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INFORMATION LITERACY AND INFORMATION-SEEKING BEHAVIOUR AMONG RESIDENTS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES IN ISOKO NORTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, DELTA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the information literacy (IL) skills and information-seeking behavior (ISB) among residents of rural communities in Isoko North Local Government Area, Delta State, Nigeria. Anchored on Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behaviour, the research adopted a descriptive survey design targeting adult household heads across six purposively selected communities: Ozoro, Emevor, Oyede, Ellu, Ovrode, and Ofagbe. A sample of 287 valid respondents was used, with data collected via a structured questionnaire (ILISBQ) and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and mean scores. The findings revealed that rural residents possess a moderate level of information literacy (aggregate mean = 2.58), characterized by strong functional problem-solving skills but a significant lack of formal, tool-based competencies, such as the ability to use library catalogues. Information needs were rated high (aggregate mean = 3.00), with the most pressing demands centered on health issues, disease prevention, and modern farming methodologies. Regarding information sources, residents relied predominantly on radio broadcasts (mean = 3.23) and informal interpersonal networks (mean = 3.11), while formal public libraries were severely underutilized (mean = 1.91). The study identified major structural barriers to information access, including the total absence of functional libraries, poor road networks, and unreliable electricity supply. Recommendations include the establishment of functional community libraries by the Delta State Government, the prioritization of rural electrification, and the formal integration of traditional community structures (e.g., town criers) and radio-based strategies into rural information dissemination.

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Keywords: Information Literacy, Information-Seeking Behaviour, Information Needs, Rural Communities, Isoko North, Delta State

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Introduction

Information is a vital resource that shapes human decisions, productivity, and overall well-being, whether in urban or rural settings. For rural dwellers in particular, timely and accurate information on agriculture, health, market prices, government policies, and social affairs can mean the difference between progress and stagnation. However, the ability to benefit from available information depends not merely on its existence, but on individuals' capacity to recognise an information need, locate appropriate sources, and critically evaluate and use the information obtained, a set of competencies broadly described as information literacy.

Abdulsalam and Odigie (2023) define an information-literate individual as one who can recognise when information is needed and has the ability to locate, evaluate, and use information effectively. This conception was later expanded by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2016) in its Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education, which describes information literacy as an interrelated set of abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, an understanding of how information is produced and valued, and its use in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning. Although this framework was developed primarily for academic contexts, its core ideas comprise the ability to recognise information needs and to find, evaluate, and use information responsibly, apply with equal force to rural, non-academic populations whose daily survival often depends on practical information about farming, health, and livelihood.

Closely related to information literacy is the concept of information-seeking behaviour, which describes the manner in which individuals search for and utilise

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information in order to satisfy a felt need. Information-seeking behaviour is a prominent research area in the field of information science. Wilson (1999, 2000) conceptualises the concept as the totality of human behaviour in relation to sources and channels of information, including both active and passive information seeking and information use. Similarly, Yadav and Singh (2026) defined information-seeking behaviour as the strategy, pattern, and activities individuals adopt to locate, acquire, and deploy information to meet their various information requirements. Studies on information-seeking behaviour expose several areas of the user, which include their preferred information sources, information needs, information search strategies, the uses they put the information they receive to, and the factors militating against their accessibility and use of information. The findings from such services would enable information professionals to adequately plan specialised services that meet the specific needs of a particular user group, which could include farmers, doctors, students, lawyers, accountants, geologists, and bankers, to mention only a few.

