

## INFORMATION NEEDS AND USE AMONG RURAL INHABITANTS IN MANGU LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

By

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### Abstract

The study examined the information needs and uses among rural inhabitants in Mangu, Plateau State, Nigeria. To achieve the purpose of this study three (3) objectives and three (3) research questions guided the study. A survey research design was used for the study. The target population for the study was 6, 247 rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area. The sample size of 400 was drawn from the target population using the Yamane formula for determining the sample size for research activities. The questionnaire was the instrument for this study. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used in analyzing the data collected. Based on the findings of this study, the results revealed that the frequency of information needs in various areas by the rural inhabitant in Mangu is very often. The results revealed that most rural inhabitants in Mangu use community libraries, agricultural extension agents, health extension workers, local government council and wards and family and friends among others as channels through which they receive information. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made. The public libraries such as the National and State libraries within North Central Nigeria should be mandated with the full responsibility of reaching the information needs of every rural community within the locality it found itself and a high level of social amenities should be provided to the rural inhabitants to help them access varieties of information types particular through the use of mass and social media.

**Keywords:** Information needs, Use, Rural Inhabitants, Information Dissemination and Mangu Local Government Area.

## Introduction

Information is an important tool used in the realization of any objective or goal set by a person or group of persons. It remains the life wire of any individual or organization and a valuable resource required in any society. Thus, acquiring and using information is critical for activities for different reasons such as; business, health, politics, sports, entertainment, agriculture etc, to all these, information needs is a fundamental human process closely related to learning and problem-solving. It is vital for technological, scientific and economic progress, it is also a medium of social transformation and communication.

The rural information providers such as; teachers, health workers, agricultural attendants, business experts, religious leaders, corporate organization meetings, librarians, wedding events speakers, family and friends are responsible for effective information and communication dissemination to rural inhabitants. The failure of the rural information providers to effectively perform their roles as a local gateway to knowledge in society has drastically affected the rural settlement. In view of the foregoing, Egbe (2014) noted that this is so because rural areas are characterised by depression, degradation and deprivation as many villages are deeply in poverty despite their large population.

Information providers use the internet World Wide Web (www) to provide information to their clients both in rural and urban communities. Just as stated earlier, Teachers provide information about the activities which they perform in the classroom and the community in which the school is located. Over the years, media houses have cemented their ever-increasing role in providing information to rural inhabitants as well as urban areas. Agricultural attendants control all the agriculture development affairs and are responsible for submitting reports and returns

to the government annually. Also responsible for coordination and monitoring of agriculture production programmes in their jurisdiction which includes both rural and urban areas. They give information concerning soil, seedlings, fertilizer, mechanization and food security. Health workers have a legal responsibility to give information on safety and healthy living, safety environment and quality care to the rural inhabitants. Social workers are to pass information concerning the welfare and well-being of children and their families in rural communities. Furthermore, librarians provide information in printed and non-printed media on different fields of knowledge.

## Statement of the Problem

Preliminary observation showed that the information needs of rural inhabitants is measured towards the effectiveness of information providers and information services rendered to the rural inhabitants, non-governmental organization should support the packaging of information needed and provide more relevant resources and information which is modelled along the needs of rural inhabitants. It has been observed that the specific area of information dissemination to rural inhabitants has suffered greatly compared to its urban counterpart. Information dissemination outfits like books, radio/television and newspapers had further compounded the problem by creating the unwholesome impression that meeting such needs is strictly urban affairs. It is in light of this that the present study was carried out to examine the information needs and uses among rural inhabitants in Mangu Plateau State, Nigeria.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. Determine the extent frequency of information needs of the rural

inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

2. Identify the channels of information used by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.
3. Determine the constraints to accessing information by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria

### Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the frequency of information needs of the rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?
2. What are the channels of information received by rural inhabitants in Mangu LGA., Plateau State, Nigeria?
3. What are the constraints to accessing information by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria?

