

## **Strategic Roles Of Academic Library In Fostering Sustainable Development Goals Through Community Engagement**

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### **Abstract**

*This study critically examines the strategic roles of academic libraries in advancing sustainable development goals within academic communities through deliberate community engagement methodologies in three academic libraries in Ede, Osun State, Nigeria (Adeleke university library, Federal Polytechnic Ede library and Redeemers' university library). Two research questions were used to guide the study. The study population consists of 32 library professionals and 22 para-professionals. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for data collection while mean value was used to analyse the research questions. The findings reveal that all types of sustainable development goals are so germane to academic libraries as a result of its numerous benefits. The finding also indicates that the roles of academic libraries in promoting SDGs through community engagement in academic libraries make some transformative impacts on library service delivery. The study concludes that fostering SDGs through community engagement is a critical step towards achieving better and effective SDGs in academic libraries. These practices would enable academic libraries to make positive impacts and contribute to the achievement of SDGs by working together with the academic communities and stakeholders because any academic libraries that embrace community engagement practices will amplify their impacts on SDGs by being inclusive,*

*responsive and sustainable knowledge hubs. The recommendations include advocating for reconfiguration of academic library operations to foreground sustainability as a core institutional value, conducting a community needs assessment to identify the needs and priorities of the researcher working on SDGs related projects and initiatives. These could be under pinned by stakeholders' collaboration, inclusive decision-making and context-responsive service delivery.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Roles, Academic Libraries, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Community Engagement.

## **Introduction**

An effective approach to human development that aims to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations can be referred to as sustainable development. Sustainable Development has emerged as the guiding principle for long-term global development (Nest-IAS, 2025). The aim is to have a society where living conditions and resources meet human needs without undermining planetary integrity. Also, sustainable development always supports a strong, healthy, and just society by means of meeting the needs of existing diverse people and that of future generations, promoting personal well-being and social inclusion, and creating equal opportunity for all (Tomislav, 2018). In addition, sustainable development is the practice of meeting today's needs in a way that secures a better future for the coming generations, this can be achieved by meeting present needs without compromising the opportunities of future citizens (UNSDG, 2023).

Moreover, sustainable development goals are the specific and measurable targets that enforce the broader perception of the sustainable development. In essence, sustainable development is the key target, while the sustainable development goals are the detailed, actionable steps needed to accomplish it. IFLA (2018) explained sustainable development goals as a set of 17 global agenda adopted by United Nation in 2015 to protect the planet, end poverty and ensure prosperity and peace for all by 2030. Also, Siviwe (2024) described sustainable development goals (SDGs) as a universal strategy to accomplish a better and more sustainable future for all nations. These goals

were endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. However, these goals were designed to address the urgent global challenges of inequality, climate change, poverty, environmental degradation, peace and justice. Similarly, these goals were introduced to strengthen the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were applicable from 2000 to 2015 (Siviwe, 2024). Though each of these 17 SDGs is partnered with set of specific targets and indices to guide and measure progress in each area (Par, 2023).

IFLA (2018) likewise reported that sustainable development goals cover so many areas such as education, gender equity, climate action, economic growth and strong institutions. However, the target of SDGs is to guide individuals, governments and institutions, including libraries in working towards inclusive and sustainable practices in order to create balance between economic growth, environmental care and social well-being of the community people. Apart from these, UNESCO (2024) agreed that to incorporate sustainable development goals into education system is very crucial for empowering future generations in order to address global challenges in this 21st century. Therefore, education for sustainable development (ESD) aims to equip learners with the knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes needed to address global challenges and create a sustainable future, encompassing environmental, social, and economic dimensions (Njoku, Chukwu, Nwaohiri & Opara, 2022).

Furthermore, education is essential if all these sustainable development goals are to be achieved. Majorly, it has its own dedicated SDG-4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (UNESCO, 2020). Although, tertiary institution libraries act as the heart-beats of universities and colleges in every country around the world, they are meant to support in achieving SDGs in academic community. Therefore, academic libraries play a crucial role in advancing the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing access to information, fostering literacy and promoting sustainable practices. Apart from these, all college libraries support literacy programs, provide safe space for learning, and support researchers to access, apply and reuse research and data to create new knowledge

(Lahyani, 2024). Also, academic library as integral part of academic institution is originally saddled with the responsibility of supporting the research and learning needs of the faculties and students. However, they are uniquely well-suited to help humanity to achieve sustainable solutions to the economic, social, environmental and academic challenges.

