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## Feasibility of Community Information Centres and The Implications for Technological Innovations in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### *Article history:*

Received 27 November 2021

Revised 21 February 2022

Accepted 2 April 2022

#### *Keywords:*

Community Information  
Centres,  
Technological Innovations,  
Rural Development,  
Afikpo,  
Nigeria

### ABSTRACT

The development of rural areas is expected to be holistic covering all essential infrastructure. Community information centres (CICs) are agencies that should be part of the infrastructures for rural development. Unfortunately, these centres are hardly seen in rural communities in Nigeria, including Afikpo in Ebonyi State. Thus, this study was conceived to explore the perceptions of citizens towards the establishment of CICs in the locality. It adopted survey research method with questionnaire as instrument for data collection, which was self-developed and validated by experts with a pre-texted reliability index of 0.72. A total of 399 copies of the questionnaire were distributed, out of which 267 copies were properly completed, representing 67% and were used for analysis. Findings revealed that the citizens have overall positive perception towards establishing the CICs; they are also knowledgeable of the benefits of such centres. Furthermore, there are workable suggestions on ways of establishing, funding and managing CICs in Afikpo. In addition, about 65% of the respondents indicated interest to assist and support the funding and management of the CICs when established. However, the challenges of inadequate funding and support as well as the possible politics of where to site/locate the CICs in Afikpo, are likely impediments to the project. The study concluded that citizens have strong and positive disposition towards establishing CICs in Afikpo. The implications of such CICs for technological innovations were analysed. The study recommends, among others, that government should see the establishment of CICs as priority projects that would significantly contribute to the growth and development of rural communities in Nigeria; communities in Afikpo should explore self-help approach to development; and political representatives from Afikpo should take advantage of establishing CICs as constituency projects for the citizens.

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International Journal of Knowledge Content Development & Technology, 13(2): 007-022, 2023.  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.5865/IJKCT.2023.13.2.007>

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## 1. Introduction

Development of infrastructure is expected to be a significant feature of societies. This implies that the existence and continuous operation of societies should be grounded in various visible indices of development. Such development, which should be balanced, should not only focus on urban centres but also in local government areas and rural communities. Thus, in different areas and rural communities, various infrastructures such as good roads, pipe borne water, electricity, health centres, schools, worship centres like churches and mosques, and community information centres are established for use by the citizens. The essence of establishing these infrastructures are for the benefit of the citizens in rural areas, so as to minimize rural to urban migration that will result in overpopulation in city centres. However, it has been observed that among the above-listed infrastructures that are found in rural areas, community information centres are hardly seen.

Community information centres (CIC) are established institutions responsible for the provision and delivery of information resources and services for addressing the information needs of the citizens in rural areas. According to Shrestha (2013), CICs act as vehicles for social and economic transformation in rural areas, with various facilities like a library, information and communication technology (ICT) centre, women empowerment section, early childhood section, multimedia and communication section, as well as training/meeting hall. Momodu (2012) notes that such CICs should have the capacity to meet the information needs of rural dwellers in areas of agriculture, education, health, politics, socio-economic information, culture and recreation. Examples of such rural dwellers include farmers, traders, artisans, community leaders, school children, out-of-school children, women and women groups, private businesses in the community, non-governmental organisations, community-based organizations, and local government authorities. Thus, the establishment of such CICs will be significant to various stakeholders in the community such as students, youths, adults, the elderly and artisans in the society, considering that CICs are responsible for addressing diverse information needs of community dwellers. To students in the community, such CICs, when established, will contribute in assisting them towards academic issues, such as reading habits, study skills, acquisition of knowledge, and preparation for examinations. To youths and adults, the CICs can act as a place for engaging in literacy programmes, skills acquisition, ICT training, among others. The centre can also provide information services that will address the entrepreneurial needs of youths and adults. On the part of artisans, the CICs will enable them to access information on ideas, innovations and market opportunities for their various areas of specializations. Generally, the CICs will be beneficial to the entire communities in Afikpo in Ebonyi State because it will serve as centre for addressing all information and knowledge needs of all citizens in the area. Therefore, the significance to the study are numerous and therefore worth investigating.