In rural communities across Nigeria, information-seeking behaviour is shaped strongly by the absence of formal information infrastructure such as libraries, internet access, and extension services, and tends to lean heavily on informal and interpersonal channels (Ogungbeni et al. 2022; Istifanus et al., 2023). Isoko North Local Government Area is one of the twenty-five local government areas of Delta State, Nigeria, with its administrative headquarters at Ozoro (Delta State Government, 2024). The area is largely rural, with a substantial proportion of the population engaged in farming, fishing, and petty trading. Like many rural areas in the Niger Delta region, Isoko North faces infrastructural deficits, including poor road networks, irregular electricity supply, and

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limited access to formal information institutions such as public libraries and resource centres. These conditions raise important questions about how rural residents in the area identify their information needs, where they turn for information, and what challenges they encounter in the process, questions which this study sought to answer.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the centrality of information to rural development, residents of rural communities in Nigeria, including those in Isoko North Local Government Area, continue to experience difficulty in accessing and effectively utilising information relevant to their daily lives. Public libraries and formal information centres are scarce or non-functional in many rural communities, while infrastructural challenges such as poor electricity supply and weak telecommunication network coverage further constrain access to electronic and online sources of information. Consequently, many rural dwellers depend largely on informal sources, such as family members, neighbours, and community gatherings, which, while accessible, do not always provide accurate, current, or comprehensive information. There is also a paucity of empirical, community-specific studies examining the actual level of information literacy possessed by rural residents in Isoko North and the strategies they adopt in seeking information to meet pressing needs in agriculture, health, and livelihood. It was against this background that this study examined information literacy and information-seeking behaviour among residents of rural communities in Isoko North Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

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1. What is the level of information literacy skills among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?
2. What are the information needs of rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?
3. What are the sources of information utilised by rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?
4. What challenges militate against effective information access among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on Wilson's (1999) Model of Information Behaviour. The model posits that an information need arises within a particular context, shaped by the individual's role, environment, and the intervening variables of psychological, demographic, social, environmental, and source-characteristic factors, and that this need triggers information-seeking behaviour through one or more activating mechanisms. The model is particularly suited to this study because it accommodates the reality of rural information behaviour, where formal information-seeking mechanisms (such as library use or internet search) often coexist with, or are substituted by, informal mechanisms (such as interpersonal consultation and reliance on traditional community structures), all of which Wilson's model treats as legitimate and analytically significant forms of information-seeking behaviour shaped by the rural respondent's social and infrastructural context.

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The model guided the design of the research instrument used in this study, particularly in distinguishing between the respondents' information needs, the range of formal and informal sources and channels through which they sought to satisfy those needs, and the intervening environmental and infrastructural barriers that shaped their information-seeking behaviour.

Concept of Information Literacy

Information literacy, as defined by UNESCO (2023), is the ability to effectively find, evaluate, and use information to reach your personal and professional goals. It empowers people to navigate important areas like health and education, allowing them to make informed decisions about their lives. From a similar perspective, Anunobi and Udem (2014) defined Information literacy as the ability to recognize when information is needed and to effectively find, evaluate, analyze, and ethically use that information to solve problems or answer questions.

From a different angle, Information Literacy Group (2018) asserted that information literacy is far more than a checklist of technical skills for handling data; it is the critical ability to find, manage, and share information with confidence and judgment. It requires a deep level of awareness and ethical thinking to navigate the complex political and social landscapes surrounding information use. According to Plymouth Library (2026), information literacy is a versatile concept that covers all information formats from digital data and spoken words to traditional print. It doesn't exist in a vacuum; instead, it intersects with digital, media, and academic literacies to form a comprehensive framework for understanding. Being information-literate, as affirmed by Ashikuzzaman (2021), means having the expertise and mindset to find, judge, and apply information

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effectively. These individuals can pinpoint their specific needs, gather data from varied sources, and critically verify credibility. They do not just collect information; they synthesize it into meaningful insights while maintaining ethical standards and using modern tools to organize and share their results (Ashikuzzaman, 2021).

Additionally, Badiger et al. (2017) affirmed that mastering information literacy is crucial in the modern world because it drives critical thinking and a problem-solving mindset. It equips individuals to ask the right questions, locate the necessary data, and evaluate sources effectively to make better-informed decisions.

