

Influence of Community Participation on Indigenous Knowledge Collection in County Libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo, Kenya

Makai Adan Sora^{1*}, Paul Maku Gichohi², Catherine Mueni Nzioka¹

Kenya Methodist University¹

University of Eldoret²

*Corresponding author email: msora2364@stu.kemu.ac.ke

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Abstract

County libraries are expected to preserve Indigenous Knowledge (IK) through systematic collection and documentation. However, in Marsabit and Isiolo counties, much of this knowledge remains undocumented because community participation in library-led IK collection is inconsistent and inadequately structured. This study evaluated how community participation influences Indigenous Knowledge collection in county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo, Kenya. The study drew on Social Capital Theory, which explains how trust, social networks, and shared norms facilitate collective action in community-based knowledge preservation. The study adopted a descriptive survey design using quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study was conducted in county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo and targeted 370 respondents, comprising 33 library staff, 42 Community Knowledge Holders (CKHs), and 295 Indigenous Knowledge Programme Participants (IKPPs). The study selected a sample of 150 respondents through census sampling for library staff and CKHs and stratified random sampling for IKPPs. We collected data using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interview guides. Instrument validity was established through expert review and pretesting at Kitui County Library, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha coefficients above the recommended threshold of 0.70. Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Version 26, while qualitative data were analysed thematically. The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between community participation and Indigenous Knowledge collection ($r=0.728$, $p<0.001$), with a composite mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.79), indicating well-established participatory practices. The study concludes that meaningful community participation is critical to effective Indigenous Knowledge collection. It recommends that county library management, the Kenya National Library Service (KNLS), and county governments institutionalise structured participation mechanisms, including community forums, storytelling sessions, cultural events, and validation meetings. The study contributes empirical evidence demonstrating that structured community participation strengthens Indigenous Knowledge collection and preservation in culturally diverse county libraries in Kenya.

Keywords: *Indigenous Knowledge, Community Participation, County Libraries, Knowledge Collection, Social Capital Theory.*

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1. Introduction

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) represents the collective wisdom, skills, practices, and cultural experiences communities develop over generations to address social, economic, cultural, and environmental needs. It contributes to cultural identity, community wellbeing, sustainable livelihoods, and local resource management, particularly among rural and marginalized populations (Su et al., 2022). Public libraries therefore have an important role in collecting, documenting, preserving, and providing access to Indigenous Knowledge. However, because much IK is embedded within communities and transmitted orally, its effective collection depends on meaningful participation of knowledge holders, elders, and practitioners in documentation and preservation processes (UNESCO, 2019; IFLA, 2021).

Globally, public libraries and cultural institutions have increasingly adopted community-centered approaches to Indigenous Knowledge collection. In Australia, libraries and archives collaborate with Aboriginal communities through Indigenous Knowledge Centres, where elders participate in oral history recording, language preservation, and cultural mapping (Garner et al., 2021). Similarly, Canadian libraries work with First Nations communities through oral history and digitization programmes guided by Indigenous data sovereignty principles (IFLA, 2021). In the United States and New Zealand, participatory archiving, digital storytelling, and community-curated repositories have enabled Indigenous communities to identify knowledge holders, validate collected information, and determine appropriate access conditions (UNESCO, 2020). These experiences demonstrate that effective IK collection requires sustained community involvement and positioning libraries as facilitators of community knowledge.

In Africa, Indigenous Knowledge collection increasingly uses participatory and community-based approaches, although institutional capacity varies. In South Africa, the Indigenous Knowledge Systems Policy promotes collaboration with elders and traditional leaders in documenting oral histories, medicinal knowledge, and cultural practices (RSA, 2004). In Botswana, Ghana, and Nigeria, community libraries, universities, and cultural institutions have employed interviews, focus groups, and participatory approaches to document agricultural, health, environmental, and cultural knowledge (Chikonso, 2019; Akinwale, 2020; Asante & Gyimah, 2021). However, inadequate technical capacity, limited resources, and weak mechanisms for sustained community involvement continue to constrain long-term preservation and access (Nakata et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2021).

