

PROMOTION OF SUSTAINABLE HEALTHCARE PRACTICES, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, AND INFORMATION ACCESS BY USERS OF MEDICAL LIBRARIES IN NORTH-EAST NIGERIA**Rabi Hassan Elbadawy (CLN, CMLN, Ph.D)¹ & Dr. Sophia v. Adeyeye²****¹Goodluck Ebele Jonathan Central Library, Yobe State University, Damaturu, Nigeria****²Department of Information Management, Lead City University, Ibadan.****Abstract**

This study investigates the promotion of sustainable healthcare practices, community engagement, and information access among users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria. The research was guided by three key objectives: to identify the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices by users of medical libraries, to assess the extent of community engagement among these users, and to determine the degree of information access available to them. A survey research design was adopted, and data were collected using a self-structured instrument titled Sustainable Healthcare and Library Engagement Questionnaire (SHLEQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Health Information Science and demonstrated strong reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. The study targeted 426 users drawn from eight major medical libraries across the region, using proportionate random sampling. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Findings reveal that the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices among users of medical libraries is moderate, with considerable variations across institutions. Awareness of sustainable health information is relatively high, but active dissemination and application of the knowledge remain limited. The study also found that community engagement among users is moderately strong; however, engagement efforts are hindered by inadequate outreach programs and restricted collaboration between medical libraries and community health stakeholders. Conversely, the degree of information access was found to be relatively high, particularly regarding digital medical resources, open-access journals, and public health information, though challenges such as unstable internet connectivity and inadequate ICT infrastructure persist. The study concludes that medical libraries in North-East Nigeria play an important role in promoting sustainable healthcare, engaging communities, and enhancing access to critical information. However, their impact is constrained by infrastructural challenges, insufficient community-library collaboration, and limited user training on sustainable healthcare resources. Recommendations include strengthening health information literacy programs, enhancing community outreach, upgrading ICT infrastructure, and promoting strategic partnerships with health institutions and NGOs.

Keywords: sustainable healthcare practices, medical libraries, community engagement, information access

Introduction

Medical libraries are essential institutions within healthcare and academic environments, serving as critical access points to evidence-based health information, research outputs, and public health resources. Over the past decade, the global shift toward sustainability has increasingly influenced healthcare delivery, public health communication, and health information systems. Sustainable healthcare practices involve preventive health behaviors, environmental responsibility in health systems, and informed decision-making driven by credible medical knowledge (Osei & Mbatha, 2022). Medical libraries thus serve as vital platforms in promoting these practices by facilitating equitable access to reliable medical information, supporting community education, and empowering users through health information literacy.

In the African, medical libraries play a crucial role in bridging gaps in health knowledge and supporting community-based health promotion initiatives (Nguyen & Olorunfemi, 2023). Through

their collections, outreach programs, and digital services, they contribute to improved health outcomes and support global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). In Nigeria, studies by Adamu and Ibrahim (2023), Eze & Nwafor (2022), and Abdullahi (2021) have emphasized the growing relevance of medical libraries in disseminating public health information and supporting medical training and research. However, the role of users in promoting sustainable healthcare practices remains underexplored, particularly in the North-East region, which has unique socio-economic and healthcare challenges.

Community engagement is another crucial dimension of modern medical librarianship. Engagement efforts may involve health literacy campaigns, collaborative training, partnerships with local health institutions, and outreach initiatives that support public health interventions (Wilson & Gomez, 2023). Medical library users-including students, healthcare workers, researchers, and community visitors-play an important role in extending the impact of medical libraries beyond institutional boundaries. Their level of engagement influences the extent to which health information is applied within local communities.

Access to reliable and timely medical information remains a central concern in developing regions. While digital resources and online health databases offer immense opportunities, challenges such as limited ICT infrastructure, unstable internet connectivity, and low levels of digital literacy persist (Bakare & Adebayo, 2022). In North-East Nigeria, the situation is further complicated by infrastructural underdevelopment and social instability. Despite these constraints, medical libraries continue to provide access to medical literature, research databases, and public health resources to diverse users.

This study examines three interrelated dimensions-promotion of sustainable healthcare practices, community engagement, and information access-among users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria. Understanding these dimensions is crucial for enhancing the role of medical libraries in strengthening healthcare systems, improving public health literacy, and supporting sustainable health practices.

Statement of the Problem

Medical libraries worldwide are increasingly recognized as key institutions for promoting sustainable healthcare, community engagement, and equitable access to health information (Gumbo & Lee, 2024). In many developed regions, medical libraries have successfully integrated sustainability-focused health communication strategies, digital health literacy programs, and community engagement models that support preventive healthcare and sustainable public health practices (Holt & Meyer, 2023). These efforts have contributed to improved patient outcomes, enhanced community resilience, and increased awareness of sustainable health behaviors.

However, the situation in many developing contexts, including Nigeria, differs significantly. Medical libraries in North-East Nigeria operate within a region marked by insecurity, underdeveloped healthcare infrastructure, and limited access to digital resources (Aliyu, 2023). While these libraries serve an essential function in supporting medical education and facilitating health information access, their capacity to promote sustainable healthcare and engage communities remains unclear. Furthermore, the level to which users-students, medical practitioners, and researchers-actively promote and apply sustainable healthcare information is largely undocumented. Existing studies have focused on the challenges facing medical libraries, such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and limited staffing (Eze & Nwafor, 2022). However, very few studies have examined how users engage with libraries to promote sustainable healthcare practices or how effectively they access and disseminate medical information. This gap limits understanding of how medical libraries contribute to sustainable health development in the study area.