Similarly, IFLA (2018) noted that institutional libraries act as facilitators in their communities by setting up studying centers to support learning in different forms, while SDG-9 focuses on building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation. On this note, institutional libraries provide access to research infrastructures, data and quality information to foster innovation and competitiveness in academic communities (IFLA, 2018). Apart from that, SDGs-16 promotes peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, it provides access to justice for all and builds effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all level. As libraries are key source of information for the public, they are also equipped to teach and enable citizens to benefit from this open access. Similarly, Lyaka et al., (2020) identified role that institutional libraries play in the achievement of sustainable 2 and 3, such as repackaging of agricultural information in different formats in the language that rural community people would understand. Moreover, fostering literacy through libraries extension services will also provide rural dwellers the opportunity to partake in globalization of a sustained knowledge economy. In addition to its primary obligations, an institutional library can make its facilities and services available to all members of the community in which it is situated (Njoku et al., 2022).

In institutional libraries, sustainable development is facilitated by ensuring that information is well shared and circulated in the community to ensure that everyone has access to information. Dabengwa (2024) also agreed that tertiary libraries contribute to SDGs by playing a pivotal role in furnishing decision-makers with vital information for social and economic developments. However, college libraries are inherently positioned to support SDGs by giving their ability to provide access to resources and information, facilitate learning and education, as well as

encouraging community engagement in order to involve the stakeholders in decision-makings. Cyr and Connaway (2020) affirm that traditional humanistic goal of college libraries is centered on transforming society by providing trusted information that caters for the needs of their respective communities. Consequently, it is expected that scholarly libraries will strive towards achieving four fundamental pillars of sustainability in their operations such as environmental sustainability, economic stability, social sustainability, and cultural vibrancy (Dabengwa, 2024).

ALA (2019) declared sustainable development goals to be a core part of librarianship. The 2019 ALA president, Loida Garcia-Febo, stated that scholarly libraries are helping to promote education and lifelong learning of the communities they serve by adding sustainability to its core values. ALA noted that scholarly libraries also act as catalysts and inspire future generations to reach solutions that are not only sensible but essential to sustain life on this planet (American Library Association, 2019). Similarly, college libraries foster sustainable development goals through community engagement by promoting sustainable literacy education, facilitating access to information and resources, and collaborating with local organizations and institutions to address community needs and promoting sustainable practices (Embree & Gilman, 2020). Similarly, community engagement practices (CEP) in college libraries encompass initiatives and programs that aimed at connecting libraries with their local communities, addressing community needs, and fostering collaboration and participation (Barasha, 2024). Likewise, Bangani and Dube (2023) referred to Community Engagement (CE) in college libraries as the establishment of ongoing networks, collaborations, and relationships utilized to collectively address social issues within the communities they serve. As institutional libraries are making progress, there is need for more research to quantify their impacts and develop standardized tools for measuring their contributions towards SDGs in academic community. Therefore, this study sought to highlight the strategic roles and the contributions of academic libraries in fostering sustainable development goals through community engagement practices in academic libraries in Ede, Osun state, Southwest, Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Academic libraries are strategically positioned to contribute to the achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly through their roles in knowledge dissemination, lifelong learning and inclusive access to information. One of the emerging strategies in this regard is the adoption of community engagement to enable libraries to directly involve stakeholders in programs that promote awareness, collaboration and local development. Despite the recognized potential of academic libraries in advancing SDGs such as quality education, reduced inequalities, and partnerships for the goals, the actual benefits of their roles through community-centered approaches remain underexplored, especially in academic context. However, many libraries face challenges such as inadequate staff capacity, lack of strategic direction, limited resources and low awareness of the SDGs among both users and librarians. Furthermore, there is a limited of empirical research on how community engagement practices contribute meaningfully to the SDGs. And this has created a gap in understanding how to effectively harness these approaches. Therefore, this study is carried-out to address this gap with the goal of ascertaining the strategic roles of academic libraries in promoting SDGs through community engagement in academic libraries in Ede, Osun state Southwest, Nigeria

### **Objective of the Study**

1. Identify types of SDGs promoted in academic libraries in Ede, Osun State Southwest, Nigeria
2. Ascertain the strategic roles of academic library in promoting SDGs through community engagement in Ede, Osun State Southwest, Nigeria

