

Indices of Access to Information in Nigerian Public Libraries and Citizens' Political Participation

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Abstract:

Political participation spices up democratic societies. It encompasses a wide range of political activities which include voting at elections, contesting elective posts, belonging to a political party, and many more. In Nigeria, after frequent military incursions in politics, democracy has been successfully sustained for about sixteen consecutive years under four general elections. Despite the recorded achievements of this uninterrupted democracy, much is however left to be desired in the actual implementation of the tenets of liberal democracy in relation to citizens' participation. In a democratic context, voting is crucial for a credible outcome of political engagements. It is the means through which the citizens agree to delegate their authority to those who govern them. The experience with citizens' participation in electoral politics in Nigeria has not been encouraging. There has been persistent low voter turnout. Previous studies have linked certain political and socio-cultural constraints to low voter turnout but few studies have been done on its information and library dimension. This study therefore investigates possible relationship between access to information and citizens' participation in politics particularly voter turnout in Nigeria. It used documentary sources to x-ray voter turnout in the 1999, 2003, 2007, and 2011 parliamentary and presidential elections, as well as fourteen (14) out of the thirty six (36) state public libraries in the states/zones/regions in Nigeria focusing on those key indicators of access to information such as outreach programmes services (the number of library branches, availability of information and communications technologies, mobile library services, rural information network, literacy and community information network, and other special services in these libraries. Other variables in the access factor which the work looked into are the human and information resources as well as library/ information policy and legislation.

Findings revealed low voter turnout with only 36% of the voting age population who voted in 2011 and the highest being 55% in 2003. The findings were correlated with that of the public libraries and results revealed the same low developmental trend. It can therefore be true to say that poor state of public libraries in Nigeria has contributed to citizens' low political participation. Recommendations were therefore made (among others) to the effect that the Nigeria government must ensure that the minimum standard required for public libraries to provide effective and efficient services as recommended by IFLA/UNESCO, is adhered to. The recommendation cuts across staff, nature of collection, services, structure, equipments, policy and management.

Key words: Access to information, Indices, Public Libraries, Political participation, Citizens.

Introduction

The development of any political system depends largely on the awareness and political involvement of the citizens in civic and political matters. Nigeria, often described as the giant of African, has been bewildered by a lot of political issues since after she got her independence in 1960. The first ever general election after political independence was in 1964. The elections were fraught with so much sharp practices that the then President, Dr. Nnamdi Azikwe declared in a nationwide broadcast that 'he found it awkward to exercise his constitutional duty of inviting the leader of the winning party to form a new government' (Ekili, 2007), cited by Nwawkwuribe, Nwakodo and Okeagu (2013).

Several other political crises emerged in the years that followed, giving impetus to the military to seize power and run the government between 1966 and 1979 and even after then. Military as it is well known thrives in the use of force to seize power and to rule. Military rule has rightly been described as 'an aberration'; a silencer of the voice of the people; a stifler of human choice and participation. When civilian rule started to return in Nigeria, much needed to be done particularly in the area of politician education. The citizen needed again to have and build faith in the electoral system so much as to participate actively because political education is fundamental to political participation. Dahl (1989) argues that effective participation is a criterion for the perfect democratic process. Since democracy is synonymous with citizens' participation, there is a dire need to create and sustain adequate awareness for citizens' political participation in democratic processes. The best institutions through which citizen can be

empowered information - wise are libraries. Oltmann (2009) observes that many ALA position and policy statements explicitly name the protection and furtherance of democracy as one of the essential, foundational reasons for the existence and continuation of libraries. Both Ditzion (1947) and Shera (1971), in tracing the development of American public libraries, noted the close connection with democracy. The ALA emphasizes that libraries “celebrate and preserve our democratic society by making available the widest possible range of viewpoints, opinions and ideas” In linking intellectual freedom, information access, and democracy, the ALA (2008) argues that, “Intellectual freedom is the basis for our democratic system (Oltmann, 2009). Dahl further asserts that ‘the prosperity for a system to be more democratic is when participation by the people to influence decision making increases’.

The experience with citizens’ political participation in Nigeria, particularly with voter turnout, has not been encouraging. Available statistics indicate low voter turnouts in Nigeria general elections. Previous studies have linked certain political and socio-cultural constraints to the low voter turnout. This ugly scenario has had bad implications for the populace and the overall development of the country. In order to find a holistic remedy for this recurring political decimal in Nigeria political life, all possible areas of influence needed to be explored. This work therefore sets out to investigate the possible link between access to information through Nigeria public libraries and citizens’ participation in politics via voting.