Apart from Abakaliki, the capital of Ebonyi State of Nigeria, Afikpo is the second largest city in the state with various communities such as Amuro, Mgbom, Ozziza, Ukpa, Amasiri, Akpoha, Ibii, Amaechara, Unwana, Enohia-Itim, Nkpoghoru/Ndibe, Ugwuegu, Ohisu, Egeburu, Amizu/Amangbala, Amankwo/ Amaobolobo, among others. As individuals residing in the area, the researchers observed that there are no reasonable efforts towards the establishment of CICs in the locality. Thus, it is not out of context to state that communities are incomplete, infrastructure-wise, without

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the availability of CICs that are accessible for use by the citizens. This is not farfetched from the situation in Afikpo of Ebonyi State. Observations from the researchers show that before now, there was this former old Amizu Town Hall, which was used by Ebonyi State Government as the Afikpo Branch Library of the Ebonyi State Library Board. However, with the renovation of the Amizu Town Hall, the community took over the building for their communal and traditional affairs, leaving the communities without a CIC. This is not ideal, considering the benefits of such CICs in the society, especially in areas of literacy enhancement, reading culture development, education and learning, documentation of cultures and traditions, among others. Thus, with this situation, the study was conceived to assess the perception of the citizens on the feasibility of establishing CICs in the area. Specifically, the study answered the following research questions:

- (a) What are the citizens' perceptions about the establishment of CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?
- (b) What are the citizens' perceptions of the benefits of establishing CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?
- (c) What are the citizens' perceptions of the methods/ways of establishing, funding and managing the CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?
- (d) What is the level of citizens' readiness to assist and support in the funding and management of the CICs when established in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?
- (e) What are the citizens' perceptions of the possible challenges that may affect the establishment of CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?

## 2. Literature Review

There are various conceptual and empirical reports related to community information centres (CICs). It is a fact that CICs are provided for the people in a particular geographical location to access information. It is community-based, sometimes referred to as rural information centres, community libraries and information centres, which collectively mean information agencies located in rural communities and professionally managed by information practitioners, technologists and administrators for the provision of diverse peoples' information needs in the locality or environment where the centre is located (Uzuegbu & Arua, 2018).

According to Adewusi (2013), CICs refer to places where people in communities may gather to listen to stories, watch films or seek an understanding of their environment and their problems. It is a place with resources in variety of media such as books, journals, newspapers, films, slides, video and audio cassettes, three dimensional objects, etc., and equipment such as, recorders, cameras, computers, photocopiers, printers, fax machines etc., are arranged or made accessible in appropriate manner for empowering people through information dissemination, production, and skills acquisition. It is an established place dedicated to keeping up-to-date information on thousands of community

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programmes, services and organizations, so as to be meeting the diverse and changing needs of the community people. Part of the services of CICs are Internet access place, work space, small group meetings, workshops and training, information and referral counseling, community information and social service systems, technology and skills training for adults and youths, cyber-camps for children and youth, publications and learning resources, enquiry counseling and consultation services, community engagement and development services as well as communication and advocacy service.

According to Shrestha (2013), with their changing roles as centres for sustainable development, CICs act as vehicles for social and economic transformation in rural areas, with diverse facilities like library, ICT centre, women empowerment department, early childhood unit, multimedia and communication department, as well as training/meeting hall. The CICs are expected to have up-to-date information resources (like books, newspapers, magazines, encyclopaedia, dictionaries, etc), and functional ICT components (like computer systems with Internet facilities, printers, fax machines, photocopiers, television, and telephones), with the capacity to meet the agriculture, education, health, politics, socio-economic information, culture and recreational information needs of the citizens (Momodu, 2012).

It is a fact that the benefits of CICs in rural areas cannot be over-emphasized because it is the fulcrum on which grassroots development all over the world is driven. It is also a major indicator of national growth, development and literacy. The Nwalimu Julius Nyerere of Tanzania (1967, as cited in Aguolu, 1989) in his days of Ujamaa revolution quipped “while other countries in the world aim to reach the moon, we must aim for the time being - - - to reach the villages by providing them with necessary information”. Thus, CICs have the capacity to eradicate ignorance and provide enlightenment on social, political and cultural objectives towards the development of the entire community (Kamba, 2009). A community can only become knowledgeable if they recognize and use information as their tool for development.