### Review of Related Literature

Information is a raw material for the development of both urban and rural inhabitants. The prosperity, progress, and development of any nation depend upon the nation's ability to acquire, produce, access, and use pertinent information. Jerome (2013) reported that older rural people's access to information and advice is a key resource for local people in maintaining active and independent lives. Access to information is also critical to letting people know their entitlements to welfare benefits and sources of support to overcome social exclusion. Rural inhabitants' resources, as suggested by Issa (1998) include facilities needed for regular information, such as television, occasional video viewing, radio and gramophone, posters and other handbills that could enhance public enlightenment. Newspapers and magazines are also relevant

to the local inhabitants' needs (Hossain, 2012).

A study conducted by Yadav (2017) reveals that the information needs of female workers in Lakhipur Tea Garden in the top rank are occupationally related with 44.92% of respondents, child care and family relationship with 57.97% of respondents, health-related information needs with 55.07% of respondents, information on procedures of performing tasks with 46.37% of respondents, information on housekeeping and household maintenance with 40.58% of the respondents, information on education and schooling with 36.23% of respondents and information on government policies and schemes with 42.02% of respondents. Information use is concerned with understanding what information sources people choose and how people apply information to make sense of their lives and situations. People use information to seek meaning in a variety of situations. Sometimes they use information instrumentally, to do something tangible (e.g., to acquire a skill or reach a goal). El-Kalash, Mohammed & Ahmed (2014) sometimes information is used cognitively (e.g., to generate ideas). Yet in other cases, information is used in an effective manner (e.g., when an individual uses the information to feel supported or to derive pleasure). Some researchers believed that people use information to reduce uncertainty, so the more information that is provided, the greater the reduction of uncertainty about a particular issue or problem (e.g., about what political party to vote for or what career path to pursue). People also use the information to confirm or verify something that they know, to predict what may happen, and to develop or maintain personal relationships (Ekoja, 2010).

### Methodology

A survey research design was used for the study. The population for the study was 6, 247 rural inhabitants of the three selected villages of Mangu Local Government Area. The three

selected villages include Gaude, Nyemdung and Bwonpe. The sample size of 400 was drawn from the target population using Yamane's (1967) formula for determining sample size for research work. Cluster sampling techniques were employed for the study. Data was gathered through the instrument of a questionnaire. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentages.

### Data Analysis and Interpretation

The response rate indicated that four hundred (400) copies of the questionnaire were administered to rural inhabitants and the response rate recorded three hundred and ninety-one (391) representing 98%.

**Table 1: The Frequency of Information Needs of the rural inhabitants in North Central Nigeria**

Items	How often do you need	Very Often		Often		Not at All		Mean
		Fx	%	fx	%	fx	%	
1	Health information	185	47.3	120	30.7	86	22	1.75
2	Agricultural information	257	65.7	78	19.9	56	14.3	1.49
3	Employment information	165	42.2	133	34.0	93	23.8	1.82
4	Skill acquisition information	170	43.5	147	37.6	74	18.9	1.75
5	Recreation information	153	39.1	129	33.0	109	27.9	1.89
6	Political information	131	33.5	122	31.2	138	35.3	2.02
7	Work enhancement information	251	64.2	83	21.2	57	14.6	2.06
8	Business enhancement information	258	66.0	90	23.0	43	11	2.11
9	Birth and death information	126	32.2	155	39.6	110	28.1	1.96
10	Educational enhancement information	152	38.9	125	32.0	114	29.2	1.90
11	Civil service information	136	34.8	166	42.5	89	22.8	1.88
12	Fashion related information	116	29.7	168	43.0	107	27.4	1.98
13	Social welfare information	250	63.9	84	21.5	57	14.6	1.51
14	Weather and climate information	277	70.8	54	13.8	60	15.3	1.46
<b>Total Scores/Percentages/Mean</b>		<b>2627</b>	<b>671.8</b>	<b>1654</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>1193</b>	<b>305.2</b>	<b>25.58</b>
<b>Average Scores/percentages/Mean</b>		<b>188</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>1.83</b>