Concept of Information-Seeking Behaviour

Information-seeking behaviour refers to the purposive process by which individuals engage with information systems and sources to satisfy an identified information need. Wilson's (1999) model of information behaviour situates information-seeking behaviour within a broader framework of human information behaviour, which includes information needs, information seeking, and information use, and emphasises that an individual's context, including their social role, environment, and the barriers they encounter, shapes both the decision to seek information and the channels chosen. Wilson's model has remained influential in information science research because it accounts for the intervening variables, psychological, demographic, interpersonal, environmental, and source-related, that determine whether and how an information need is acted upon.

Poongodi and Santhi (2017) argued that the study of information-seeking behavior evolved from the broader discipline of user studies, encompassing a wide array of research in information science while drawing influence from the fields of computer

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science and communication. Within the overarching framework of Information Science, both user studies and information-seeking behavior are recognized as core components. Scholars have historically conceptualized this behavior in various ways; for example, Fourie (2004) characterizes information seeking as a multifaceted process involving social, communicative, and interactive elements. In contrast, Case (2002) defines it as a deliberate and conscious effort to acquire information to address a specific need or a recognized gap in one's knowledge.

Empirical Review

Level of Information Literacy Skills among Rural Residents

The prevailing discourse on rural information literacy (IL) reveals a systemic crisis characterized by a "critical imbalance" between information needs and the foundational skills required to address them. Research by Ekoko (2020) in Delta State, Nigeria, underscores a fundamental barrier: the widespread absence of functional literacy, which precludes the development of higher-order communicative and interactive skills. Oldenburg and Griesbaum (2022) and Divina and Balasubramanian (2024) illustrate that even where basic literacy exists, information evaluation remains a significant bottleneck, with most residents possessing only a rudimentary understanding of digital tools. This "basic" level of literacy is insufficient for the demands of the modern information age and mirrors the "techno-complexity" often discussed in professional settings.

Crucially, studies by Dorathy and Uche (2021) and Mashiyane et al. (2025) demonstrate that rural information literacy is not merely a cognitive issue but a consequence of material and infrastructural neglect. Much like the unique infrastructural

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deficits and weak internet connectivity that characterize the South-South Nigerian landscape, rural residents face a structural paralysis caused by a lack of devices and stable power. Whether it is farmers in Abia State struggling to identify agricultural solutions or youth in South Africa unable to search for employment, the evidence suggests that information literacy is inextricably linked to the availability of physical resources.

The Information Needs of Rural Residents

Regarding the information needs of rural residents, Momoh and Adewojo (2025) examined the information needs and seeking behaviour of farmers in Baruten, Local Government Area, Kwara State, Nigeria. Findings from the study revealed that the greatest information need of farmers in Baruten Local Government was information on credit facilities, which had a mean value of 3.61. This was followed by information on new farming methodologies and marketing of farm produce, which had a mean value of 3.59. Also, Istifanus et al. (2025) evaluated the information needs, awareness, and use among rural dwellers in Chibok Local Government Area, Borno State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the rural dwellers in Chibok Local Government Area, Borno State, Nigeria, frequently need information on health, agriculture, employment, and skills acquisition, among others, and that they were aware of the sources of the information they get.

Also, Yakubu (2024) assessed the information needs of rural dwellers for poverty reduction and sustainable development. The findings revealed that the rural dwellers' information needs are particularly related to health, farming/ agriculture, financial and economic information, politics, education, and other social and cultural information. Ho et al. (2020) examined the information needs and seeking behaviour of rural dwellers in

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Sarawak, Malaysia. From the findings, the rural dwellers have the highest needs in the areas of religion, health and medical, as well as entertainment, leisure, and sports. They have the lowest needs for information about social welfare, politics, and general/state elections.

In yet another study, Sanders et al. (2023) explored the health information-seeking patterns via social media among Rural Residents in rural Georgia. The findings revealed that the primary information needs of the rural residents include information on their health status, treatment, and medications. In a study, Olaiya (2022) assessed the availability and accessibility of health information among rural women in Elemere, Moro Local Government, Kwara State. The findings revealed that the information needs of the rural women include information on immunization, maternity and general health information, and treatment and prevention of communicable diseases.