Political participation in Nigeria

Maclosky (1968) cited in Awoleso (2014) defines political participation as ‘voluntary activities shared by members of a society in the selection of their rulers and directly or indirectly involves in the formation of public policies’. Akamare cited in Falade (2014) describes political participation as an aspect of political behaviour which focuses on the way individuals take part in politics. According to Awolowo and Aluko cited in Falade, the essence of political participation is to seek control of power, acquisition of power and to influence decision making. It is clear from this definition that political participation involves the citizens taking part in their political system thereby contributing their quota in the political system and the overall development of the nation. It encompasses a wide range of political activities such as voting, contesting elective post, belonging to a political party, holding public office, attending political rallies, and meetings and so on.

Some of the factors that determine political participation are: cultural, economic, political, religious and educational backgrounds of individuals as well as choice. Also the level of political awareness as well as the measure of confidence in the political process determines the extent to which the citizens participate in the politician system.

The political apathy Nigeria is based on the twin problems of ignorance and deliberate deception by some politicians. The consequence of this is the inability of the masses to have a link between their state of underdevelopment and their non participation in the electoral process (Fabiya, 2010, cited in Falade, 2007). In the light of this, Falade (2007) argues that the Nigeria political culture has not given room for the entrenchment and sustenance of true democracy. Awolowo and Aluko (2010) also decried the low level of political participation of the Nigerian women, describing it as alarming and disturbing.

Voting is one of the easiest ways for citizens to participate in a democratic process. Pitman (2000) describes voting as the most common act of democratic citizenship. Voting is the means through which the citizens agree to delegate their authority to those who govern them. According to the populist theory, when less people are expressing their will (i.e. lower voter turnout) the less accurate the will of the people will be. Therefore voter turnout is vital for the democratic process. In Nigeria politics is seen by a number of people as a dirty game and thus they tend to avoid it. A lot of undemocratic tendencies and uncertainties have known to characterize Nigeria's political system (Falade, 2014). Commenting on the voter apathy of Nigerian citizens during the 2011 general elections, the Independent National electoral Commission (INEC) chairman, Professor Attairu Jega said 'that there exists voter apathy in Nigeria is no longer contentious. He further posits that voter turnout in the just concluded general elections had provided a scientific and empirical evidence of the existence voter apathy and disinterestedness of sections of the electorate in elections. Statistical analysis of the 2011 general elections indicated that only 37% of the voting age population actually voted.

Access to Information

Access to information is a continuing issue in the library and information discipline. It is the basic and fundamental tenet upon which all library policies activities, operations and resources

are built upon. Libraries embody a principle of rights of access to information and acquisition of knowledge by all categories of individuals in a society.

Access to information has been viewed in many ways by many scholars. Jaeger and Burney (2005) define access as ‘the presence of a robust system through which information is made available to citizens. Such a system, according to them, has physical, intellectual and social components and these components affect the availability of information. Other similar formulations of access to information include free dissemination of information, access to information and knowledge resources, freedom of information, freedom of access to information and the right to have access to all expressions of knowledge, creativity and intellectual activity (IFLA, 2007).

Burgman (2000) cited by Oltmann (2009) defines access to information as ‘connectivity to a computer network and the available content itself is in a usable and useful form. Burgman’s definition is rooted in technology. It is pertinent to note technology only mediates individual’s access to information. McCredie and Rice cited in Oltmann (2009) conceive access as knowledge, such knowledge is extracted from artifacts such as books or documents. All these definitions apply for this study because in one way or the other libraries are meant to foster access to information through the provision of information resources in various formats, services as well as creating and expanding the frontiers for access to information.

In a nut shell, access to information as used in this study denotes that libraries especially public libraries are drivers of access to information through the provision of information resources and services. It is assumed that the availability of relevant resources and services in the public libraries are indicators of the public libraries’ creation of access to information to the citizenry.

Public Libraries in Nigeria: A Brief Timeline

Public libraries are service institutions which foster education, culture and information. It is the local centre of information, making all kinds of knowledge and information readily available to users. It is the only type of library that is open to all in the society. According to IFLA 2003, this space provided by public libraries is accessible to all groups of the society, regardless of gender, age, and ethnic affiliation. (Eze et al 2010). UNESCO has had a strong support base for public libraries represented in the promulgation of the Public Library manifestoes of 1945, 1972 and 1994. The manifestoes contained the principles guiding the creation and operation of public

libraries. Commenting on the role which public libraries play in the promotion of access to information, the IFLA/UNESCO Manifesto (1994) states that ‘a public library is an organization established, supported and funded by the community either through local, regional or national government or through some other form of community organization to provide access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a range of resources and services on the basis of equality of access for all regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language, or social status’. It clarifies further that ‘specific services and materials are provided for those users who cannot for whatever reasons, use the regular services and materials for example for linguistic minorities, people with disability or people in hospital or prison’. Akinola(2013) asserts that the basis in the foundation and maintenance of most public libraries is in the provision of access to knowledge in a variety of formats to support formal and informal education.