Mchombu (2003) notes that lack of access to adequate and right information at the right time to the rural communities undermines the efforts at improving the living conditions of the rural people by both governments and non-governmental organisations. The CICs also facilitates access to information on various farming systems in the rural areas (Aina, 2007). Farmers have increased income because they belong to cooperatives that are able to respond appropriately to changes in market forces. These are achievable mainly through the existence of viable CICs. Societal needs are satisfied through various activities that requires information as an input. Information that is well packaged for rural communities will eliminate poverty, ignorance and gives enlightenment on how to achieve economic, social, political, educational and cultural objectives towards the development of the whole society. For instance, research findings show that CICs have a strategic role to play in disseminating the change mantra of the government as championed via “change begins with me” campaign (Umar, 2018). When factored into government programmes, the CISs serve as platforms for training people in basic literacy skills, digital literacy skills, facilitating adult educational programmes and could also serve as access points to open education cum distance learning programmes. In addition, such CICs could also serve as institutions for documenting and preserving the traditions, cultural practices, values and other indigenous knowledge of the people for reference purposes and the future generations yet unborn. Thus, as Adewusi (2013) noted, the

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impact of CICs in the society cuts across areas of education and current affairs, skills acquisition, financial assistance, business opportunities and employments.

The report of Shrestha (2013) shows that CICs are viable centres for tangible growth and development, like the case of the “READ” model of Nepal where sections of CIC are devoted to women’s empowerment and community meetings and trainings. This aligns with the fact that CICs drive grass-roots education, economic empowerment and development, create hubs for life-changing abilities, and support community-based programmes. Despite all these benefits associated with such centres, however, their establishment remains a challenge in Nigeria.

Meanwhile, ordinarily, the establishment of CICs should be the responsibility of governments, especially state and local governments. However, these governments appear to have neglected such responsibility, but with more focus on health centres, schools and pipe borne water, which are equally important. However, there are various feasible ways that could be adopted in establishing CICs in rural areas in Nigeria (Igwe et al, 2019). These are through states and local governments, community self-help efforts, community age grades/groups, constituency projects of political representatives, philanthropists in the community, community members/ town unions in diaspora, contributions of NGOs, and friends of the community. In addition, the findings of Emezie and Igwe (2017) revealed that librarians in academic institutions can engage in providing community information services as corporate social responsibility and recommended that government should enact laws that can enable all stakeholders, government inclusive, to provide resources that can make CICs realistic and viable for service delivery. In addition, business companies and industrial firms could be made to factor community information centres into their community development programmes or corporate social responsibility (Emezie & Igwe, 2017). However, no matter the way such CIC was established, it is the responsibility of the community to ensure and facilitate the security, funding and proper management of the centre for the use of the people.

There are other empirical studies related to CICs. The impact of CICs on community development was investigated by Adewusi (2013) using four communities in Akoko North West Local Government, Ondo State, Nigeria. The study employed survey research method, using mainly questionnaire. Copies of questionnaire were distributed to a total of 200 respondents. The entire questionnaire were effectively completed and retrieved. Teachers, traders, farmers, fish sellers, civil servants and students were the respondents. The findings revealed that availability of CICs is rare in the communities; thus, the dwellers were unaware of the great potentials inherent in the utilization of the centres. It was further discovered that the communities yearn for provision of well stocked CIC with a view to empowering, changing and transforming their life socially, economically, technologically, educationally, and politically for the better.

Another study by Agwuna and Enweani (2018) examined the need for managing CICs for effective provision of health information to rural women. Data were gathered through desk research and content analysis approach. Data generated from analysis of literature were augmented through brainstorming and interaction with professional colleagues. The study found that the challenges to effective provision of health information to rural women includes gross underfunding of CICs, inadequate knowledge of information needs of rural communities, gap between service provided and actual information desired, dearth or skilled and qualified librarian and indifferent attitude of rural women

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to information utilization. The study recommended some strategies that can be adopted to effectively provide health information to rural dwellers include collaboration and partnership with medical practitioners in the provision of health information, training of CICs personnel, automation of CICs, and creating a database of health information needs of rural women.

No doubt, to further promote the enhancement and sharing of knowledge among rural dwellers, CICs should be established. CICs will help to bridge the knowledge and digital divide among rural communities and thus create a knowledge society. However, a community can only become knowledgeable if they recognize and use information as their tool for development. More so, the establishment of CICs within local communities will help improve livelihood of rural dwellers, school children, businesses and farmers within the locality of the centres. Thus, literature have been reviewed in the areas of CICs meaning and benefits, ways/methods of establishing, funding and managing CICs, challenges of establishing and managing CICs, and some empirical literature related to the study. However, there is hardly any study that explored citizens' perception towards establishing CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. This is the gap and justification for the study.