In East Africa, countries including Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Rwanda face similar challenges associated with oral transmission, dispersed rural communities, and declining intergenerational transfer of Indigenous Knowledge (Msuya, 2020; Nyumba & Ochieng, 2022). Libraries and cultural institutions have adopted community workshops, oral history interviews, focus groups, and participatory documentation approaches, although community involvement in validation, preservation, and access governance remains limited (Kariuki, 2019; UNESCO, 2021).

In Kenya, county libraries provide important platforms for collecting, preserving, and disseminating cultural heritage, particularly among rural and marginalized communities. However, Indigenous Knowledge collection initiatives remain limited, irregular, and inadequately supported (UNESCO, 2019; IFLA, 2021). Community members are often treated as information sources rather than active participants in decision-making, validation, and documentation (Chepkwony, 2021). Consequently, Indigenous Knowledge relating to traditional medicine, pastoral practices, environmental conservation, and conflict resolution

remains vulnerable to loss. In Marsabit and Isiolo, strengthening structured community participation is therefore essential for improving systematic Indigenous Knowledge collection and preservation.

1.1 Problem Statement

Despite public libraries' mandate to document and preserve Indigenous Knowledge, county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo still face challenges in systematically involving local communities in Indigenous Knowledge collection. Limited participation by elders, cultural practitioners, and other knowledge holders; inconsistent community engagement; and inadequate mechanisms for integrating community contributions undermine the authenticity, relevance, and sustainability of Indigenous Knowledge collections. These challenges increase the risk of losing culturally significant knowledge that remains largely orally transmitted. To address this gap, this study examines how community participation can strengthen the systematic collection and preservation of Indigenous Knowledge in the selected county libraries.

1.2 Research Objective

To evaluate community participation practices in the collection of indigenous knowledge at county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo.

2. Literature Review

This study was guided by Social Capital Theory, which explains how relationships, trust, shared norms, and networks facilitate collective action and access to resources within communities. The theory provides a useful basis for understanding community participation in Indigenous Knowledge (IK) collection because effective documentation depends on trust and sustained relationships between libraries and local knowledge holders. IFLA (2021) emphasizes that libraries should facilitate community involvement in preserving oral literature, ethnic histories, traditional medicine, and other cultural knowledge. UNESCO (2019) similarly highlights knowledge contribution, collaborative decision-making, capacity building, and validation as important elements of community participation.

Empirical evidence demonstrates the importance of community participation in strengthening IK collection. Mwaniki (2022) established that public library users have diverse participation needs, requiring platforms through which communities can contribute knowledge. Mwanatimwa (2022) similarly observed that communities contribute information on local histories, personalities, and cultural practices, making public libraries important reservoirs of community knowledge. Bello and Salawu (2020) also found that participation promotes community ownership by enabling users to contribute relevant, reliable information.

Global studies report similar findings. Thompson and Riley (2018) found that community engagement enhanced the authenticity and cultural relevance of library heritage collections in the United Kingdom, although participation was concentrated among organized groups. Patel (2019) established that participatory digital storytelling in New Zealand strengthened intergenerational knowledge transfer, while Larsson and Berg (2020) found that co-curation with Sami communities improved cultural representation and accuracy in Sweden. However, these studies provided limited systematic measurement of participation.

African evidence also demonstrates the value of community involvement. Mokoena and Dlamini (2021) found that participation improved the cultural accuracy of IK collections in South Africa, while Okeke and Ibrahim (2022) reported increased awareness and access to

local knowledge through participatory documentation in Nigeria. In Kenya, Wairimu and Otieno (2022) established that storytelling and knowledge mapping initiatives enhanced IK preservation. Nevertheless, the literature has given limited attention to structured measurement of participation and the inclusion of diverse community voices.