The IFLA/UNESCO Public Library Manifesto (1994) describes the role of public libraries as: “the local gateway to knowledge, provision of a basic condition for lifelong learning, independent decision-making and cultural development for the individual and social groups” and “the public library as a living force for education, culture and information and as an essential agent for the fostering of peace and spiritual welfare through the minds of men and women.” American Library Association cited in Muhammed (2006) maintained that the public library supplies materials and services to a community in order to support the community’s educational, informational, cultural and recreational needs.

From the above, it becomes crystal clear that public libraries promote access to information to everybody in the society.

- 2) Public libraries’ services are provided free of charge
- 3) They ensure equitable access of information and knowledge
- 4) Public libraries have a key role in collecting, organizing, and exploiting information as well as providing access to a wide range of information resources
- 5) They provide specialized information services tailored to the needs of a remote group of users – special users.

The early development of Nigeria library revealed a continual conflict between two opposing forces on the one hand – the colonial government in Lagos and the British government both resisting the establishment of library for economics and political reasons, and on the other, the Nigeria nationalistic and those colonial civil servants eager to have the establishment of higher educational and library services.

The UNESCO seminar on public library development in Africa, held in Ibadan Nigeria in 1953 gave stimulus to Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe’s quest for library services in Nigeria. It was the first

international conference or seminar on library ever held in Africa. The seminar decried the absence of library legislation in most African countries and consequently, a call was made on African governments to set up public library boards. It emphasized that only legislation can empower the appropriate authorities to provide financial support and efficient administration according to a national standard (UNESCO cited in Akinola 2013).

The reception of the institution of public libraries by both the government and general public was enthusiastic. It was presented as a remedy to existing educational problems and as a tool in the process of national development as with the developed nations where the idea of public libraries originated.

The UNESCO seminar prompted the establishment of the regional libraries in Nigeria. In the western region, the reading rooms which were set up as a result of the war were handy. The Western Regional Library was started in 1954. This was the same time the regional government launched free primary education. The library was to serve as means of producing continuing education for those who may not be able to get into secondary schools after primary school. Other aspects of public library development in the region were the establishment of local government council libraries, departmental libraries, mobile library service. The library recorded little effort beside there was never a coordinating body like a library board. The Northern Nigeria was exposed to library so long before the colonial times. The existence of Islamic scholars and the Arabic collections that had existed in various part of the North (Ogonsheye 1970, cited in Aguolu and Aguolu 2002), the establishment of reading rooms as a result of the Second World War, all gave impetus to early library development in the North. It was in August 1952 that the Northern regional library was up.

The Eastern Regional Library Board with headquarters at Enugu was the first library Board in Nigeria, The then Eastern regional government enacted a law to that effect.

In fact all the regions in the country operated regional libraries until 1967 to date where the state structure in Nigeria was started (Ojo-Igbinoba1993). Public or state library boards have now been established in all states of the federation.

Access to Information indicators in Public Libraries

These indicators are the services, facilities, manpower, guidelines or policies which ought to be on ground in public libraries which will serve as pointers and the bases for adequate access to information.

1) Services

One way of measuring level of access to information in public libraries is the quality, quantity and relevance of services provided to the citizenry. According to UNESCO/IFLA manifesto, the services of public libraries are provided on the basis of equality of access for all, regardless of age, race, sex, religion, nationality, language, or social status. Specific services and materials must also be provided for those users who cannot, for whatever reasons, use the regular services and materials, for example, linguistic minorities, people with disabilities or people in hospital or prisons. The services must be presented in all types of appropriate media and must be relevant to local needs and conditions. Eze (2010) also observes that in this 21st century a modern definition of public libraries has emerged which reflect the impact of new technologies.

These services include:

- ✓ Community information centre services
- ✓ Extension and outreach services (mobile library, etc)
- ✓ Reference services
- ✓ Loan/ Inter library loan services
- ✓ Internet services
- ✓ Audio Visual services
- ✓ Services to special group
- ✓ Packaging and repackaging of information services
- ✓ Program of adult and fundamental education and so on.

2) Access: Access to information in public libraries will be measured by the level of access of the library materials, services, personnel, building. It also includes distance and the affordability of the services by the users. Some of the performance indicators are:

- ✓ Divisional libraries
- ✓ The Public Library Network

- ✓ Library opening hours
- ✓ Organization of materials
- ✓ Cost of service (must be free of charge)
- ✓ Varieties of formats of information

While showcasing the high level of access of their library, the Buckinghamshire County library, stated in their Library Service Customer Chartered, that their Network of 27 libraries and six mobile libraries means that 99% of households are within one mile of their library service. Akinola et al (2013) also opine that providing access to knowledge in a variety of formats to support formal and informal education has been the basis in the foundation and maintenance of most public libraries and remains the core purpose of the public library.