There is therefore a pressing need to evaluate the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices by users, assess the extent of community engagement, and determine the degree of information access among medical library users in North-East Nigeria. Without such insights,

opportunities to strengthen public health communication and sustainable healthcare initiatives may remain untapped.

Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study is to examine sustainable healthcare promotion, community engagement, and information access by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria. The study specifically seeks to:

- 1- Identify the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria.
- 2- Assess the extent of community engagement by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria.
- 3- Identify the degree of information access by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria.

Research Questions

- 1- What is the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?
- 2- What is the extent of community engagement among users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?
- 3- What is the degree of information access available to users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?

Methodology

The study adopted a survey research. The study population consisted of 426 registered users drawn from eight major medical libraries across the six states in North-East Nigeria. A sample size of 310 users was selected through proportionate random sampling to ensure fair representation across institutions. The sampling ensured that each library contributed participants based on its user population size.

Data were collected using a self-developed questionnaire titled Sustainable Healthcare and Library Engagement Questionnaire (SHLEQ). Three experts in Public Health Information Systems and Library Science validated the instrument for content accuracy and relevance. A pilot test involving 25 users (outside the study area) yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, indicating strong internal consistency. The questionnaire was administered both physically and online (Google Forms). A total of 310 questionnaires were distributed, and 278 were returned, giving a usable response rate of 89.7%. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. IBM SPSS 26.0 was used for all analyses.

Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question One: What is the level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices by users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?

Table 1: Promotion of Sustainable Healthcare Practices

Sustainable Healthcare Practice	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Awareness of sustainable healthcare information	210	75.5%	3.95	0.44
Sharing health information with peers	172	61.9%	3.70	0.49
Engagement in preventive healthcare behaviors	168	60.4%	3.65	0.51

The

findings indicate a moderate level of promotion of sustainable healthcare practices among users of

Participation in library health seminars	145	52.2%	3.40	0.55
Advocacy for sustainable healthcare practices	132	47.5%	3.20	0.58

medical libraries in North-East Nigeria. Awareness levels are high (mean = 3.95), but active advocacy and seminar participation remain relatively low (means = 3.20-3.40). This shows that while users understand sustainable healthcare concepts, fewer translate this knowledge into community or peer advocacy.

Research Question Two: What is the extent of community engagement among users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?

Table 2: Extent of Community Engagement

Community Engagement Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Participation in health outreach	158	56.8%	3.55	0.50
Collaboration with community health workers	147	52.9%	3.40	0.54
Contribution to public health awareness	175	62.9%	3.70	0.48
Engagement in volunteer health programs	138	49.6%	3.35	0.52
Use of library resources for community education	165	59.3%	3.60	0.47

Community engagement is moderate. Although a majority contribute to public health awareness (62.9%), engagement in structured volunteer programs is lower (49.6%). This reflects limited institutional frameworks for coordinated community outreach.

Research Question Three: What is the degree of information access among users of medical libraries in North-East Nigeria?

Table 3: Degree of Information Access

Information Access Variable	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)	Mean	SD
Access to digital medical resources	198	71.2%	4.00	0.41
Access to print medical materials	185	66.5%	3.80	0.48
Access to online public health information	205	73.7%	4.10	0.45
Internet connectivity availability	160	57.6%	3.50	0.53
Ease of navigating medical databases	168	60.4%	3.65	0.50

Information access is relatively high (mean range = 3.50-4.10). Users have strong access to digital and online public health resources, although connectivity and database navigation challenges persist.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the roles and behaviors of medical library users in promoting sustainable healthcare, engaging with communities, and accessing medical information in North-East Nigeria.

Promotion of Sustainable Healthcare Practices

The study found that users demonstrate high awareness of sustainable healthcare information, consistent with global trends that show increasing interest in sustainability-related health practices (Holt & Meyer, 2023). However, awareness does not consistently translate into active advocacy or participation in health programs. This gap mirrors observations by Adamu and Ibrahim (2023), who

reported that Nigerian medical library users often lack structured platforms for applying sustainability knowledge.

Community Engagement

The findings show moderate engagement levels, with users contributing to public health awareness but participating less in formal outreach programs. This aligns with studies by Wilson & Gomez (2023), which note that African health institutions often lack coordinated community engagement frameworks.

Information Access

Information access was found to be relatively high, supporting research by Bakare & Adebayo (2022), who observed increased digital resource usage in Nigerian medical libraries. Nevertheless, persistent challenges such as poor connectivity and limited digital literacy remain obstacles to maximizing access.

Conclusion

This study concludes that medical library users in North-East Nigeria demonstrate moderate promotion of sustainable healthcare practices, moderate community engagement, and relatively high information access. Although users show strong awareness of sustainable healthcare, their engagement in advocacy and outreach remains limited. Community engagement is hindered by inadequate program structures, while information access is constrained by infrastructural challenges. Strengthening medical libraries, enhancing outreach programs, and expanding ICT capacity will significantly improve sustainable healthcare promotion in the region.

Recommendations

- 1- Medical libraries should conduct regular user training on sustainable healthcare, including environmental health, preventive care, and responsible health behaviors.
- 2- Libraries should partner with NGOs, teaching hospitals, and public health agencies to organize structured outreach programs.
- 3- Improved internet connectivity, digital library systems, and updated medical databases will enhance information access.

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