Collectively, the literature demonstrates that community participation enhances the authenticity, relevance, and preservation of IK. However, gaps remain in systematically assessing participation and institutionalizing community involvement. The present study therefore examined structured community participation in IK collection within selected county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted in selected county libraries in Marsabit and Isiolo counties, Kenya. The libraries served as important local institutions for providing public library and information services, including the collection, documentation, preservation, and dissemination of Indigenous Knowledge (IK). The two counties provided appropriate settings because of their culturally diverse communities and continued reliance on orally transmitted Indigenous Knowledge. The study specifically examined how community participation influenced the identification, documentation, validation, and preservation of Indigenous Knowledge within the selected county libraries.

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, complemented by qualitative interviews. The quantitative component assessed community participation practices and their relationship with Indigenous Knowledge collection, while the qualitative component explored experiences and perceptions of community knowledge holders and IK programme participants, thereby providing complementary insights into community involvement in Indigenous Knowledge processes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Kothari & Garg, 2019).

The study targeted a population of 370 individuals, comprising 33 county library staff, 42 community knowledge holders, and 295 Indigenous Knowledge programme participants. The study included library staff and community knowledge holders through census sampling because of their relatively small numbers and direct involvement in Indigenous Knowledge activities. The 295 programme participants were subjected to stratified random sampling, from which a sample of 75 respondents was obtained using Nassiuma's formula. Proportional allocation produced 37 participants from Marsabit and 38 from Isiolo, resulting in a total sample of 150 respondents across the three respondent categories.

Data collection relied on two complementary instruments: structured questionnaires administered to county library staff and semi-structured interview guides used with community knowledge holders and Indigenous Knowledge programme participants. The questionnaire measured community participation through indicators such as involvement in decision-making, attendance at cultural events, and frequency of engagement activities, while the study assessed Indigenous Knowledge collection by identifying knowledge sources, acquisition and documentation methods, and preservation and storage mechanisms. Interviews provided deeper insights into community experiences and participation in Indigenous Knowledge collection.

To ensure quality, the study enhanced validity through expert review, alignment of instruments with the study objectives and relevant literature, and pretesting at Kitui County Library, which was excluded from the main study. The study assessed questionnaire reliability using Cronbach's alpha, with coefficients of 0.70 or above considered acceptable (Mohajan, 2017).

Interview reliability was strengthened through consistent administration, probing, field notes, and triangulation of qualitative and quantitative findings.

Quantitative data were coded and analyzed using IBM SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, summarized responses. Pearson correlation was applied to establish the strength and direction of the relationship between community participation and Indigenous Knowledge collection, while simple linear regression was used to determine the predictive effect of community participation on Indigenous Knowledge collection. Diagnostic tests assessed the assumptions of regression analysis. Qualitative data were analyzed thematically, with emerging themes organized around community participation and Indigenous Knowledge collection. The study triangulated findings from both strands to strengthen interpretation and credibility.

The study obtained ethical approval from the relevant institutional authorities and sought research authorization from NACOSTI and the selected county libraries. Participants provided informed consent, participation was voluntary, and the study maintained confidentiality and anonymity. Data were securely stored and reported in aggregate form, while all sources were appropriately acknowledged in accordance with APA 7th edition requirements.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Response Rate

Of the 370 questionnaires distributed, 335 were correctly completed and returned, for a response rate of 90.5%. Library staff accounted for 30 responses (90.9%), while Community Knowledge Holders returned 38 responses (90.5%) and IK Programme Participants returned 267 responses (90.5%). The high response rate provided sufficient data for the planned descriptive and inferential analyses and strengthened the credibility of the findings on community engagement and Indigenous knowledge collection in the selected county libraries.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

The majority of respondents were male (56.7%), while females accounted for 43.3%, indicating representation of both genders. Most respondents held undergraduate degrees (56.7%), followed by diploma/college qualifications (23.3%) and postgraduate degrees (20.0%), reflecting a relatively well-qualified workforce. Librarians constituted the largest professional group (60.0%), followed by program coordinators (16.7%) and information officers (13.3%). Respondents with 6–10 years of experience formed the largest group (33.3%), followed by those with 1–5 years (30.0%), indicating considerable professional exposure. More respondents were affiliated with Isiolo County Library (56.7%) than Marsabit County Library (43.3%). Additionally, 63.3% participated frequently or very frequently in indigenous knowledge collection activities, suggesting adequate practical experience to provide informed perspectives on community engagement.