### **Research Questions**

- 1 what types of sustainable development goals achieved in academic libraries in Ede, Osun State Southwest, Nigeria

- 2 what are the strategic roles of academic library in promoting SDGs through community engagement in Ede, Osun State Southwest, Nigeria

## **Review of Related Literature**

### **Types of SDGs Promoted in Academic Libraries**

A sustainable development goal in academic libraries refers to the integration of environmental, social, and economic considerations into library operations, services and strategic planning. Academic libraries play a crucial role in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by providing access to information, fostering education, and promoting research that supports sustainable practices. They act as hubs for knowledge creation and dissemination, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs across various sectors like education, social development, and environmental sustainability. Thorpe and Lyndella (2021) affirm that college libraries play a crucial role in supporting sustainable development goals by promoting universal knowledge, preserving cultural heritage, and serving as centers for exploration. They can contribute to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through various strategies, including providing access to learning materials, promoting information literacy, and supporting environmental initiatives. Libraries also have a responsibility to educate and empower their users with the knowledge and skills necessary to live and work in a sustainable way.

According to Thorpe and Lyndella (2021), the SDGs can be used by scholarly libraries as a benchmarking tool and as a challenge to set stretch targets aligned with the United Nation's 2030 agenda. Similarly, Abata-Ebire, Adebowale and Ojokuku (2018) report that libraries must be able provide relevant and adequate information to the public in different accessible ways if they want institutions to achieve SD goals and objectives, by so doing, libraries would have significant impact in the attainment of SDGs in academic communities. Moreover, libraries are considered worldwide as the most reliable information center that acquires processes, organizes stores, retrieves and disseminates information to users (Lahyani et al, 2024). The nature of library custodianship of knowledge has led to focus on understanding the value and sustainability in terms

of collections. Missingham (2020) agrees that exceptionally rich collections have made a great impact on service delivery of library staff to connect the users with the right resources in the communities they are serving.

In academic libraries, sustainable development goals (SDGs) are usually discussed, not as separate new goals, but as the ways libraries contribute to the UN's 17SDGs through their functions, scholars and professional bodies. According to Abata-Ebire, Adebowale and Ojokuku (2018), here are the main types of SDG-related roles that most of the academic libraries promote.

**Educational and Knowledge-Based Goals:** Academic libraries support sustainability by providing equitable access to information and research to promote SDG 4. The academic library supports open educational resources (OER) and teaches critical thinking and research skills which promote lifelong learning and information literacy.

**Social Inclusion and Equity Goals:** In information access, academic libraries promote gender equality and inclusion of marginalized groups including the accessibility of users with disabilities in academic environment to encourage SDGs 5, 10 & 16. Intellectual freedom and ethical information use are also promoted.

**Community Engagement and Outreach Goals:** Academic libraries partner with communities, NGOs and other institutions to foster SDGs 11 & 17. Likewise, civic engagement and local development are also promoted by academic libraries.

**Digital Sustainability and Technology Goals:** Academic libraries strengthen SDGs 9 & 11 by digitalizing library resources to enhance long-term digital preservation. Also, academic libraries promote sustainable IT infrastructure and integration of technologies in library operations in order to bridge the digital divide.

**Research and Innovation Support Goal:** Academic libraries promote SDG 9 by supporting sustainable research practices and managing research data (RDM) in academic communities.

**Economic and Institutional Sustainability:** The academic libraries promote SDG 8 in academic communities by supporting employability skills and managing resources efficiently to demonstrate value and impact in order to support institutional sustainability.

**Environmental Sustainability Goals:** Libraries support SDGs 12, 13 & 15 through promotion of environmental awareness collections and programs to encourage establishment of green libraries to enhance energy efficient operations. These SDGs facilitate reduction in paper use and paper waste in the academic settings.

### **Strategic Roles of Academic Library in Promoting SDGs through Community Engagement**

Community engagement is a primarily part of a dialogue where organizations and communities can make decisions to create social capital. Barasha et al (2024) report that constructive relationships between communities and the institutions of government make community engagement not only desirable, but necessary and viable as it is likely to lead to more equitable, sustainable public decisions and improve the live-ability of local communities. This might be one of the reasons why community engagement is important for individuals, public organizations, and governments alike. Granicus (2025) affirms that community engagement can lead to improved outcomes for communities when government organizations and public decision-making entities seek out the aspirations, concerns and values of communities.