### 3. Methodology

The survey research design was adopted for this study. It is one of the descriptive research designs that involve systematic and comprehensive collection of data about the opinions and behaviours of people on a particular issue or problem. In this case, the issue is citizens' perceptions towards the establishment of Community Information Centres (CICs) in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Survey research design is appropriate for the study (Nworgu, 2015), considering the fact that the population of the prospective respondents i.e. citizens in Afikpo runs into thousands, spreading across a large area like Afikpo in Ebonyi State. So, collecting the prospective respondents' opinions on the study objectives for description, analysis and interpretation require sample.

According to the 2006 National Census of Nigeria, the population of Afikpo, Ebonyi State is one hundred and fifty six thousand, six hundred and eleven (156,611). The statistical formula of Taro Yamane (1967) was used to derive the sample size of three hundred and ninety nine (399). Stratified sampling technique was used in selecting the sample so that all the communities were represented, covering males and females. Self-developed questionnaire with four-point Likert scale was used for data collection, which was validated by two experts and the pre-texted reliability found to be 0.72, which is ideal for the study.

### 4. Results and Discussions

With the help of eight research assistants, a total of 399 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to many individuals in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. Out of the 399 copies, 318 copies were returned. However, after a careful scrutiny of the returned copies, it was found that only 267 copies were properly completed and thoroughly filled, representing 67%, and were used for analysis. The 67%

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validated and found usable was considered adequate for analysis in that the standard acceptable for most research studies is 60% (Dulle et al, 2010).

#### *4.1 Demographic Characteristics (Bio-Data) of Respondents*

The bio-data of the respondents refers to their personal data such as gender, age, marital status, occupation, and highest academic qualifications, among others. These are shown in **Table 1**, which indicated that majority of the respondents are males (163 or 61.05%), between the ages of 41 – 50 years (97 or 36.33%), married (119 or 44.57%), mainly civil servants (193 or 72.29%), with HND/BSc (87 or 32.58%) as highest academic qualification.

**Table 1.** Demographic Characteristics (Bio-Data) of Respondents

<b>Gender of the Respondents</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	163	61.05
Female	104	38.95
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age Bracket of Respondents</b>		
<b>Age Bracket</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
18-30	32	11.98
31-40	52	19.48
41-50	97	36.33
51-60	51	19.10
61 and above	35	13.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Married	119	44.57
Single	97	36.33
Divorce	18	6.74
Widow/Widower	33	12.36
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Occupation of the Respondents</b>		
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Traders/Business men and women	41	15.36
Artisans (tailors, welders, barbers, etc)	23	8.61
Civil servants (teachers, lecturers, government workers, etc)	193	72.29

Farmers	7	2.62
Others	3	1.12
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

<b>Highest Educational Qualification of the Respondents</b>		
<b>Highest Qualification</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Primary School Certification (FSLC)	21	7.87
SSCE/WAEC/NECO/NABTEB	52	19.48
ND/NCE	35	13.11
HND/Bachelor Degree	87	32.58
Post Graduate Diploma	10	3.75
Masters Degree	51	19.10
PhD Degree	11	4.11
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

*RQ 1: What are the citizen’s perceptions about the establishment of community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?*

**Table 2.** Perceptions about the Establishment of Community Information Centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State

	<b>Perceptions about establishing Community Information Centres in Afikpo</b>	<b>SA (4)</b>	<b>A (3)</b>	<b>D (2)</b>	<b>SD (1)</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Establishing Community Information Centres is a step in the right direction for the betterment of citizens in Afikpo	153	92	14	08	3.4607	0.7315	Significant
2	Establishing Community Information Centres is expected to serve as hub for acquisition of knowledge and skills among the citizens of Afikpo	139	87	23	18	3.2996	0.8886	Significant
3	I have positive perception and attitude towards the establishment of Community Information Centres in Afikpo	123	79	53	12	3.1723	0.9013	Significant
4	There is no doubt that Community Information Centres should be established in Afikpo, as it will contribute a significant quota in the overall development of the area	119	73	22	53	2.9663	1.1515	Significant
5	If given the opportunity, I will like to be part of the individuals that will be sincerely committed towards the establishment of Community Information Centres in Afikpo	107	116	37	07	3.2097	0.7762	Significant
	Pooled mean					3.2217		
	Criterion mean					2.5		

Source: Field Survey 2019



As shown in **Table 2**, the perceptions of the citizens towards the establishment of community information centres are in the positive direction. Most importantly, it is seen as a step in the right direction for the betterment of citizens in Afikpo. In addition, all other items responded to by the respondents are significant. This implies that the citizens have favourable disposition towards establishing community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State.