4.3 Community Participation

Community Participation in Indigenous Knowledge Collection

This study examined community participation in indigenous knowledge collection to determine how community involvement, decision-making, cultural activities, and engagement initiatives contributed to identifying and documenting indigenous knowledge in the selected county libraries. This section presents the findings on community participation in decision-making, attendance at cultural events, and the frequency of community engagement activities, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Community Participation in Indigenous Knowledge Collection

Statement on <i>Community Participation (n =30)</i>	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
I actively contribute to determining IK collection priorities and strategies within the branch.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	17 (56.7%)	8 (26.6%)	4.03	0.83
Staff input is systematically incorporated into planning IK documentation initiatives.	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	4 (13.3%)	16 (53.3%)	6 (20.0%)	3.77	0.96
Decision-making processes regarding IK priorities reflect staff expertise and community needs.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)	16 (53.3%)	8 (26.7%)	4.00	0.85
I ensure that library staff participation in cultural events aligns with IK documentation objectives.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	8 (26.7%)	4.20	0.71
Attendance at cultural events facilitates structured engagement with knowledge custodians.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	17 (56.7%)	10 (33.3%)	4.33	0.70
Staff actively evaluate cultural events for their potential contribution to IK collection and preservation.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	7 (23.3%)	4.00	0.76
I regularly coordinate activities that promote community involvement in IK documentation.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	19 (63.3%)	8 (26.7%)	4.27	0.64
Staff schedules include systematic follow-up with community contributors to maintain engagement.	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)	17 (56.7%)	6 (20.0%)	3.83	0.93
Engagement activities are planned and documented to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	8 (26.7%)	4.10	0.70
Composite Mean						4.06	0.79

The findings showed that community participation in indigenous knowledge collection was generally high across the selected county libraries, as shown by a composite mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.79). The highest-rated statement was that attendance at cultural events facilitated structured engagement with knowledge custodians (M = 4.33, SD = 0.70), with 17 respondents (56.7%) agreeing and 10 (33.3%) strongly agreeing. This was followed by the statement that staff regularly coordinated activities promoting community involvement in indigenous knowledge documentation (M = 4.27, SD = 0.64), with 19 respondents (63.3%) agreeing and 8 (26.7%) strongly agreeing. These findings suggest that cultural events provided important platforms for interaction between library personnel and knowledge custodians. Greyling and Zulu (2010) similarly observed that public libraries can provide platforms for community participation in

collecting and disseminating indigenous knowledge, particularly where communities actively develop local knowledge content.

Staff participation in cultural events aligned with indigenous knowledge documentation objectives also received a high rating ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 0.71$), indicating that participation in community-based cultural activities was connected to the broader objectives of indigenous knowledge collection. Respondents further agreed that engagement activities were planned and documented to ensure continuity and knowledge transfer ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.70$). This finding demonstrates that community participation extended beyond occasional interaction and included efforts to organize and document engagement activities in ways that supported continued access to indigenous knowledge. The Kenyan National Policy on Traditional Knowledge, Genetic Resources and Traditional Cultural Expressions emphasizes partnerships between government, institutions, and local communities in the documentation, archiving, access, and utilization of traditional knowledge, while also promoting effective community participation in related activities (Government of Kenya, 2009).

However, the findings also revealed areas requiring improvement. The lowest-rated statement concerned the systematic incorporation of staff input into planning indigenous knowledge initiatives ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.96$), followed by scheduled follow-up with community contributors ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.93$). Although these ratings still reflected general agreement, the relatively lower means suggest that participation was less consistent when it involved formal planning and sustained follow-up mechanisms. This finding matters because indigenous knowledge documentation requires ongoing relationships with knowledge holders rather than isolated collection activities. Evidence from Kenya also indicates that community involvement throughout documentation and safeguarding activities can strengthen the sustainability and relevance of indigenous knowledge initiatives (UNESCO, 2022).