Sources of Information for Rural Residents

Several empirical studies have examined dimensions of information access and behaviour specifically within Delta State. Isebe (2022), in a study of information-seeking behaviour among elderly persons in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, found that elderly rural residents relied heavily on interpersonal and community-based channels for information, with research assistants proficient in the local Urhobo language needed to administer the questionnaire, underscoring the relevance of language and literacy considerations in rural information-seeking research within the state. Similarly, Igere (2025), examining the information-seeking behaviour of rural dwellers on healthcare matters in the same local government area, found that rural dwellers relied predominantly on traditional and informal ways of seeking healthcare information and

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faced common barriers in accessing formal healthcare information services, a pattern consistent with the broader picture of rural information behaviour in Delta State.

In yet another study, Ezeh and Ezeh (2017) assessed the perception and information-seeking behaviour of rural households towards health-promoting practices in Maigana district of Kaduna State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the rural residents relied on Community Health Workers, Radio, and Self-Help/Women Groups; the other sources were poorly utilized, with the least-ranked (internet) having zero patronage. Emmanuel (2012) assessed the Information needs and information-seeking behaviour of rural farmers in the Okpokwu Local Government Area of Benue State, Nigeria. From the findings, the rural farmers relied on Friends, age-grade members, elders, neighbours, and farmers' groups as the most available and accessible sources of information in their information-seeking efforts.

In yet another study, Anunobi et al. (2014) explored the information needs of rural dwellers as an assessment of the effectiveness of library and information services provision in Anambra State, Nigeria. The findings revealed that the rural dwellers rely on their professional colleagues/trade masters, churches, promotion by motor advertisers, television/radio, and ceremonies for information to meet their needs.

The Challenges Militating against Effective Information Access and Use among Rural Residents

Several challenges militate against the access and use of information among rural residents. George's (2018) study identified high illiteracy rates, language barriers, inability to access formal channels of information, poverty, lack of time, and rural women's scepticism towards government and information agencies, among others.

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Ijiekhuamhen and Omosekejimi's (2016) study highlighted the unavailability of library information resources, illiteracy, language barriers, lack of time, and high cost of electronic gadgets as barriers to the access and use of information among the rural women in the three rural communities in Ondo State, Nigeria. In another study, Sokey and Adisah-Atta (2017) assessed drawbacks affecting rural dwellers in their quest to access and use health information in Ghana. Notable among the challenges identified in the study are the language barrier, the location of the villages, and inaccessibility to emerging technologies such as mobile phones and television sets. A study by Jwat and Wumbuet (2023) on the information needs and seeking behaviour of rural farmers in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria identified a lack of language support, extension worker services, financial support, public awareness, and current information as the factors affecting information access and use among the rural farmers in the study scope.

Yap et al. (2020) assessed the information needs and seeking behaviour of rural dwellers in Sarawak, Malaysia. The findings revealed that limited finance availability, poor infrastructure, poor literacy, language barriers, insufficient digital access, and lack of interest were identified as the barriers to the access and use of information by the rural dwellers. Nzeduba et al. (2025) evaluated health-Seeking Behavior Among Rural Dwellers in Enugu, A South-Eastern Nigerian state. The findings revealed that a lack of funds was the major barrier militating against their access and use of information. Also, Haumba and Kaddu (2021) assessed the information-seeking behaviour patterns of family farmers and household food security in Kisoga B village, Uganda. The findings revealed that inadequate access to public extension services, lack of awareness of information sources, poor locations, which are either far or not easy to access, insufficient

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funds, resistance to change, information hoarding/ selfishness among several farmers, lack of trust, insufficient assistive technologies, and poor/ low information literacy level were classified as the challenges militating against access to information by the farmers.