3) Manpower:

Personnel in libraries are sine qua non for the success of such libraries. The Librarian for instance, is an active intermediary between users and resources. Professional and continuing education of the Librarian is indispensable to ensure adequate services (IFLA/ UNESCO Public Library Manifesto).

According to the Finnish Library Decree (1070/998) of 1998, the qualification required from the person responsible for the library and information services in a municipality shall be a higher university degree which includes, or has been supplemented with, a minimum of 35 credits of library and information studies. The decree also provided for a higher number of professionals than Para and non professionals in their central and municipal libraries.

The Ontario Public Library Guidelines (1997) recommended library staff standard of 1 staff member per 2000 population.

4) Policy/ legislation/Guidelines:

Legislations give boost to the proper functioning of public libraries as they stipulates standards, funding and financing of the public libraries and so on. The UNESCO Seminar of 1953 held in Ibadan decried the absence of library legislation in most African countries and consequently a call was made on African government to enact public library boards. The

IFLA/UNESCO manifesto stipulates that the public library is the responsibility of local and national authorities and financed by national and local governments.

Public libraries must have standards in space, collections, personnel, operations and services. A clear cut policy must be formulated defining objectives, priorities and services in relation to the local needs.

Some Frameworks for measuring Access to Information Indices in Public Libraries

Index	UNESCO/IFLA Public Library Manifesto	The Finnish Library Act (904,1998)	The Finish Library Decree (1078/998)	Buckinghamshire County Library Service (Library Service Customer Charter)	Ontario Public Library Guidelines 1997	Queensland Standards and Guideline for Public Library
1)Service	Outreach Services; User Education Program; Services in all types of appropriate media; Services to Special groups.	Language Services; Lending Services; Inter – Library loan; Evaluation of Services; Mobile Library service	Inter–Library lending Services	Mobile Library; Service; Loan Service; Home Delivery Service.	Reference Service; Children Service; Audio Visual Services; Public Internet Stations	Mobile Library Service; Inter – Library loan; Local Collections; Reference Service; Specialist Services; Literacy; ICT
2)Access	Free of charge services; Library Network; Well situated Library Buildings; Good reading and study facilities; Relevant technologies; Sufficient and convenient opening hours; Outreach services; Equality of access for all.	Access to Library professionals; Information service Network; Library services free of charge.	Library Co–operation	Library access and membership free for all; Network of 27 Libraries and six mobile libraries; 99% of household within one mile of library service; Users-friendly opening hours; Ramp or level access library premises; Equipment with a hearing loop; 98% of users served within 3 minutes of beginning to wait.		Bibliography control of library materials; Interchange of bibliographic data; Literary service standards.
3)Manpower	Professional and continuing education of the librarians	Sufficient number of qualified staff; Qualification requirement of library staff enacted in a decree.	Staff training; Minimum of 2/3 of personnel must have university degree or equivalent; Head of library: minimum of 35 credits of Library and Information studies	Staff training on disability awareness	1 Staff member per 2000 population	Staffing standards

4)Policy/legislation/Standards	Collections and services not subject to any form of censorship, or commercial pressure; Funded by local and national authorities; National Library Network; Library Policy Statements	To be funded under the Act on the Financing of Educational and Cultural provision (635/1998); Library Rules and fines	The Finnish Library Decree (1078/998); Acts as the National Interlibrary lending centre.	Library Service Customer Charter	Minimum size for an independent library not less than 370sq.m (4000sq.ft); For Branch, not less than 230sq.m (2500sq.ft.); Standard measurement for Library buildings.	Standards in Staff, services, building, collections, and management of their public libraries.
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Literature Review on Political Participation and Access to Information through Libraries

The relationship between access to information and political participation has been highlighted in several literatures. According to Falade (2014) the political stability and development of any political system is a function of the awareness and positive involvement of the citizens in civic and political matters. . Libraries provide the ideas and information to allow people to inform themselves” (ALA Intellectual freedom & censorship Q&A, para. 2). Similarly, IFLA (2001) states that public libraries “have an important role in the development and maintenance of a democratic society by giving the individual access to a wide and varied range of knowledge, ideas, and opinions” (Section 1.3) (Oltmann, 2009).