The findings therefore suggest that community participation was most effective where library personnel actively collaborated with communities through cultural events and organized engagement activities. Cultural events created opportunities for direct interaction with knowledge custodians, while coordinated documentation activities supported the preservation and transfer of indigenous knowledge. Recent evidence from Kenya similarly demonstrates that bringing elders and communities together with library professionals can facilitate the documentation and preservation of oral traditions, cultural practices, and tacit knowledge (University of Nairobi Library, 2026). The relatively lower ratings for staff involvement in planning and follow-up with contributors indicate, however, that participation had not been fully institutionalized across all stages of the indigenous knowledge collection process.

From a theoretical and practical perspective, the findings support a participatory approach to indigenous knowledge management in which communities are regarded as active partners and custodians rather than merely sources of information. The Kenyan policy framework specifically emphasizes strengthening community capacity to document, protect, develop, teach, and apply traditional knowledge and ensuring that communities have effective control over its documentation (Government of Kenya, 2009). Libraries should therefore provide structured opportunities for staff and community representatives to jointly plan documentation initiatives, identify priority knowledge areas, and establish follow-up mechanisms with contributors. Such approaches would strengthen continuity, improve relationships with knowledge holders, and enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of indigenous knowledge documentation in the selected county libraries.

4.4 Community Knowledge Holders' Responses

Community Knowledge Holders (CKHs) described their contribution to Indigenous Knowledge (IK) collection primarily through sharing and interpreting knowledge and identifying other knowledge holders. They reported providing oral histories, cultural practices, traditional beliefs, customs, and explanations of their cultural meanings. As one participant observed, “*Traditional elders have a lot of information about our history, culture and traditional practices*” (CKH 01). CKHs also helped libraries identify individuals with specialized knowledge of traditions, stories, ceremonies, and cultural practices, thereby expanding the range of knowledge available for documentation. This role positioned CKHs as important intermediaries between libraries and the wider community, consistent with the emphasis placed on community participation in IK transmission, documentation, and preservation (Ngulube & Mutshehwa, 2023; Ocholla & Mostert, 2022).

CKHs further reported participating in storytelling sessions and cultural exhibitions. Storytelling involved sharing histories, traditions, cultural values, and experiences transmitted across generations, while exhibitions provided opportunities to display cultural objects and demonstrate traditional practices. These activities facilitated oral transmission, practical learning, and intergenerational engagement. One participant explained that exhibitions enabled community members to “demonstrate some of the practices that are important to our community” (CKH 06). These findings support previous evidence that storytelling, exhibitions, demonstrations, and other community-based activities are useful mechanisms for preserving and disseminating Indigenous Knowledge (Chigwada & Ngulube, 2024).

4.5 Indigenous Knowledge Programme Participants' Responses

Indigenous Knowledge Programme Participants (IKPPs) reported participating in IK activities through storytelling and oral sessions, cultural exhibitions and events, and documentation activities. Storytelling sessions enabled participants to listen to elders and knowledge holders, ask questions, and learn about community history, traditions, and cultural practices. Participants also attended cultural exhibitions, interacted with knowledge holders, and observed traditional objects and practices. These activities provided opportunities for direct engagement with cultural materials and facilitated intergenerational learning.

Participants also reported contributing to IK documentation, including assisting with interviews, recording information, taking photographs, and organizing materials obtained from knowledge holders. This involvement expanded their role from recipients of IK to active participants in its preservation. This observation is consistent with Ngulube and Mutshehwa (2023), who emphasized community participation in documenting and preserving Indigenous Knowledge.