Methodology

This study adopted the descriptive survey research design. This design was considered appropriate because the study sought to describe the existing level of information literacy, information needs, information sources, and challenges among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area as they naturally exist, without manipulation of variables. The population of the study comprised adult household heads resident in rural communities within Isoko North Local Government Area of Delta State. For this study, the population was defined as adult household heads (aged 18 years and above) across six purposively selected communities in the local government area, namely Ozoro (Headquarters), Emevor, Oyede, Ellu, Ovrode, and Ofagbe, estimated at approximately 1,201 persons based on community household records and local administrative estimates. A sample size of 287 respondents was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table for determining sample size for a given population, which yields a sample of approximately 291 for a population of 1,201 at a 95% confidence level and 0.05 margin of error.

Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select respondents, with each of the six communities serving as a stratum from which respondents were drawn in proportion to its estimated household population, followed by simple random sampling of household heads within each community. A structured questionnaire titled "Information Literacy and Information-Seeking Behaviour Questionnaire" (ILISBQ) was

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used for data collection. The instrument was divided into six sections: Section A elicited demographic information of respondents, while Sections B to E contained ten items each on a four-point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree), corresponding to Research Questions 1 to 5, respectively. The face and content validity of the instrument were established through review by experts in Library and Information Science and Measurement and Evaluation, who assessed the instrument for clarity, relevance, and adequacy of coverage of the constructs under investigation. Necessary corrections were made based on their observations before the final administration of the instrument.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through a pilot test administered to 20 respondents in a rural community outside the main study area, and the data obtained were subjected to Cronbach's Alpha reliability test, which yielded a coefficient of 0.81, indicating that the instrument was reliable for the study. Copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents by the researcher with the assistance of trained research assistants who were familiar with the local communities and could assist respondents with low literacy levels in completing the questionnaire through interview-administration where necessary. A total of 291 copies of the instrument were administered to the respondents, and 287 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved, found valid, and used for analysis, representing a response rate of 99% for the final usable sample. Data collected were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentages, means, and standard deviations. For the Likert-scale items, response options were assigned weights as follows: Strongly Agree = 4, Agree = 3, Disagree = 2, and Strongly Disagree = 1. A criterion mean of 2.50 was adopted for decision-making; any item with a mean score

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of 2.50 and above was regarded as "Agree", while items with a mean score below 2.50 were regarded as "Disagree".

Results and Discussion of Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	158	55.1%
Female	129	44.9%
Total	287	100%

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 - 30 years	52	18.1%
31 - 45 years	98	34.1%
46 - 60 years	91	31.7%
Above 60 years	46	16.0%
Total	287	100%

Table 3: Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
No formal education	43	15.0%
Primary education	87	30.3%
Secondary education	109	38.0%
Tertiary education	48	16.7%
Total	287	100%

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents by Occupation

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Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Farming	121	42.2%
Trading	64	22.3%
Civil/Public service	39	13.6%
Artisan/Skilled labour	41	14.3%
Others	22	7.6%
Total	287	100%

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents by Community

Community	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Ozoro	58	20.2%
Emevor	51	17.8%
Oyede	44	15.3%
Ellu	39	13.6%
Ovrode	53	18.5%
Ofagbe	42	14.6%
Total	287	100%

Tables 1 to 5 present the demographic distribution of respondents. As shown in Table 1, the majority of respondents were male (55.1%), while females constituted 44.9%. Table 2 shows that respondents aged 31-45 years formed the largest age bracket (34.1%), followed by those aged 46-60 years (31.7%), suggesting that the data were drawn predominantly from economically active and household-head age groups. Table 3 indicates that most respondents had attained secondary education (38.0%), while 15.0% had no formal education at all, a factor relevant to the discussion of information literacy levels in subsequent sections. Table 4 shows that farming was the dominant occupation (42.2%), consistent with the largely agrarian character of the study area, while Table 5 confirms a fairly even spread of respondents across the six sampled communities.

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Research Question 1: What is the level of information literacy skills among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?

The level of information literacy skills among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area.