**RQ 2:** *What are the citizen's perceptions on the benefits of establishing community information centres in Afikpo North, Ebonyi State?*

**Table 3.** Citizen's Perceptions on the Benefits of Establishing Community Information Centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State

	<b>Benefits of Establishing Community Information Centres</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Community Information Centres are essential for development of learning and education in Afikpo	94	127	33	13	3.1311	0.8097	Significant
2	Community Information Centres would contribute positively to the improvement of reading habits of students in Afikpo	172	69	12	14	3.4944	0.8105	Significant
3	Community Information Centres in Afikpo will contribute to the growth of literacy rate in the area.	132	103	25	07	3.3483	0.7574	Significant
4	Community Information Centres should be established in Afikpo so as to encourage the youths to acquire knowledge.	129	117	21	-	3.4045	0.6322	Significant
5	The establishment of Community Information Centres is necessary for documentation of culture, traditions, values, and indigenous knowledge of the community.	114	121	18	14	3.2547	0.8010	Significant
	Pooled mean					3.3266		
	Criterion mean					2.5		

Source: Field Survey 2019

**Table 3** showed the citizens' perceived benefits of establishing community information centres. All the items were significant. However, the major benefits as noted by the citizens are that community information centres would contribute positively to the improvement of reading habits of students, encourage the youths to acquire knowledge, contribute to the growth of literacy rate, enhance development of education, and documentation of culture in Afikpo, Ebonyi State.

**RQ 3:** *What are the citizen's perceptions of the methods/ways of establishing, funding and managing community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?*

**Table 4.** Ideas and Suggestions on the Methods or Ways of Establishing, Funding and Managing Community Information Centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State

	<b>Methods/Ways of Establishing, Funding and Managing Community Info Centres</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Decision</b>
1	Setting up a designated fund for it by Afikpo citizens, may be through town unions or development unions	142	104	04	17	3.3895	0.8076	Significant
2	Donations from traditional rulers, chiefs, philanthropists and notable citizens of Afikpo	131	107	23	01	3.3596	0.7345	Significant
3	Annual subvention from the local government to the Community Information Centres in Afikpo	165	69	19	14	3.4419	0.8404	Significant
4	Monthly/annual allocations from the state government through the requisite ministry or agency of government	179	58	22	08	3.5281	0.7720	Significant
5	Donations from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other corporate organizations within Afikpo as corporate social responsibility	136	112	15	04	3.4232	0.6694	Significant
	Pooled mean					3.4285		
	Criterion mean					2.5		

Source: Field Survey 2019

All the items in **Table 4** are significant, meaning they are reasonable ideas and suggestions on the methods/ways of establishing, funding and managing community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. However, more emphasis was made on monthly/annual allocations from the Ebonyi State government, annual subvention from the local government, and donations from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In addition, the roles of citizens through town/development unions as well as donations from traditional rulers are also not left out. This implies the above-mentioned points are ways of establishing, funding and managing the centres.

**RQ 4:** *What is the citizens' level of readiness to assist and support in the funding and management of the CICs when established in Afikpo, Ebonyi State.*

**Table 4.** Citizens' Level of Readiness to Assist and Support in the Funding and Management of Community Information Centres in Afikpo

<b>Citizens' Level of Readiness to Assist and Support in the Funding and Management of the Community Information Centres</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Fully Ready	173	64.79
Partially Ready	44	16.48
Not Ready	27	10.12
Can't Say/Not Sure	23	8.61
<b>Total</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Field Survey 2019

As revealed in **Table 5**, it can be seen that out of the 267 respondents, 173 representing 64.79% are fully ready to assist and support in the funding and management of the community information centres when established. In addition, 44 (16.48%) are partially ready to assist and support. Unfortunately, the position of 27 (10.12%) and 23 (8.61%) percentages of the citizens are not encouraging, as they are not ready to assist/support and not sure, respectively. The implication of this is that majority of the citizens are very much ready to assist and support in the funding and management of the community information centres.