When asked about the most engaging activities, participants particularly highlighted storytelling, interaction with knowledge holders, cultural exhibitions, and practical workshops. Storytelling was valued because it provided direct access to knowledge that was perceived as difficult to obtain from written sources. Exhibitions and practical activities were similarly appreciated because they enabled participants to observe cultural objects and practices rather than relying solely on verbal descriptions. As one participant noted, “*we can see the cultural objects and understand how they were used instead of just hearing their names*” (IKPP 04). Overall, the findings suggest that participatory and experiential approaches enhanced engagement with Indigenous Knowledge by combining oral transmission, direct interaction, observation, and practical learning. This is consistent with Chigwada and Ngulube (2024), who

identified storytelling, exhibitions, demonstrations, and practical cultural activities as important approaches to IK dissemination and preservation.

4.6 Collection of Indigenous Knowledge

This study examined how the selected county libraries identified, acquired, documented, preserved, and stored indigenous knowledge from various community sources. This section presents the findings on the identification of indigenous knowledge sources, acquisition and documentation methods, and preservation and storage mechanisms, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Collection of Indigenous Knowledge

Statement on collection of indigenous knowledge (n = 30)	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	SD
I oversee the systematic identification of reliable IK sources within the community.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	17 (56.7%)	8 (26.7%)	4.03	0.80
Staff coordinates with community representatives to validate identified IK sources.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	8 (26.7%)	4.10	0.70
Procedures are in place to prioritize and document IK sources based on cultural relevance.	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)	17 (56.7%)	6 (20.0%)	3.83	0.91
I ensure acquisition methods adhere to professional and ethical standards.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	18 (60.0%)	9 (30.0%)	4.27	0.64
IK documentation is standardized across branches to ensure consistency and quality.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	7 (23.3%)	4.00	0.79
Staff regularly audit IK records to maintain accuracy and completeness.	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	4 (13.3%)	17 (56.7%)	6 (20.0%)	3.83	0.93
Preservation protocols are implemented to maintain the integrity of IK materials.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	2 (6.7%)	18 (60.0%)	9 (30.0%)	4.27	0.64
I ensure storage systems protect IK from deterioration, loss, or unauthorized access.	0 (0.0%)	1 (3.3%)	3 (10.0%)	18 (60.0%)	8 (26.7%)	4.17	0.70
Preservation strategies are periodically reviewed and updated according to best practices.	0 (0.0%)	2 (6.7%)	3 (10.0%)	17 (56.7%)	8 (26.7%)	4.03	0.77
Composite Mean						4.06	0.76

The findings revealed that the collection of indigenous knowledge was well supported across the selected county libraries, as demonstrated by the composite mean of 4.06 (SD = 0.76). The highest-rated statements were that acquisition methods adhered to professional and ethical standards (M = 4.27, SD = 0.64) and that preservation protocols were implemented to maintain the integrity of indigenous knowledge materials (M = 4.27, SD = 0.64), with 18 respondents (60.0%) agreeing and 9 (30.0%) strongly agreeing for each statement. This was followed by the statement that storage systems protected indigenous knowledge from deterioration, loss, or unauthorized access (M = 4.17, SD = 0.70). These findings suggest that the selected county

libraries had established sound practices for acquiring and safeguarding indigenous knowledge. Isah, Bashorun, and Omopupa (2012) similarly emphasized that libraries play an important role in identifying, acquiring, organizing, preserving, and presenting indigenous knowledge for future generations.

Respondents also agreed that staff coordinated with community representatives to validate identified indigenous knowledge sources ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.70$), while systematic identification of indigenous knowledge sources and periodic review of preservation strategies each recorded a mean of 4.03. These findings indicate that the collection process included mechanisms to identify relevant knowledge sources and maintain the quality of documented materials. Collaboration with community representatives is particularly important because indigenous knowledge is often transmitted orally and through community practices, making it vulnerable to distortion or loss when it is not systematically recorded. Eze and Eze (2010) observed that libraries play an important role in documenting indigenous knowledge because much of it remains unwritten and depends on oral transmission and memory. The findings therefore suggest that involving community representatives strengthened the credibility and contextual relevance of the knowledge collected.