**Keys:** Very Often, 2 = Often, 3 = Not at all

The information in Table 1 revealed that rural inhabitants seek health information need very often 185(47.3%), often, 120(30.7%) and not very at all 86(22%). They also sought agricultural information very often 257(65.7%), often 78(19.9%) and mot at all 56(14.3%) respectively. Regarding employment information, the rural inhabitants indicate that they seek it very often at 165(42.2%), often 133(34%) and not at all at 93(23.8%). Regarding skill

acquisition information, it indicates 170(43.5%), 147(37.6%) and 74(18.9%) respectively. It further showed that the people seek recreational information very often 153(39.1%), often 129(33%) and not-at-all with 109(27.9%) respondents. The result on the table revealed that the rural inhabitants do not bother much about political information as 138(35.3%) do not seek it at all, 131(33.5%) seek it very often and 122(31.2%) seek it often. The majority of workers in the areas under study seek work

enhancement information very often 251(64.2%) often 83(21.2%) and 57(14.6%) not-at-all. For business enhancement information, 258(66%) seek it very often, 90(23%) often and 43(11%) not seek it-at-all. Birth and death information and educational enhancement information is other information needs of the rural inhabitants. Result on the table showed 126(32.2%) and 152(38.9%) seek it very often, 155(39.6%) and 125(32%) often while 110(28.1%) and 114(29.2%) indicated not that they do not seek it at-all. The rural inhabitants seek civil service and fashion-related information very often at frequencies 136(34.8%) and 116(29.7%), 166(42.5%) and 168(43%) seek them often while 89(22.8%) and 107(27.4%) do not seek them at all. Social welfare is another information need of the rural inhabitants, results indicate that 250(63.9%) seek it very often, 84(21.5%) often and 57(14.6%) do not seek social welfare information at all. As an area that depends on farming, weather and climate information is very important to them. As such, majority of the respondents

277(70.8%) seek the information very often, 54(13.8%) often and 60(15.3%) not-at-all.

With the highest average score of 188 at 48%, the frequency of information Needs of the rural inhabitants revealed that they sought information very often in the various areas of their information needs. While 118(30%) sought information often to meet their needs. With an average mean score of 1.83 on a scale of three, it can be deduced that the people in the studied area seek information in various areas if need very often. This result means that rural inhabitants in the Mangu local government area of Plateau state in North Central Nigeria frequently need information on social welfare, agriculture, health, and business etc., this is because of the peculiar nature of the rural inhabitants are predominantly farmers, and are also far from the urban which benefits from the most government, non-governmental bodies and other agencies.

**Table 2: The Channels of information used by rural inhabitants in Mangu LGA., Plateau State, Nigeria**

Items	I receive information from the flowing channels	YES		NO	
		fx	%	fx	%
1	Family and friends	262	67.0	129	33
2	Customers and markets places	215	55.0	176	45
3	Town criers	248	63.4	143	36.6
4	Mobile phone	130	33.2	261	66.8
5	Cooperative societies	234	59.8	157	40.2
6	Worship centres	200	51.2	191	48.8
7	Newspapers/magazines	165	42.2	226	57.8
8	Radio and television	163	41.69	228	58.31
9	Billboard and posters	198	50.6	193	49.4
10	Handbills and fliers	205	52.4	186	47.6
11	Local government councils and wards	274	70.1	117	29.9
12	Health extension workers	265	67.8	126	32.2
13	Agricultural extension agent	268	68.5	123	31.5
14	Dispensaries and health centres	212	54.2	179	45.8
15	Community library	293	74.9	98	25.1
<b>Total Scores/Percentages</b>		<b>3299</b>	<b>843.5</b>	<b>2566</b>	<b>656.5</b>
<b>Average Scores/percentages</b>		<b>220</b>	<b>56.23</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>43.77</b>



