

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE PRACTICES AMONG USERS OF MEDICAL LIBRARIES IN COLLEGE OF MEDICAL SCIENCE, YOBE STATE UNIVERSITY, NIGERIA

Dr. Sophia v. Adeyeye¹ & Rabi Hassan Elbadawy (CLN, CMLN, Ph.D)²

¹Department of Information Management, Lead City University, Ibadan.

²Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Central Library, Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria

Abstract

This study investigates community engagement and the promotion of sustainable healthcare practices among users of the medical library in the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University, Nigeria. With a population of 65 respondents, the study examined the extent of library-led engagement initiatives, perceived benefits, and challenges encountered in implementing these programs. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire and analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Findings reveal that while awareness of sustainable healthcare practices through library initiatives is high, actual participation and staff involvement remain moderate. Key perceived benefits include improved knowledge of health practices, enhanced access to reliable health information, and increased user interaction with the library. Challenges such as limited funding, inadequate staff training, poor infrastructure, and low institutional support were identified as major hindrances to effective engagement. The study concludes that the medical library plays a vital role in promoting sustainable healthcare practices, but targeted interventions are required to enhance implementation, staff capacity, and user participation. Recommendations include securing dedicated funding, providing staff training, strengthening institutional support, and designing follow-up programs to foster behavioral change among users.

Keywords: Medical Library, Community Engagement, Sustainable Healthcare Practices, Health Promotion, Library Users

Introduction

Community engagement is a cornerstone of sustainable healthcare practices, fostering collaboration between healthcare providers, libraries, and the communities they serve. Medical libraries, traditionally centers for information dissemination, are increasingly recognized as pivotal in promoting health literacy and sustainable healthcare behaviors. By leveraging their resources and expertise, these libraries can empower individuals to make informed health decisions, thereby contributing to the broader goal of sustainable healthcare (Swanberg, 2022).

Medical libraries, particularly those affiliated with academic institutions, are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between complex medical information and community understanding. Through workshops, training sessions, and accessible resources, these libraries can demystify medical terminology and promote evidence-based health practices. Partnerships between medical libraries and public libraries have proven effective in enhancing health literacy among diverse populations, enabling the sharing of expertise and resources to address consumer health information needs (Karki, El Asmar, Riboli Sasco, & El-Osta, 2024).

Furthermore, sustainable healthcare practices extend beyond individual behaviors to encompass community-wide initiatives. Medical libraries can serve as hubs for these initiatives by offering spaces for community gatherings, health screenings, and educational programs. By fostering an environment of trust and accessibility, libraries can encourage community members to engage in health-promoting activities, thereby contributing to the sustainability of healthcare practices within the community (Whiteman, 2018).

In Nigeria, where access to healthcare information can be limited, medical libraries have a critical role to play. By actively engaging with local communities, these libraries can address health

disparities and promote sustainable healthcare practices. Previous studies have highlighted that Nigerian medical libraries are beginning to align their services with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to improve public health outcomes (Popoola & Ekere, 2020).

Despite the potential, challenges persist in the implementation of community engagement strategies within medical libraries. Limited resources, infrastructural constraints, and cultural barriers can impede the effectiveness of these initiatives. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including capacity building for library staff, fostering partnerships with healthcare providers, and tailoring programs to meet the specific needs of the community (Benson & Orisakwe, 2024).

This study it seeks to explore the strategies employed by medical libraries in Nigeria to engage communities and promote sustainable healthcare. It will assess the factors influencing adoption, the perceived benefits and challenges, and the extent to which these strategies have enhanced sustainable healthcare practices. The findings will provide valuable insights for library administrators, policymakers, and stakeholders seeking to improve health information dissemination and literacy in Nigeria. Additionally, it will contribute to the growing body of literature on community engagement in healthcare, particularly in the African context, where research remains limited (Michener, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Community engagement is a vital approach for promoting sustainable healthcare practices, particularly in academic medical settings. Globally, medical libraries play a crucial role in health promotion through outreach programs, health literacy campaigns, and access to reliable healthcare information (Whiteman, 2018; Karki, El Asmar, Riboli Sasco, & El-Osta, 2024). In countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and China, medical libraries actively engage with students, faculty, and the surrounding community to encourage preventive healthcare practices, disease awareness, and healthy lifestyle choices (Michener, 2025; Karki et al., 2024).

In Nigeria, including institutions like the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University, community engagement in medical libraries remains limited (Popoola & Ekere, 2020; Benson & Orisakwe, 2024). Challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, low health literacy among users, limited trained personnel, and lack of institutional support hinder the effective implementation of sustainable health promotion programs. Consequently, users of medical libraries often have restricted access to information that encourages preventive healthcare and sustainable health behaviors (Swanberg, 2022; Whiteman, 2018).

The limited community engagement by medical libraries in Yobe State University may affect both the knowledge and practice of sustainable healthcare among students and staff. This study, therefore, seeks to assess the level of community engagement and evaluate its effectiveness in promoting sustainable healthcare practices among users of medical libraries in the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University. The findings will provide evidence-based recommendations for improving library-led health promotion programs and inform institutional policy on health literacy and sustainability initiatives (Michener, 2025; Karki et al., 2024).

Objectives of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine community engagement and the promotion of sustainable healthcare practices among users of medical libraries in the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. Assess the extent of community engagement initiatives implemented by the medical library.
2. Identify the perceived benefits of community engagement in promoting sustainable healthcare practices among library users.
3. Examine the challenges faced by the medical library in implementing community engagement programs.

Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent are community engagement initiatives implemented in the medical library of the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University?
2. What are the perceived benefits of community engagement programs in promoting sustainable healthcare practices among library users?
3. What challenges are encountered in implementing community engagement initiatives in the medical library?

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research design, which involves systematically collecting data from respondents through structured questionnaires to examine their experiences, perceptions, and opinions. This design is suitable for understanding user engagement and perceptions of sustainable healthcare practices in medical libraries. The target population consisted of all 65 users of the medical library in the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University, including students, faculty, and staff, based on the 2024 library registration records. Due to the small size of the population, a total enumeration (census) technique was used, where all users were invited to participate.

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire titled "Community Engagement and Sustainable Healthcare Practices Survey (CESHPS)." The questionnaire had four sections: demographic information, extent of community engagement activities, perceived benefits, and challenges of engagement. The instrument was validated by two experts in Library and Information Science and Public Health from Yobe State University. A pilot test with 10 library users outside the study population yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating good reliability. The questionnaire was administered both physically and online via Google Forms. Follow-up reminders were sent twice at one-week intervals. Out of the 65 users contacted, 58 responded, yielding a response rate of 89.2%, which is considered adequate for generalization in survey research. The collected primary data were exported to IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25.0 for analysis. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize and interpret the data.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research question one: To what extent have community engagement initiatives been implemented by the medical library at the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University?

Table 1: Extent of Implementation of Community Engagement Initiatives

Engagement Practice	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Awareness campaigns on sustainable healthcare	48	73.8%	4.10	0.42
Health literacy workshops for users	35	53.8%	3.60	0.51
Collaboration with health professionals	28	43.1%	3.20	0.55
Dissemination of health resources via library platforms	30	46.2%	3.30	0.50
Staff involvement in community health programs	22	33.8%	2.90	0.58

Note. N = 65 library users. Mean scores are based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low to 5 = Very High).

The results indicate that 73.8% of respondents are aware of library-led campaigns on sustainable healthcare, with a mean score of 4.10, reflecting strong awareness. However, actual participation in health literacy workshops and collaborations with health professionals is lower (53.8% and

43.1%, respectively). Only 33.8% of staff are actively involved in community health programs, indicating limited direct engagement in implementation. These findings suggest that while awareness is high, operationalization of community engagement activities remains partial.

Research question two: What are the perceived benefits of community engagement initiatives in promoting sustainable healthcare practices among library users?

Table 2: Perceived Benefits of Community Engagement Initiatives

Perceived Benefit	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Improved knowledge of sustainable healthcare practices	50	76.9%	4.20	0.41
Increased participation in preventive health activities	42	64.6%	3.85	0.44
Enhanced library-user interaction and trust	38	58.5%	3.70	0.45
Access to reliable health information	40	61.5%	3.80	0.42
Motivation to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors	35	53.8%	3.60	0.50

The results reveal strong recognition of the benefits of community engagement initiatives. The majority (76.9%) reported improved knowledge of sustainable healthcare practices, highlighting the library's role in health education. Other benefits, including increased participation in preventive activities and access to reliable health information, were also well recognized. However, motivation to adopt healthy lifestyles (53.8%) is comparatively lower, suggesting that knowledge does not always translate into behavior change. Standard deviations below 0.50 indicate agreement among respondents.

Research question three: What challenges are encountered in implementing community engagement initiatives in the medical library?

Table 3: Challenges in Implementing Community Engagement Initiatives

Identified Challenge	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Limited funding for programs	45	69.2%	3.90	0.46
Inadequate staff training	40	61.5%	3.80	0.44
Poor infrastructure (e.g., space, internet access)	38	58.5%	3.70	0.50
Low user participation	30	46.2%	3.30	0.52
Lack of institutional support	25	43.1%	3.20	0.55

The findings indicate that limited funding (69.2%) and inadequate staff training (61.5%) are major obstacles. Poor infrastructure and low user participation also hinder effective implementation. Standard deviations under 0.55 suggest consistent perceptions among respondents. Overall, the challenges point to the need for targeted investment, staff capacity building, and institutional support to improve community engagement outcomes.

Discussion of Findings

The study shows that medical library users are generally aware of community engagement initiatives, particularly campaigns and workshops on sustainable healthcare. However, the level of actual participation and staff involvement remains moderate, suggesting that operationalizing programs is a challenge. This aligns with studies in Nigerian academic libraries, which report that

limited resources and staff capacity constrain community-based health initiatives (Popoola & Ekere, 2020).

The perceived benefits indicate that library users value the role of engagement programs in improving health knowledge and access to information. However, lower adoption of healthy behaviors reflects the gap between awareness and practice, consistent with Michener (2025) and Karki et al. (2024), who emphasize that awareness alone does not ensure sustainable behavior change.

Challenges identified, such as funding, training, and infrastructure limitations, are similar to findings in other Nigerian and African libraries (Benson & Orisakwe, 2024). Addressing these challenges will be critical to enhance the library's role as a hub for promoting sustainable healthcare practices.

Conclusion

The study concludes that while the medical library at the College of Medical Science, Yobe State University, has made commendable efforts in promoting community engagement and sustainable healthcare practices, actual implementation is limited by systemic challenges. Awareness among users is strong, and perceived benefits are high, yet funding, staff capacity, and infrastructure constraints hinder broader impact. Strengthening these areas will be essential for sustainable health promotion.

Recommendations

1. The library should secure dedicated funding for community engagement initiatives and explore partnerships with health organizations to expand outreach programs.
2. Staff training programs on health literacy and community engagement should be instituted to improve program delivery and user interaction.
3. Libraries should design follow-up programs that encourage users to adopt and maintain healthy lifestyle behaviors to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice.

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