However, the findings also revealed areas requiring improvement. The lowest-rated statements concerned procedures for prioritizing indigenous knowledge sources based on cultural relevance ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.91$) and regularly auditing indigenous knowledge records to maintain accuracy and completeness ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 0.93$). Although the ratings indicated general agreement, the comparatively lower means suggest that systematic prioritization and quality-control mechanisms were less developed than acquisition and preservation practices. This could limit libraries' ability to identify knowledge that is particularly significant, endangered, or relevant to local communities. Sithole (2007) identified inadequate resources, limited technological capacity, insufficient human expertise, and weak institutional frameworks as challenges affecting the effective documentation and preservation of indigenous knowledge in African libraries. The present findings may therefore reflect the ongoing need to strengthen institutional systems that support systematic indigenous knowledge management.

The findings suggest that indigenous knowledge collection was strongest in acquisition, preservation, and storage, while prioritization and auditing required greater attention. Effective indigenous knowledge management requires libraries to move beyond simply collecting materials to ensuring that knowledge is accurately organized, verified, preserved, and made available for future use. Anyira, Onoriode, and Nwabueze found that libraries in the Niger Delta did not manage indigenous knowledge resources effectively and recommended collaborating with indigenous communities to record, store, and make such knowledge accessible. The relatively high rating for coordination with community representatives in the present study provides a useful foundation for strengthening these practices. The libraries could therefore develop explicit criteria for prioritizing culturally significant knowledge and introduce regular audits to assess the accuracy, completeness, condition, and accessibility of indigenous knowledge records.

From a theoretical and practical perspective, the findings demonstrate the importance of treating indigenous knowledge collection as a systematic knowledge-management process. Ogunkeyede, Ndukwe, Akinola, and Olaseigbe (2023) argued that public libraries have an important responsibility to identify, collate, sort, preserve, and disseminate indigenous knowledge for national development. Similarly, Monyela (2023) emphasized the potential of libraries, archives, and museums to use digital approaches to preserve and provide access to

African indigenous knowledge. The findings of the present study therefore indicate that the selected county libraries had established important foundations for indigenous knowledge collection, particularly in acquisition, preservation, and storage. Nevertheless, strengthening systematic prioritization, routine auditing, and structured knowledge-management procedures would enhance the accuracy, completeness, authenticity, preservation, and long-term accessibility of indigenous knowledge resources.

4.7 Community Knowledge Holders' Responses: Collection of Indigenous Knowledge

Community Knowledge Holders (CKHs) reported that Indigenous Knowledge (IK) collection involved identifying and engaging knowledge holders, followed by oral interviews, storytelling, cultural demonstrations, and documentation. Elders, traditional practitioners, storytellers, and other community members were identified as important sources of specialized knowledge. One respondent explained that *“elders are often able to identify other people who are knowledgeable about particular traditions, history, medicine or community practices”* (CKH 01). This suggests that community networks facilitated access to relevant and specialized knowledge, consistent with Mhlongo (2020), who emphasized community involvement in enabling libraries to access and incorporate Indigenous Knowledge.

CKHs also indicated that collection involved cultural demonstrations, exhibitions, photographs, audio recordings, and written documentation. These approaches enabled libraries to capture both oral and practical dimensions of IK. As one respondent observed, *“some cultural knowledge is better understood when it is demonstrated rather than simply explained”* (CKH 06). Multiple documentation approaches were therefore important for preserving knowledge in forms that reflected how it was traditionally transmitted and practiced, consistent with Chigwada and Ngulube (2024).

Regarding improvements, CKHs emphasized greater community participation, collaboration, and improved documentation capacity and resources. They recommended involving elders, knowledge holders, community leaders, and younger generations throughout the collection process rather than engaging them only when specific information was required. One respondent noted that *“the library should involve the community from the beginning”* (CKH 03). They also identified recording equipment, storage facilities, staff training, and community awareness as important requirements for strengthening IK collection. These recommendations reinforce the need for sustained library–community partnerships and adequate technical and human resources for IK preservation (Mhlongo & Ngulube, 2018; Chigwada & Ngulube, 2024).