In Falede’s study on political participation in Nigerian democracy, findings corroborated low voter turn in the 2011 general elections. 90% of the respondents of the study did not cast their vote. They were quick to state their reasons: thuggery, chaotic and violent situations that characterized the voting centers, distance, lack of confidence in the electoral process and names not found on the voters register. Very significantly, the study revealed that more than 70% of the respondents had no access to the Nigerian constitution.

Awofeso and Odeyeme’s (2014) study on ‘Gender and political participation in Nigeria from a cultural perspective’, revealed another significant dimension of political apathy: women’s political apathy. The frequency of women participation was at zero level. They identified illiteracy, low educational status, and cultural discrimination among others as inhibiting factors to women political representation.

In Uhegbu’s (2009) study to determine the extent political information provided by information agencies helped in enhancing women’s involvement in politics in Imo state, Nigeria, one of his findings revealed that women who were literate had more political awareness, and actual information utilization for political participation more than the women who were illiterates. Positive significant relationships were found to exist between access to political information and political activity.

Eze et al. (2012) also observe that access to information and knowledge enable citizens full conscious participation in social and political processes such as election, control of local or national power and the exercise of public functions. They maintain that through access to

information and knowledge, citizens can understand, analyze and reflect on their personal and social situations resulting in their active participation in promoting changes and stimulating national economy. They therefore went ahead to recommend that public libraries should seriously wield in order to close those information/knowledge gaps of illiteracy, digital divide and in so doing will support the clear proof that the library profession values freedom, equity and inclusion.

Akinola (2013) also corroborated this fact by asserting that access to information without libraries is inconceivable because librarianship is concerned with literacy, intellectual freedom and equity of information access.

Abdulkarim (2010) cited in Akinola analyzes how public libraries can play this role: promotion of reading culture among members of the society rural or urban settings, promotion of good information and reference centre for the masses through the building of collections that relate to local interest. This collection (book and non book materials) should be properly organized, integrated and preserved. The public libraries are expected to offer different kinds of services to users which should include reference, extension, audio visual and training services.

Methodology

Documentary sources were used to collect data for this work. The population is the 36 state public libraries in Nigeria. Out of this number, fourteen (14) about 40% were used for this study. The sample is purposeful. All the regions were represented though not proportionally. Libraries in the northern region are more in the sample because library development in the country had started very early in the North. Nigeria is divided into 6 geographical zones. They are North East, North Central, North West, South East, South South, and South West.

The study also covered voter turnout in the country from the period of 1999 -2011 general elections in Nigeria. Within this democratic period, there was no military rule interference. The 2015 general election was not included in this study because the elections had not held as at the time the proposal for this work was sent.

The presidential and parliamentary elections were covered in this study excluding the governorship and State Assembly elections. The reason is because in presidential and

parliamentary elections, the entire citizens are to be involved in voting where as at State levels, it is only the residents of the state that vote their governors and state house of assembly members.

Data collected were analyzed using tables, percentages and graph. The State Libraries studied are as follows:

Name of State Libraries	Acronym	Region
1. Anambra State Library Board	ANSLB	East
2. Abia State Library Board	ABSLB	„
3. Ebonyi State Library Board	EBSLB	„
4. Adamawa State Library Board	ADSLB	North
5. Bauchi State Library Board	BASLB	„
6. Borno State Library Board	BOSLB	„
7. Gombe State Library Board	GOSLB	„
8. Taraba State Library Board	TASLB	„
9. Yobe State Library Board	YOSLB	„
10. Oyo State Library Board	OYSLB	West
11. Ogun State Library Board	OGSLB	„
12. Kwara State Library Board	KWSLB	„
13. Lagos State Library Board	LGSLB	„
14. Edo State Library Board	EDSLB	South

Presentation of Data

Table1: Voter Turnout & Population Data in Nigeria 1999-2011

Year	Voter Turnout	Total vote	Voting Age population Turnout	Registration	Voting age population	Population
Parliamentary						
2011	28.66%	21,074,621	25.80%	73,528,040	81,691,751	155,215,573
2007	NR	NR	NR	61,567,036	71,004,507	131,859,731
2003	49.32%	29,995,171	46.63%	60,823,022	64,319,246	129,934,911
1999	40.69%	23,573,407	44.65%	57,938,945	52,792,781	108,258,359
Presidential						
2011	53.68%	39,469,484	48.32%	73,528,040	81,681,751	155,215,573
2007	57.49%	35,397,517	49.85%	61,567,036	71,004,507	131,859,731
2003	69.08%	42,018,735	65.33%	60,823,022	64,319,246	129,934,911
1999	52.26%	30,280,052	57.36%	57,938,945	52,792,781	108,258,359
Total for the Presidential and parliamentary elections						
2011	41.17%	30,272,053	37.06%	73,528,040	81,691,751	155,215,573