Table 2 shows channels of information used by rural inhabitants. The respondents were asked to indicate yes or no regarding these channels, and according to the information, 262(67%) said yes to family and friends as channels of information while 129(33%) said no to them. From customers and markets places as a channel of information, 215(55%) were for the yes option while 176 (45%) opted for no. Town criers, mobile phones 248(63.4%) and 130(33.2%) respondents said yes while 143(36.6%) and 261(66.8%) did not prefer town criers and mobile phones as sources of information. cooperative societies and worship centres like churches and mosques were some of the sources of information for the rural inhabitants in Mangu, the results indicate that 234(59.8%) and 200(51.2%) said yes respectively for cooperative societies and worship centres. Also, 157(40.2%) and 191 (48.8%) said no to the sources. Newspapers/magazines and television are other channels, 165(42.2%) and 163(41.69%) said yes, while the majority 226(57.8%) and 228(58.31%) said no. This means that the rural inhabitants have no access to either newspapers, magazines and television or they do not consider the information from the above sources relevant to their everyday activities. Concerning billboards and posters as channels, 198(50.6%) indicate Yes while 193(49.4%) indicate No. Often, information to the rural inhabitants is channelled through handbills and fliers, about 205(52.4%) indicate Yes to

receiving information through this channel while 186(47.6%) indicate No. The Local government secretariat and wards are often the main channels through which information to the rural inhabitants is transmitted, this is evident with a higher number of respondents 274(70.1%) indicated yes while 117(29.9%) indicate no. Furthermore, Health extension workers often serve as channels of health-related information with 265(67.8%) which indicated Yes, however, 126(32.2%) indicate No to this option. As predominant farmers, rural inhabitants in Mangu prefer Agricultural extension agents as a channel of agricultural information with 268(68.5%) for yes while those who have no access to the extension agents indicated No. Dispensaries and health centres as well as the community Library are other channels through which the rural inhabitants receive information to meet their needs. Accordingly, 212(54.2%) and 293(74.9%) indicate yes while 179(45.8%) and 98(25.1%).

The average score of 220(56.23%) respondents indicated Yes to the above-listed channels through which they receive information. These channels include community libraries, agricultural extension agents, health extension workers, local government councils and wards, and family and friends among others. While mobile phones, radio and television, newspaper and magazines etc. were not the main channels of information for the rural inhabitants.

**Table 3: Constraints to Accessing Information by Rural Inhabitants in Mangu LGA., Plateau State, Nigeria**

SN	Responses on Constraints to Accessing Information by Rural Inhabitants	Agreed		Disagreed	
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%
1	Lack of Reliable infrastructure	376	96.1	15	3.9
2	Lack of Competent human resources	311	79.6	80	20.4
3	Lack of Transparency in government and other issues of capacity building	377	96.4	14	3.6
4	Lack of realization of the ICT Policy	381	97.4	10	2.6
5	Lack of enhancement of social activity	266	68	125	32

6	Lack of government inability to take investment-driven steps in the field of information and communication technologies	339	86.8	52	13.2
7	Lack of electricity power generation	366	93.7	25	6.3
8	Lack of sensitization and desire to carry along all relevant agencies by the government	321	82	70	18
9	Important to develop local languages to make them meet the requirements suitable for current trends in information and communication technology.	356	91	35	9
10	Lack of poor road network	374	95.7	17	4.3
	Total	3467/10		443/10	
		346.7		44.3	
		88.7		11.3	