Table 6: Mean Responses on the Level of Information Literacy Skills Among Rural Residents (n = 287)

S/N	Information Literacy Skills Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I can clearly state what information I need before searching for it	79	102	71	35	2.78	0.98	Agree
2	I know where to look for information when I need it	84	96	68	39	2.78	1.01	Agree
3	I can use a library catalogue or a simple search tool to locate information	41	63	110	73	2.25	0.99	Disagree
4	I can tell the difference between a reliable and an unreliable source of information	52	87	99	49	2.49	0.98	Disagree
5	I can evaluate information gotten from radio, television, or social media before believing it	58	91	94	44	2.57	0.98	Agree
6	I can use the information I have gathered to solve a personal or community problem	91	110	53	33	2.90	0.98	Agree
7	I can organise the information I have collected for future use	47	79	107	54	2.41	0.97	Disagree
8	I know how to ask someone (e.g., an extension worker or librarian) for help in finding information	73	119	64	31	2.82	0.94	Agree
9	I understand basic terms used in government, health, or agricultural information materials	55	84	101	47	2.51	0.98	Agree

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S/N	Information Literacy Skills Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
10	I am confident in my ability to find information on any topic I need	39	68	116	64	2.29	0.96	Disagree
	Aggregate Mean / SD					**2.58**	**0.98**	**Agree**

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 6 shows that respondents generally perceive themselves as moderately information literate, with an aggregate mean of 2.58, which is above the criterion mean of 2.50. Respondents agreed most strongly that they can use information gathered to solve a personal or community problem (mean = 2.90) and that they know how to ask someone, such as an extension worker or librarian, for help in finding information (mean = 2.82). However, respondents disagreed that they could use a library catalogue or simple search tool to locate information (mean = 2.25) and expressed low confidence in their overall ability to find information on any topic they need (mean = 2.29). This pattern suggests that while rural residents in Isoko North possess functional, everyday information literacy skills rooted in practical problem-solving and social help-seeking, they lack the more formal, tool-based information literacy competencies associated with library and database use. This finding presents a notable contrast to the research of Ekoko (2020), who documented a total lack of functional literacy among rural women in other parts of Delta State. While the participants demonstrated a proficiency in using information for practical problem-solving that aligns with the competencies described by Ashikuzzaman (2021) and Badiger et al. (2017), they lacked the formal skills required to navigate library catalogues or databases. This specific deficit supports the assertions of Oldenburg and Griesbaum (2022) and Divina and Balasubramanian (2024) that a "digital

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divide" and "techno-complexity" exist where basic literacy remains insufficient for the demands of modern tool-based information environments. This finding aligns with Wilson's (1999) Model by illustrating how personal and psychological intervening variables shape information behaviour.

Research Question 2: What are the information needs of rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?

Identify the information needs of rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area.

Table 7: Mean Responses on the Information Needs of Rural Residents (n = 287)

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I need information on modern farming methods and agricultural inputs	121	98	47	21	3.11	0.93	Agree
2	I need information on health issues, disease prevention, and available health services	134	91	39	23	3.17	0.95	Agree
3	I need information on government programmes, policies, and rural development schemes	99	107	56	25	2.98	0.94	Agree
4	I need information on the prices of farm produce and market opportunities	117	103	45	22	3.10	0.93	Agree
5	I need information on educational opportunities for myself or my children	108	112	44	23	3.06	0.92	Agree
6	I need information on weather and climate conditions affecting farming activities	126	89	48	24	3.10	0.96	Agree
7	I need information on my legal rights, land matters, and community/traditional issues	87	101	67	32	2.85	0.98	Agree

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S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
8	I need information on financial services, loans, and cooperative society activities	95	99	62	31	2.90	0.98	Agree
9	I need information on security and safety within my community	103	110	51	23	3.02	0.93	Agree
10	I need information on social and religious activities within and outside my community	71	96	84	36	2.70	0.98	Agree
	Aggregate Mean / SD					**3.00**	**0.95**	**Agree**