United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) were promoted through community engagement by academic libraries. College libraries act as knowledge hubs, providing access to information, fostering education, and supporting inclusive and informed communities. According to Dabengwa (2024), institutional libraries play a vital role in promoting the SDGs, by actively engaging with the community, libraries can contribute to achieving various SDGs, including quality education, reduced inequalities, and sustainable cities and communities. Community engagement enables academic libraries to build strong relationships, promote social responsibility and contribute to the overall well-being of their users and stakeholders. Not only that, community engagement can help libraries and librarians to better understand the needs of their users and develop services and programs that meet those needs of library community. [Houk, Harlow and Murphy \(2019\)](#) also agrees that community engagement should be stated in library mission statement and strategies should be aligned with the deployment of resources towards it. Siviwe

and Luyanda (2023) report that library staffs play crucial roles in promoting sustainable development through community engagement by acting as liaisons, building relationships, and promoting library programs and services to foster a sense of belonging and support lifelong learning. They also work to understand community needs and collaborate with local organizations to address those needs. Igbinovia (2016) highlights the roles of academic libraries in promoting SDGs through community engagement to include the followings:

**Collaboration and Partnerships:** In academic libraries, library staff may partner with one other, departments, and faculty to achieve common goals, such as promoting information literacy or supporting community development projects in academic environment to enhance sustainability initiatives.

**Program Development and Delivery:** Library staff can organize events, workshops and exhibitions on sustainability topics by collaborating with community groups to develop programs and services. The library staff can also offer volunteer opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to participate in community service projects such as literacy tutoring or community events

**Outreach programs:** Library staff offer outreach programs to engage with students, faculty and staff, such as literacy programs, research assistance and cultural events.

**Evaluating Impacts:** Library staff can assess the impact of community engagement initiatives on sustainability outcomes by using feedback to improve and refine programs and services.

**Building Relationship:** Library staff can build relationship with academic community and stakeholders by developing mutually beneficial partnerships and collaborations.

By promoting SDGs through community engagements, academic libraries can play vital role in driving sustainable development and creating a more equitable and sustainable future. Academic libraries play vital roles in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by

providing access to information, supporting research and promoting sustainability literacy. They also contribute to various SDGs through their resources, programs, and advocacy efforts.

## Methodology

A descriptive survey research design was employed for this study. The target population of the study is (54) respondents from three academic libraries in Ede, Osun State; Adeleke university library Ede, Tekena Tamuno Library, Redeemers University Ede and Federal Polytechnic library, Ede. And total enumeration method was used to cover all 54 target respondents. All professional and para-professional staffs were used as respondents. The main instrument used to gather data for this study was a structured and a rated questionnaire titled “*Strategic Roles of Academic Library in Fostering Sustainable Development Goals through Community Engagement*” (SRALFSDGCE). A rating scale is a closed-end survey question that can be used to evaluate how survey respondents feel about a particular statement. Therefore, data were analysed by using frequency count and mean value.

**Section A** contains types of sustainable development goals promoted in academic libraries in Ede, Osun State Southwest, Nigeria.

**Section B** contains strategic roles of academic library in promoting SDGs through community engagement.

All the research objectives were rated by using modified 4point likert-scale responses of Strongly Agree(4), Agree (3), Strongly Disagree(2) and Disagree(1). Data collected were analysed by using frequency count and mean value, to obtain the mean value of  $4+3+2+1=10$ , while the mean value is  $10/4=2.5$ . For the research objective statement with mean value of 2.5 and above were accepted, while below 2.5 were rejected. The fifty-four (54) copies of questionnaire were administered personally by the researchers and all were retrieved and found valid for the analysis.

## Data Analysis and Presentation

**Table 1:** Category of Respondents

S/N	Category of library staff	Frequency	%
1	Professionals Librarians	32	59%
2	Para-professional Librarians	22	41%
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>54</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Departmental staff lists (2025)

Table 1 captures the categories of respondents, 32(59%) of respondents are professional librarians, while 22(41%) are para-professionals. However, the result of table one shows that majority of the respondents are professionals.