**Keys:** A- Agreed & DA- Disagreed

Table 3 presents the responses view on constraints to accessing information by rural inhabitants in Mangu LGA., Plateau State, Nigeria, where 376(96.1%) agreed that lack of reliable infrastructure hinders information services to rural inhabitants while 15(3.9%) disagreed with the statement. This implies that the lack of reliable infrastructure affects rural inhabitants in accessing information services. Item 2 is on lack of competent human resources where 311(79.6%) agreed while 80(20.4%) disagreed that lack of competent human resources does not hinder rural inhabitants in accessing information services for their daily activities. It was also reported that lack of transparency in government and other issues of capacity building affect rural inhabitants in accessing information services where 377(96.4) agreed while 14(3.6%) completely disagreed with the statement above respectively. Item 4 the result revealed that lack of realization of the ICT policy has affected rural inhabitants in accessing information services where 381(97.4%) of the respondents agreed while 10(2.6%) shows their disagreement. The finding of the analysis shows that the lack of enhancing social activities hurts rural inhabitants in accessing information resources where 266(68) of the respondents agreed, and 125(32%) disagreed. This shows that the majority of the respondents agreed

that the lack of enhancement of social activities hurts rural inhabitants in accessing information. Item 6 responses view on lack of government's inability to take investment-driven steps in the field of information and communication technologies where 339(86.8%) of the respondents disagreed and 52(13.2%) disagreed with the statement. Table analysis also shows that lack of electricity power generation has a negative impact on rural inhabitants on their daily basis activities where 366 (93.7%) of the respondents agreed while 25 (6.3%) disagreed. The result revealed that lack of sensitization and desire to carry along all relevant agencies by the government where 321(82) of the respondents disagreed while 90(18%) of the respondents shows their disagreement. This revealed that the majority of the respondents agreed that lack of sensitization and desire to carry along all relevant agencies by the government has a negative impact on rural inhabitants in accessing needed information services. Table analysis also revealed that, the important to develop local languages to make them meet the requirements suitable for current trends in information and communication technology where 352(91%) agreed with the statement above while 35 (9%) shows their disagreement. Finally, the results also show that the lack of a poor road

network has hindered rural inhabitants in accessing information services needed for daily activities where 374 (95.7%) of the respondents agreed and 17 (4.3%) shows their disagreement. This implies that the majority of the respondents agreed that, the lack of a good road network affects rural inhabitants in accessing information services needed.

## Discussion

The purpose of the study is to investigate the information needs and use information among the rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. Findings revealed that the frequency of information needs by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State is very often. This was indicated by the fact that majority of the respondents indicated that they needed information very often at 188(48%) and 118(30%) often. Also, a cumulative mean score of 1.83 on a scale of 3 attested that the information needs of the rural inhabitants in Mangu L.G.A are very often. This result is in agreement with Apeji (2006) who carried out a study of the information need and seeking behaviour of rural women in Zungeru, Niger State, which showed that the factors that pose a barrier to the accessibility of information by rural women include; less resource as there is no single limited information centre in that area and lack of time among others. Aina (2004) asserted that the artisans and rural inhabitants need information mainly for survival. Hence any information that will improve their productivity and attract more customers will be critical to their survival. It is therefore expected that a library will provide services that will meet this critical need.

Also, the average score of 220(56.23%) respondents indicated Yes to the above-listed channels through which they receive information. These channels include community libraries, agricultural extension agents, health extension workers, local government councils and wards, and family

and friends among others. This implies that majority of the respondents agreed that, the lack of a good road network affects rural inhabitants in accessing information services needed.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that the level of information needed by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State is very often satisfied. It was concluded again that, the level of awareness of information needs of rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State is high and that, different types of information sources such as agricultural extension agents, health extension workers, local government council and wards, family and friends among others were channels through which they receive information.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made.

1. The information needs by rural inhabitants in Mangu Local Government Area of Plateau State should be the primary responsibilities of public libraries and the National Library within Plateau State, Nigeria in reaching the rural community to promote their agricultural activities, piety traders, growth and development and mining activities of people.
2. Different types of information sources should be the primary purpose of public libraries and the National Library to educate the agencies responsible on the importance of information needs. Such agencies are agricultural extension agents, health extension workers, local government councils and wards, family and friends among others as channels through which the rural inhabitants receive information that can help them in



their agricultural activities and health services.

3. There is a need to ensure that government should provide rural library services to the rural communities to easily access current and appropriate information in various formats in print audio and electronic information for their daily activities.

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