. | 54 | 75% |
| 4 | Untrained staff | 30 | 42% |
| 5 | Information access restriction | 14 | 19% |
| 6 | Sensory considerations | 12 | 17% |
| 7 | Accessibility to public libraries | 39 | 54% |
| 8 | Lack of awareness | 40 | 56% |

Based on the analyses in Table 6, there is every indication that there are challenges faced by public libraries in providing services for the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. The main ones are: inadequate programmes and services (75%), inadequate funding (74%), lack of community partnership (69%), Accessibility to public libraries (54%) and lack of awareness (56%). The other items were not seen as major challenges faced by public libraries in providing services for the education of people with special needs in the libraries studied.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study revealed that the types of people with special needs that make use of the public libraries studied are the visually impaired individuals, those with hearing impairments and the physically challenged individuals. This finding agrees partly with Udo-Anyanwu (2022) who identified people with special needs that use the library as those with physical disability, visual impairment, hearing impairment and mental retardation. The finding disagrees with those with mental retardation as it was discovered that they do not use the libraries studied.

The resources provided are for mainly those with visual impairment. This finding corroborates that of Adetoro (2014) that alternative formats availability were inadequate and, e-resources were not available while access to formats and information desired by the users were limited. Also the findings of Bashir, *et al* (2017) revealed that ramps and elevators were available, directional signs in large print, book call numbers converted into Braille for blind students and telecommunication devices are provided to the deaf persons in the libraries. The study of Khasseh, Rahimi-Yamchi, Azimi,

Ghazizadeh, and Alipour (2020) discovered that most of the libraries lack the information resources and facilities for the disabled.

The study revealed that the services are provided at a low level. This finding is in tandem with that of Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) who discovered that majority of the libraries do not offer specialized training such as induction sessions or market services that cater for those with disabilities. The study of Khasseh, Rahimi-Yamchi, Azimi, Ghazizadeh, and Alipour (2020) revealed that generally, information services for the disabled are poor in the public libraries studied.

Public libraries in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria are not performing up to expectation in terms of outreach initiatives. This finding does not agree with the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2006), which stated that many initiatives have been taken to provide accessible learning environment to individuals with special needs. Igbinlola, Sanni, Olatunde and Oyeboji (2024) recommended that libraries should engage in community outreach efforts to raise awareness about the services available for individuals with disabilities. Advocacy campaigns can help combat social stigma and promote the importance of inclusivity in library services.

Most assistive technologies are lacking in the libraries studied. The result of Adetoro's (2014) study revealed that alternative formats availability were inadequate and, e-resources were not available while access to formats and information desired by the users were limited. Okechukwu (2024) discovered that the proportion of available adaptive technologies for the physically challenged students in special education centres is not as expected.

It was also discovered in this study that there are challenges faced by public libraries in providing services for the education of people with special needs in Anambra and Imo States, Nigeria. This finding is in line with that of Chaputula and Mapulanga (2017) who identified lack of equipment to support disabled access to library and information resources, as challenge to provision of library services to them. Majinge and Msonye (2020) found that special needs in the LIS programme are integrated at one university as an elective but not covered as a core subject.

Conclusion and Recommendations

People with special needs like other members of the society require information for their daily activities. Their hope lies in the public libraries which are established to cater for all members of the society without bias. However, this study has revealed that both resources and services are provided at a low level thereby hindering access by people special needs. It is imperative to note that if the public library fails in the provision of resources and services especially those that are specialized, it will be difficult to cater for the information needs of people with special needs. Hence, there is need for inclusive services for the library users with special needs. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Awareness should be created by the public library through its public relations unit on the availability of resources and provision of services to people with special needs so as to attract them to the library.
2. Inclusive and innovative services should be provided by public libraries to attract people with special needs to use the library.

3. The public libraries should collaborate with all stakeholders such as: local disability organizations, support groups, and advocacy agencies to ensure that effective services are provided for the education of people with special needs.
4. Non-Governmental Organizations, philanthropists and friends of the library can be appealed to, to provide assistive technologies such as: adaptive switches, assistive listening devices, environmental control systems, closed captioning and subtitles, and Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) devices among others to people with special needs given to poor financial state of public libraries and the high cost of providing them.
5. The government through the Ministries of Education and Information should provide a special fund for the acquisition of information resources and provision of special services to these set of library users. Also there should be a legal provision for their resources to be on open access.

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