2007	57.49%	35,397,517	49.85%	61,567,036	71,004,507	131,859,731
2003	59.20%	36,006,953	55.98%	60,823,022	64,319,246	129,934,911
1999	46.26%	26,926,730	51.01%	57,938,945	52,792,781	108,258,359

NOTE: Voter turnout = Percentage of registered voters who actually voted.
 Total vote = Total number of votes cast including valid and invalid votes
 Registration = Number of registered voters
 VAP Turnout = Percentage of the voting age population that actually voted
 VAP = All citizens of legal voting age
 Population = Total population
 NR = Official figure not released

From table 1, in 1999 parliamentary and presidential elections, out of the total number of a voting age population of 52, 792, 781, only 26, 926, 730 which is 51.01% turned out for voting. In 2013, there was a voting age population of 64 million, only 55.9 % of the number actually voted. The same trend of voting age population low turnout followed in 2007 elections where 49.9% of the voting age population voted. The worst hit was the 2011 elections where you have the highest voting age population of 81 million and the lowest voter turnout of 30 million representing 37% .

The data also reveals a consistent rise in voting age population (VAP) and registration between 1999 and 2011 without a corresponding rise in voter turnout. VAP rose steadily from 52 million in 1999 to 81 million in 2011. Voter registration rose from 57million in 1999 to 73 million in 2011. VAP decreased steadily from 51 % to 37%, except in 2003 which was the highest VAP turnout.

The data also reveals lower voter turnout in parliamentary elections than in the presidential in all the years. In 1999 parliamentary VAP turnout was 44.65% while presidential was 57.36%. In 2011, parliamentary was bedeviled by VAP turnout of 28.66% while presidential was 48. 32%.

Graphical Representation of Total for the Presidential and parliamentary elections