4.8 Indigenous Knowledge Programme Participants' Responses on Collection of Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous Knowledge Programme Participants (IKPPs) similarly described IK collection as involving identification and oral engagement with knowledge holders, followed by documentation and preservation. Participants reported identifying elders and other community members by area of knowledge and then engaging them through interviews and storytelling sessions. One participant explained that *“the process usually begins by identifying people who have knowledge about particular subjects”* (IKPP 01). This indicates the importance of community networks in locating appropriate knowledge sources and facilitating interactive knowledge collection, supporting Mhlongo (2020).

Participants also reported using audio, video, photographs, and written records to document knowledge obtained through interviews, storytelling, and cultural activities. As one participant noted, “*stories can be captured through audio, while demonstrations may require video and photographs*” (IKPP 05). The findings suggest that combining different documentation formats enabled libraries to preserve both oral narratives and practical cultural knowledge. This aligns with Chigwada and Ngulube (2024), who identified storytelling, performances, exhibitions, and special collections as important approaches to preserving and disseminating Indigenous Knowledge.

The qualitative findings showed that IK collection was largely community-centered and participatory, relying on knowledge-holder identification, oral engagement, culturally appropriate documentation, and multiple preservation formats. However, participants' recommendations also highlighted the need to strengthen community involvement, technical capacity, equipment, storage, and staff skills to sustain effective IK collection and preservation.

4.9 Pearson Correlation Analysis Results

The correlation analysis established the direction, strength, and statistical significance of the relationship between community participation and indigenous knowledge collection. Pearson’s product-moment correlation coefficient was used, with coefficients of 0.70 and above considered strong (Field, 2018).

Table 3: Pearson Correlation between Community Participation and Collection of Indigenous Knowledge

Variables	Collection of Indigenous Knowledge	Community Participation
Collection of Indigenous Knowledge	1	
Sig. (2-tailed)	—	
N	30	
Community Participation	0.728**	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	—
N	30	30

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As shown in Table 3, the findings revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between community participation and indigenous knowledge collection ($r = 0.728$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that higher levels of community participation were associated with improved indigenous knowledge collection in the selected county libraries. Active involvement in decision-making, cultural events, and documentation activities may have enhanced interaction with knowledge custodians and facilitated access to culturally embedded knowledge. The significant relationship further suggests that meaningful community engagement strengthened the identification, sharing, and recording of indigenous knowledge. The finding demonstrates that effective indigenous knowledge collection depended substantially on interaction between libraries and the communities they served. Thus, strengthening community participation practices could enhance the systematic collection, documentation, and preservation of indigenous knowledge.

5. Conclusion

The study found a strong positive relationship between community participation and the collection of Indigenous Knowledge in county libraries. Community involvement in identifying knowledge holders and documenting, validating, and preserving knowledge improved the quantity, authenticity, and credibility of the knowledge collected. However, inconsistent institutionalization of participatory practices limited sustained engagement by some elders, youth, and other local knowledge holders. The findings therefore suggest that effective Indigenous Knowledge collection requires county libraries to build sustained, meaningful relationships with the communities they serve. Institutionalizing participatory approaches and involving local knowledge holders throughout the knowledge management process can strengthen trust, community ownership, continuous knowledge sharing, and the preservation of culturally relevant knowledge.

6. Recommendations

The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) and county library management should institutionalize structured and inclusive mechanisms for community participation in Indigenous Knowledge programmes. County libraries should provide regular opportunities for community engagement through storytelling sessions, cultural events, community consultations, and feedback forums involving elders, youth, cultural groups, and other knowledge holders. Community leaders should help identify and mobilize diverse knowledge holders, and community contributors should have opportunities to review and validate documented knowledge to improve its accuracy, cultural relevance, and ownership. At the policy level, KNLS should develop clear guidelines for community participation in Indigenous Knowledge collection and encourage their consistent implementation across county libraries. These measures would promote sustained community engagement and strengthen the collection, validation, and preservation of Indigenous Knowledge.

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