**RQ 5:** *What are the citizens’ perceptions of the possible challenges that may affect the establishment of community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State?*

**Table 6.** Possible Challenges that may affect the Establishment of Community Information Centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State

	Possible Challenges of Establishing Community Information Centres	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Inadequate funding and support for establishing and managing the Community Information Centres	207	41	19	-	3.7041	0.5933	Significant
2	Absence of cooperation and unity among the citizens of Afikpo concerning the project.	38	56	131	42	2.3371	0.9087	Rejected
3	Possible politics of where to site/locate the Community Information Centres in Afikpo.	177	56	29	05	3.5169	0.7626	Significant
4	Inadequate understanding from citizens of Afikpo on the benefits and importance of Community Information Centres	16	29	113	109	1.8202	0.8526	Rejected
5	Erratic/epileptic power supply	47	22	123	75	2.1536	1.0236	Rejected
6	Unavailability of personnel to establish, manage and render the services expected of the Community Information Centres	15	31	147	74	1.9513	0.7861	Rejected
	Pooled mean					2.5805		
	Criterion mean					2.5		

Source: Field Survey 2019

As shown in **Table 6**, the major possible challenges are inadequate funding and support for establishing and managing the Community Information Centres as well as possible politics of where to site/locate the Community Information Centres in Afikpo. Unfortunately, absence of cooperation and unity among the citizens concerning the project, inadequate understanding on benefits and importance of Community Information Centres, erratic/epileptic power supply, as well as unavailability of personnel to establish, manage and render the services expected of the Community Information Centres, were not seen as possible challenges.

## 5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are in area of citizens' perception towards the establishment of community information centres in Afikpo North, Ebonyi State, Nigeria. The perceptions of the citizens towards the establishment of community information centres (CICs) are in the positive direction, as revealed in **Table 2**. Most importantly, it is seen as a step in the right direction for the betterment of citizens in Afikpo. In addition, all other items responded to by the respondents are significant. This implies that the citizens have favourable disposition towards establishing CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. This finding is in line with that of Adewusi (2013), Uzuegbu and Arua (2018) and Shrestha (2013) that see CICs as centres for sustainable development and vehicles for social and economic transformation of rural areas with diverse facilities.

The citizens have knowledge of the benefits of establishing CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. As noted by the citizens (see **Table 3**), the benefits are that CICs would contribute positively to the improvement of reading habits of students, encourage the youths to acquire knowledge, contribute to the growth of literacy rate, enhance development of education, and documentation of culture in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. This is in support of earlier findings of Kamba (2009) and Umar (2018) that if well supported, community information centres could eradicate ignorance and provide enlightenment on social, political and cultural objectives towards the development of the entire community. In addition, the finding supports that of Adewusi (2013) on the impact of community information centres such as education and current affairs, skills acquisition, financial assistance, business opportunities and employments.

As revealed in **Table 4**, there are workable ideas and suggestions on the methods/ways of establishing, funding and managing community information centres in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. These are in the areas of monthly/annual allocations from the Ebonyi State government, annual subvention from the local government, donations from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), roles of citizens through town/development unions as well as donations from traditional rulers. These are implications that funding, supporting and managing community information centres are feasible in Afikpo North, Ebonyi State. These ways concur with the recommendations of Igwe et al.(2019) on feasible ways of establishing community information centres for sustainable development of rural areas in Nigeria.

The establishment of community information centres is inevitable in communities that are determined for it. This is where patriotism comes into play among the citizens. As stated in **Table 5**, out of the 267 respondents, 173 representing 64.79% are fully ready to assist and support in the funding and management of the community information centres when established. This is in addition to 44 others representing 16.48% that are partially ready to assist and support the project. This is related to the findings of Adewusi (2013) that communities yearn for provision of well stocked community information centres with a view to empowering, changing and transforming their life socially, economically, technologically, educationally, and politically for the better.