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 7 reveals that all ten items recorded mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50, with an aggregate mean of 3.00, indicating a high level of information need among rural residents in Isoko North across all the domains examined. The highest-rated needs were information on health issues, disease prevention, and available health services (mean = 3.17) and information on modern farming methods and agricultural inputs (mean = 3.11), reflecting the centrality of health and agriculture to the daily survival of rural dwellers in the area. Information on social and religious activities was recorded at the comparatively lowest, though still agreed-upon, mean (2.70). This finding strongly corroborates the empirical findings of Istifanus et al. (2025) and Yakubu (2024), who observed similar priorities among rural dwellers in Borno State and for sustainable development generally. This also aligns with Momoh and Adewojo's (2025) research in Kwara State, which highlighted farming methodologies and market prices as critical needs. However, the study deviates from the findings of Ho et al. (2020) in Malaysia, where religion was the highest-rated need; in Isoko North, social and religious

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information was ranked lower than immediate survival needs related to health and economic livelihood.

Research Question 3: What are the sources of information utilised by rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?

The sources of information utilised by rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area.

Table 8: Mean Responses on Sources of Information Utilised by Rural Residents (n = 287)

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	I rely on family members, friends, and neighbours for information	119	104	41	23	3.11	0.93	Agree
2	I rely on community town criers, age-grade meetings, and traditional rulers for information	98	112	53	24	2.99	0.93	Agree
3	I rely on radio broadcasts for information	142	89	35	21	3.23	0.93	Agree
4	I rely on television for information	77	93	79	38	2.73	1.00	Agree
5	I rely on mobile phones (calls, SMS, social media, WhatsApp) for information	88	96	71	32	2.84	0.99	Agree
6	I rely on agricultural extension workers and health workers for information	64	91	92	40	2.62	0.98	Agree
7	I rely on the public library or any nearby library for information	21	38	121	107	1.91	0.89	Disagree
8	I rely on churches, mosques, and religious gatherings for information	91	108	62	26	2.92	0.94	Agree
9	I rely on markets and trade associations for information	73	99	81	34	2.74	0.97	Agree

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S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
10	I rely on newspapers and printed materials for information	33	52	116	86	2.11	0.96	Disagree
	Aggregate Mean / SD					**2.72**	**0.95**	**Agree**

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Criterion Mean = 2.50

Table 8 shows an aggregate mean of 2.72, indicating general reliance on the listed sources, although with considerable variation across items. Radio emerged as the most relied-upon source (mean = 3.23), followed by reliance on family members, friends, and neighbours (mean = 3.11), and community structures such as town criers and age-grade meetings (mean = 2.99). In sharp contrast, reliance on the public library or any nearby library recorded the lowest mean (1.91), falling well below the criterion mean, while reliance on newspapers and printed materials was similarly low (mean = 2.11). The heavy reliance on radio and interpersonal networks, such as family and neighbors, found in Isoko North reinforces Momodu's (2002) earlier research in Edo State and Isebe's (2022) work in Delta State. This pattern of prioritizing accessible broadcast media and social capital over formal institutions is consistent with observations by Emmanuel (2012) and Anunobi et al. (2014), who found that age grades, churches, and trade masters serve as primary information infrastructures in rural settings. Furthermore, the extremely low reliance on libraries and printed materials reported in this study mirrors the work of Ezeh and Ezeh (2017), who noted zero patronage of the internet and a high reliance on community health workers in Kaduna State. This finding aligns with Wilson's focus on the selection of sources and channels.

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Research Question 4: What challenges militate against effective information access among rural residents in Isoko North Local Government Area?