**Table 2: Means score of respondents on types of SDGs promoted in Academic Libraries**

S/N	What are the types of SDGs promoted in your library?	S (4)	A (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Total	X	Dec.
1	Research and Innovation Support Goal	20(80)	22(66)	6(12)	6(6)	54(164)	3.0	Accepted
2	Community Engagement and Outreach Goals	30(120)	17(51)	4(8)	3(3)	54(182)	3.4	Accepted
3	Digital Sustainability and Technology Goals	45(180)	6(18)	3(6)	0	54(204)	3.7	Accepted
4	Educational and Knowledge-Based Goals	40(160)	10(30)	3(6)	1(1)	54(197)	3.7	Accepted
5	Economic and Institutional Sustainability Goal	46(184)	6(18)	2(4)	0	54(206)	3.8	Accepted
6	Social Inclusion and Equity Goals	30(120)	17(51)	4(8)	3(3)	54(182)	3.4	Accepted
7	Environmental Sustainability Goals	20(80)	22(66)	6(12)	6(6)	54(164)	3.0	Accepted

Grand mean	54(1,299)	3.44
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**Significant mean score: 3.4**

Result in table 2 shows mean scores on types of sustainable development goals promoted in academic libraries with means scores ranging from 3.0 to 3.8. While the grand mean of 3.4 was realised for all the seven (7) items.

**Table 3: Means score of respondents on strategic roles of academic libraries in promoting SDGs through community engagement.**

S/N	What are the strategic roles of your library in promoting SDGs through community engagement?	SA(4)	A(3)	D(2)	SD(1)	Total	X	Dec.
1	Library provides access to reliable information on SDGs	34(136)	20(60)	0	0	54(196)	3.6	SA
2	Library collaborates with diverse stakeholders to promote SDGs awareness and initiative	54(216)	0	0	0	54(216)	4	SA
3	Library provides training and support to academic community members	45(180)	5(15)	2(4)	2(2)	54(201)	3.7	SA
4	Library shares resources to support community learning	51(204)	3(9)	0	0	54(213)	3.9	SA

	and engagement							
5	Library raises awareness about SDGs through various channels	50(200)	4(12)	0	0	54(212)	3.9	SA
Grand mean		54(1038)			3.8			

### Significant mean score: 3.8

The result of the analyses in table 3 shows that all the five items were strongly accepted with the grand mean of 3.8.

### Discussion of the Findings

From this research, the academic libraries play crucial role in promoting and implementing various types of United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by providing access to information, supporting research, fostering literacy and offering safe and sustainable spaces for study. This finding collaborates the study of Jagdish and Varsha (2024) that affirmed that academic libraries play an important part in promoting sustainable development goals by supporting the universal knowledge.

It was also found that academic libraries promote SDGs through community engagement services by acting as hubs for information access, raising awareness about SDGs through various channels in order to promote lifelong learning, collaborating with diverse stakeholders to promote SDGs awareness and initiatives, and providing training and support to academic community members among others. This finding agrees with the view of Madhurekha (2025) who affirms that for various types of libraries to make some transformative impacts on their service delivery, they must promote SDGs through community engagement methodology.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Community engagement is very essential to academic libraries to understand the needs and priorities of their communities and develop effective strategies to address them. It also ensures that

library programs meet diverse learning needs, encouraging equitable access to information and lifelong learning. By engaging underserved groups, libraries can minimize digital divides and supporting social inclusion in academic communities. Fostering SDGs through community engagement is a critical step towards achieving better and effective SDGs in academic libraries. These practices would enable academic libraries to make positive impacts and contribute to the achievement of SDGs by working together with the academic communities and stakeholders. In essence, any academic libraries that embrace community engagement practice will amplify their impacts on SDGs by being inclusive, responsive and sustainable knowledge hubs. Therefore, in order to foster SDGs through community engagement in academic libraries, the following suggestions were also made.

1. Conducting a community needs assessment to identify the needs and priorities of the researchers working on SDGs related projects and initiatives.
2. Developing a community engagement plan that will incorporate the library goals with SDGs goals and objectives.
3. Academic libraries should provide access to resources, databases and online platforms that support SDG-related research and projects
4. Academic libraries should host events, workshops and conferences that promote SDGs, featuring expert speakers, panel discussions and interactive sessions.
5. Collaborate with other academic libraries to share resources, expertise and best practices
6. The academic libraries should develop evaluation frameworks to assess the effectiveness of community engagement practices.

By implementing these recommendations, academic libraries can play vital roles in promoting SDGs through community engagement effectively. However, the future research directions could include; Participatory approach, User perception and engagement models, Innovative technologies in participatory engagement, Sustainability of engagement models and so on.

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