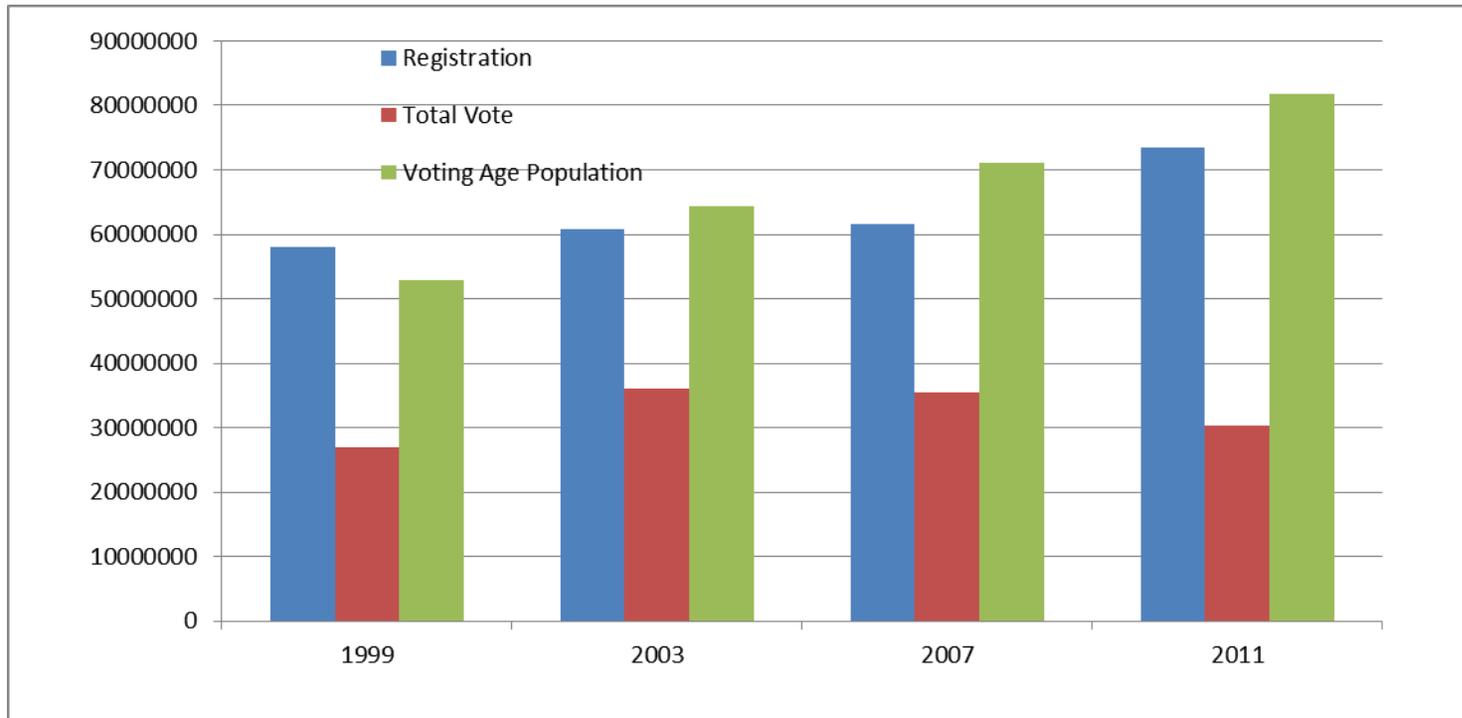


Figure 1: Voter turnouts for the presidential and parliamentary elections

TABLE 2: Level of Access to Information Indicators in the Public Libraries

S/N	INDEX	ANS LB	ABS LB	EBS LB	ADS LB	BAS LB	BOS LB	GOS LB	TAS LB	YOS LB	OYS LB	OGS LB	KWS LB	LGS LB	EDS LB	Total %
	Services:															38.7
1	Outreach	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	7.14
2	User Education	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	X	21.4
3	Lending	X	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	X	x	X	50.0
4	Packaging and Repackaging of information	–	X	–	x	–	X	X	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	35.7
5	Internet	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	–	28.5
6	Adult Literacy	–	–	–	x	X	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	x	–	28.5
7	Circulation/ Reference	X	X	x	X	X	X	X	X	X	x	X	x	x	X	100
Access:																47.5
8	Branch Libraries	x	–	–	x	X	–	–	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	28.5
9	Library Network	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	x	x	x	–	28.5

10	Free of charge services	x	x	x	X	X	X	X	X	x	x	x	x	x	X	100
11	Good Opening hours	x	X	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	x	x	X	100
12	Good Reading and studying facilities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	x	-	-	21.4
13	Special Equipment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	7.14
Manpower:															26.7	
14	Training	-	-	-	x	x	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	-	-	35.7
15	Number	-	-	-	X	x	x	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	-	42.8
16	Qualification	X	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-	x	x	x	x	X	50.0
17	Staff of Special Services	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Policy/legislation/standards:															33.3	
18	Library Policy	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

19	UNESCO/ IFLA Guidelines	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	0
20	Library Board Act	x	X	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	X	x	x	X	100
Information Materials:																30.3
21	Number	X	–	X	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	–	x	–	28.4
22	Non Print	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	7.14
23	Serials	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	X	X	X	x	x	x	–	50.0
24	Textbooks	X	–	–	X	x	x	–	–	–	–	–	–	x	–	35.7

Note: _ means that the item is not available or is negatively rated below 50%.

X means that the item is positively rated 50% and above.

As shown in table 2 above, five (5) indices were isolated as indicators of access to information through public libraries. They were x-rayed to determine how they were positioned to enhance political participation of citizens in Nigeria.

Services: The libraries' service index indicated an average of 38.7%. Further analysis shows that one (7.6%) out of the libraries studied has a positive rating for outreach services. All the libraries (100%) have positive ratings for circulation and reference services. Half of the libraries (50%) have pass mark in lending services. The other services received low ratings in these libraries.

Access: Total average for the libraries on the access index stood at 47.5%. The access index has such items as branch libraries 28.5%, free of charge and opening hours services in all the libraries (100% each), library network 28.5%. Only 24.4% of the libraries have good and studying facilities. One Library (7.14%) has a good rating for special equipment for special users.

Manpower: Average total of the libraries' manpower index is 26.7%. Among the four items that were used to adjudge manpower in the libraries, staff for special services received lowest embrace by the libraries at 0%. 35.7% of the libraries had pass mark in staff training.

Policy/legislation/standards: None of the libraries had a functional library policy. Adherence to the UNESCO/IFLA Guidelines for public libraries also stands at 0%. All the libraries (100%) have a Library Board Act. Average total for this index is 33.3%.

Information materials: 50% of the libraries have their Serials materials positively rated. 28.4% have information materials in good number. Only one (7.14%) of the libraries had positive rating for non print materials. Average total of libraries for this index stands at 30.3%.

Discussion of Findings

The services which are critical to the public libraries' performance of their role in relation to quality and relevant services are either lacking or not sufficient in these libraries. Such services as outreach (mobile library, home and document delivery etc), packaging and repacking such as translation, film shows are not adequate. Even ICT related services which are the current trend in library and information service delivery is lacking in sufficiency. It is no surprise that all the libraries are good at the regular services of circulation and reference. They constitute the core of reader services. It is surprising that not all the library have lending services. But reasons have been advanced to include non return of library materials.