As shown in **Table 6**, the major possible challenges are inadequate funding and support for establishing and managing the Community Information Centres as well as possible politics of where to site/locate the Community Information Centres in Afikpo. This aligns with the report of Agwuna and Enweani (2018) that gross underfunding is the major challenge of establishing community informati

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on centres. However, it is interesting to note factors that are not considered as possible challenges, such as absence of cooperation and unity among the citizens concerning the project, inadequate understanding on benefits and importance of Community Information Centres, erratic/epileptic power supply, as well as unavailability of personnel to establish, manage and render the services expected of the Community Information Centres, were not seen as possible challenges, thereby contradicting the earlier findings of Adewusi (2013) that lack of communal efforts, governments insensitivity, and absence of NGOs support as impediments to establishing and managing community information centres.

### *5.1 Implications for Technological Innovations in Afikpo, Ebonyi State*

The findings of this study have some implications for technological innovations in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. No doubt, technological knowledge preceded technological innovations, i.e. the actualization of technological innovations may not be possible without access to information, which CICs represent. Be it scientific, technological, agricultural, engineering, entrepreneurial or business information, the role of CICs are inevitable in the entire process. Most importantly, the study revealed that citizens have favourable disposition towards establishing CICs in Afikpo due to the numerous benefits of such centres. This is a welcome development because such CICs are essential indices for measuring the growth and development of societies. As opined by Shrestha (2003), the contemporary idea of CICs is such that should have a library, ICT centre, women empowerment department, early childhood unit, multimedia and communication department, as well as training/meeting hall. These components of CICs have significant roles to play in growth and development of children and young adults in the communities. Thus, these CICs, when established, are expected to give solid foundations to children and youths in the communities in the areas of education, literacy development, knowledge acquisition, digital literacy, and the like. The resources in such CICs could serve as moral boosters for the children and young adults towards acquiring knowledge of ICTs, development of apps, troubleshooting, coding and web design, content creation and development, infopreneurship, technopreneurship, digital marketing, among so many others. Not only that, the instructional programmes of such CICs in the areas of media and information literacy, entrepreneurial opportunities, financial literacy, digital agricultural practices, and so many other areas of skills acquisition, have the capacity to shape the mindset of the children and youths in the communities towards becoming future job creators instead of job seekers.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The establishment of community information centres (CICs) is required in local governments and rural areas for development. Unfortunately, these centres are hardly seen in rural communities, including communities in Afikpo, Ebonyi State, thereby justifying the study that explored citizens' perception towards the establishment of CICs in Afikpo. Findings revealed that the citizens have overall positive perception towards establishing the CICs; they are also knowledgeable of the benefits

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of such centres like improvement of reading habits of students, encouraging the youths to acquire knowledge, contributing to the growth of literacy rate, enhancing development of education, and documentation of culture. Furthermore, there are workable ideas and suggestions on the methods/ways of establishing, funding and managing CICs in Afikpo like monthly/annual allocations from the Ebonyi State government, annual subvention from the local government, donations from Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), roles of citizens through town/development unions as well as donations from traditional rulers. In addition, about 65% of the citizens are fully ready to assist and support in the funding and management of the CICs when established. However, the challenges of inadequate funding and support for establishing and managing the centres as well as possible politics of where to site/locate the CICs in Afikpo, are likely impediments to the project.

Based on the study objectives and the findings, it can be inferred that citizens have strong and positive disposition towards the establishment of CICs in various communities in Afikpo, Ebonyi State. The citizens are very much aware of the benefits of such centres, and ever ready to support such a project, if established in the community. However, the major possible challenges associated with establishing such centres are inadequate funding and support for establishing and managing the centres, as well as possible politics of where to site/locate the centres in Afikpo. In line with the findings, the following recommendations were made:

- (a) Government should see the establishment of CICs as priority projects that would significantly contribute to the growth and development of rural communities in Nigeria. Enacting laws that will support this is a right step in the right direction.
  - (b) The communities in Afikpo should explore self-help approach through town/development unions, traditional rulers, and influential citizens as avenues for establishing, funding and managing CICs for the benefit of their citizens.
  - (c) The citizens in Afikpo should seek for the assistance and support of philanthropists and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) for establishing, funding and managing CICs for the benefit of their citizens.
  - (d) Leagues of professionals and age groups in Afikpo should contribute in establishing, funding and managing CICs in Afikpo, Ebonyi State.
  - (e) Political representatives (senators, house of representative members and state houses of assembly members) from Afikpo should take advantage of establishing CICs as constituency projects for the betterment of their citizens.
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