Table 9: Mean Responses on Challenges Militating Against Effective Information Access (n = 287)

S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	The poor road network makes it difficult to travel to access information centres	131	96	39	21	3.17	0.92	Agree
2	There is no functional library or information centre in my community	138	89	38	22	3.20	0.94	Agree
3	Poor electricity supply limits my access to radio, television, and phone charging	124	101	41	21	3.14	0.92	Agree
4	Poor or no internet/network connectivity in my area limits access to online information	117	108	40	22	3.11	0.92	Agree
5	I lack the money to buy a radio, television, phone, or recharge card/data	89	97	68	33	2.84	0.99	Agree
6	I lack adequate education/literacy skills to read and understand certain information materials	76	91	84	36	2.72	0.99	Agree
7	Information materials are often not available in a language I understand well	62	79	99	47	2.54	1.00	Agree
8	Information from the government and officials often arrives too late to be useful	94	103	63	27	2.92	0.96	Agree
9	I do not trust some of the information sources available to me	58	86	101	42	2.56	0.97	Agree

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S/N	Item	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
10	There is no one (extension worker, librarian, information officer) to guide me on where to find information	81	99	76	31	2.80	0.97	Agree
	Aggregate Mean / SD					**2.90**	**0.96**	**Agree**

Key: SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree, SD = Strongly Disagree, Criterion Mean = 2.50

As shown in Table 9, all ten items were rated above the criterion mean, with an aggregate mean of 2.90, confirming that rural residents in Isoko North face substantial and multi-dimensional barriers to information access. The most significant challenges identified were the absence of a functional library or information centre in the community (mean = 3.20), poor road networks limiting travel to information centres (mean = 3.17), and poor electricity supply limiting access to radio, television, and phone charging (mean = 3.14). Lack of trust in available information sources recorded a comparatively lower, though still agreed-upon, mean (2.56). The multidimensional challenges identified, particularly the total absence of functional libraries and poor electricity, align with the "material and infrastructural neglect" described by Dorathy and Uche (2021) and Mashiyane et al. (2025). These structural barriers reinforce the findings of Igere (2025) and Isebe (2022), who argued that infrastructural deficits and language barriers are the primary hurdles to formal information access in Delta State. These findings confirm the Wilson model's assertion that the environment can significantly constrain or redirect the decision to seek information.

Conclusion and Recommendations

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Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that residents of rural communities in Isoko North Local Government Area are not indifferent to information; rather, they actively seek information to meet pressing needs in agriculture, health, and daily livelihood, drawing heavily on interpersonal networks and radio broadcasting in the near-total absence of functional formal information institutions. The moderate level of information literacy observed among respondents, coupled with the consistent identification of infrastructural deficits, particularly the absence of libraries, poor electricity, and weak network connectivity, as the primary barriers to information access, indicates that the central challenge facing rural residents in Isoko North is not a lack of willingness or motivation to seek information, but rather a structural and infrastructural deficit that constrains their ability to access and fully exploit available information resources. Addressing this deficit, rather than focusing narrowly on individual-level information literacy training alone, is therefore essential to improving information access and utilisation among rural residents in the area.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Delta State Government, in collaboration with the Nigerian Library Association, should establish functional community/rural library and information centres in Isoko North Local Government Area, prioritising communities currently without any form of formal information access point.

2. Government and relevant agencies should prioritise the improvement of rural electrification and the extension of telecommunication network coverage in Isoko

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North, as these infrastructural deficits underlie many of the other information access challenges identified in this study.

3. Agricultural and health extension agencies should increase the deployment of extension workers to rural communities in the area and should integrate radio-based and mobile-phone-based information dissemination strategies, given the demonstrated trust rural residents place in these channels.

4. Library and information science professionals, working with community-based organisations, should design and deliver information literacy training programmes tailored to rural adult learners, with particular emphasis on building confidence in locating and evaluating information rather than focusing solely on formal database or catalogue-based instruction.

5. Information materials produced by government and development agencies for rural audiences should be simplified and, where possible, produced in local languages to accommodate the literacy levels prevalent among rural residents.

6. Traditional community structures, such as town criers and age-grade associations, should be formally integrated into rural information dissemination strategies, given their demonstrated continued relevance and trust among rural residents.

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