Majority of the libraries lack library legislation and policy statements. The IFLA /UNESCO Guidelines for public Library Services Development (2001) observed that in meeting the needs of its community, the public library will have to develop policies (Saleh and Lasisi 2011). The state of the public libraries in Nigeria is therefore no doubt deplorable. The public libraries in the Northern part of the country where libraries had existed earlier than in some regions are not spared. Lagos Public library as part of those in the category of early library exposure took exception. It received positive ratings in a good number of the access to information indices.

Omekwu's (2006) clarion call for the repositioning of the nation's public libraries as agencies for the development of the mind, enlightenment of the people and cultural preservation supports the fact of the poor state of this institution, (cited by Nwofor and Ilorah 2015).

When one compares this scenario with the voting situation in Nigeria, one will therefore wonder little. This corroborates Falade's statement that one of the factors that determine political participation is political awareness. Libraries stand a good position of championing this awareness and restoring the measure of confidence the people need to participate reasonably in the political process but when the public libraries are lacking in this regard, then they are as good as not existing. By informing the society, the citizens attitude will change- they will appreciate the practical issues of government, patriotism (corporate interest of the Nation), protection of public properties, tenets of democracy (the electoral process, politics and leadership) rights of the citizens and by this, an endearing democratic Nigeria will emerge and be sustained (Ainabor, 2004 cited in Nwofor and Ilorah). The public library is the hope of the poor, uneducated, young and old, rural dwellers as well as any person or group who may not get the information services through the normal means. In the 2011 elections which were worse hit by low voters turn out of 37%, Falade emphatically stated that the non participation of most registered voters in the 2011 general election was an obstacle to democratic governance and that any government not voted by the majority of the electorates is not representative.

Findings of the study further reveal a wide disparity in voter registration and actual voting (total vote). In 1999 and 2003 elections, registration were about 57 and 64 million respectively while total votes were about 26 and 36 million respectively. It has been reported that citizens merely registered in order to get their voters registration card in case it will be used as a pre-condition to getting salaries or any other benefit. In some cases, desperate politicians were reported buying voters card at rate of ten thousand naira per card.

When the public libraries which should go for a rescue mission of educating, re-orientation and enlightenment for all, are beset with development problems in staffing, services, information resources and policies a lot therefore needs to be done to revamp them. The correlation between access to information through public libraries and citizens' political participation in Nigeria is simply high: low voter turnouts and low development of the public libraries. As the situation of public libraries improves, invariably citizens' participation will also improve because information is power.

Recommendations

(1)The public libraries should device means of awareness of the library resources and services. This will help increase the level of awareness of the library users to the available resources and services in the libraries for better patronage.

(2)The Nigeria government must ensure that the minimum standard required for public libraries to provide effective and efficient services as recommended by IFLA/UNESCO, is adhered to. The recommendation cuts across staff, nature of collection, services, structure, equipments, policy and management.

(3)Public libraries must begin to market their services, re-organise their services and activities to impact on the communities in which they are located especially offering grassroots services for the predominantly illiterate and semi- illiterate population.

(4) Public libraries must connect to ICT platforms. If they do, social media and Internet facilities (twitters, facebook) can be used to increase access to information and consequently connect politics to technology, which can be used to mount pressure and influence government policies. Online personal talks could be explored to sensitize and change people's attitude to politics that had been informed by corruption, high-handedness, intimidation and recklessness.

(5) Libraries should provide citizenship education to its constituencies; inform the electorates on what they should know about democracy-rights and privileges, and the role of government through posters, pictures, government documents and audiovisual resources. They should impact on the communities they serve.

(6) There is need to reposition public library services, activities, facilities and staffing. Mobile library services, community information centers, packaging and repackaging of information are critical in the crusade for information for all.

(7)Librarians should be employed, trained/retrained and remunerated adequately so that they can do their work well and even will be willing to go the extra mile in providing services.

Conclusion

The main aim of public libraries is unrestricted and equitable access to information to meet the information, educational, cultural and recreational needs of the populace. Public libraries also stand for lifelong learning. The vehicle driving this access are the services, and resources at the disposal of the public libraries. Libraries have been found to be impactful of societies in many ways. Public libraries are agent of information, education and culture. The more enlightened and informed the citizens are, the more they will actively participate in decision making and

governance. Citizens' political participation in Nigeria through voting as seen in this study and as widely reported remains low over the years. This should be worrisome. Public libraries as an embodiment of the principle of the rights of access to information and acquisition of knowledge stands a good chance of remedying this situation. Unfortunately the development of this institution has been low too according to this study, despite the many years libraries came to be in Nigeria. There is need to reposition public library services, activities, facilities and staffing in order that they will effectively contribute their quota towards a healthy and democratic society.

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