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Current Status and Countermeasures for Collaborative Governance of Grassroots Reading Services under the Digital Rural Strategy: A Case Study of 130 Villages in 7 Counties (Cities) of Hubei Province (Postprint)

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Date: 2023-04-01T15:51:23+00:00

Abstract

[目的/意义] To focus on the collaborative governance of rural reading services, enhance the level of collaborative governance, and thereby improve the effectiveness of rural grassroots reading services. [方法/过程] Questionnaire surveys were conducted among rural residents and reading service providers across Hubei Province, and the results were analyzed using the integrated collaborative governance framework proposed by K. Emerson and T. Nabatchi to identify the current status and existing problems in rural grassroots collaborative governance of reading services. [结果/结论] The analysis reveals that collaborative governance of rural reading services remains at a relatively rudimentary level. Concerning the systemic environment for collaborative governance, issues include insufficient dissemination of relevant policies and laws to lower levels, inadequate allocation of reading service resources—particularly digital resources—at the grassroots level, low educational attainment among reading service personnel, lack of a reading atmosphere in rural areas, and rural residents’ distrust of reading services. Regarding the drivers of collaborative governance, problems encompass lack of communication among service entities leading to uncertainty, uncoordinated interdependence, absence of incentive mechanisms, and insufficient cross-departmental (organizational) leadership among service entities. With respect to collaborative governance dynamics, challenges include mechanical and unsystematic principled engagement, weak behavioral intention derived from shared motivation based on understanding and trust, and inadequate grassroots joint action capacity. Based on these findings, a collaborative governance framework for rural reading services centered on digital reading service platforms and corresponding action strategies are proposed.

Full Text

Digital Village Strategy and Collaborative Governance of Grassroots Reading Services: A Survey of 130 Villages Across 7 Counties (Cities) in Hubei Province

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Abstract:

[Purpose/Significance] This study examines the collaborative governance of rural reading services to enhance governance levels and improve the effectiveness of grassroots reading services at the village level. [Method/Process] A questionnaire survey was conducted among rural residents and reading service providers in Hubei Province. Using the integrative framework for collaborative governance proposed by K. Emerson and T. Nabatchi, the survey results were analyzed to identify the current status and existing problems in collaborative governance of grassroots reading services at the village level. [Result/Conclusion] The analysis reveals that rural reading service collaborative governance remains at a relatively low level. Regarding the collaborative governance system environment, problems include insufficient downward communication of relevant policies and laws, inadequate allocation of reading service resources (especially digital resources), insufficient education levels among reading service personnel, lack of reading atmosphere in rural areas, and rural residents' lack of trust in reading services. Regarding drivers of collaborative governance, problems include uncertainty due to lack of communication among service entities, uncoordinated interdependence, absence of incentive mechanisms, and insufficient cross-departmental (organizational) leadership. Regarding collaborative governance dynamics, problems include mechanical and unsystematic principled engagement, weak common motivation based on understanding and trust as behavioral intention, and inadequate joint action capacity at the grassroots level. Based on these findings, a collaborative governance framework for rural reading services built upon digital reading service platforms is proposed, along with corresponding action strategies.

Keywords: rural reading service; grassroots reading service; collaborative governance; digital village strategy; digital reading service

Classification Number: G252

DOI: 10.13266/j.issn.0252-3116.2022.03.004

The 18th National Reading Survey, released on April 23, 2021, shows that while urban and rural residents in China have increased their engagement with book reading and digital reading methods to some extent, gaps persist between urban and rural populations across various reading modalities [1]. To address this

long-standing disparity, various sectors of society have made efforts to develop grassroots reading services at the rural level, such as the Rural Reading Room Project and various private libraries. In the digital environment, digital tools are applied throughout the stages of reading resource construction, organization, and utilization, enabling better delivery of both traditional and digital resources and services to farmers. Examples include digital rural reading rooms launched in provinces like Hubei [2], Anhui [3], and Jiangsu [4], online services from public libraries, free and paid reading software, and reading resource provision and promotion via short video platforms, presenting a trend of multi-entity service provision. However, this multi-entity approach also faces challenges. On the supply side, service entities often operate independently, leading to redundant resource construction and waste. The reading content accessible to rural residents is uneven in quality [6], either failing to meet their needs or demanding excessively high information literacy and reading abilities. The systematic construction of grassroots reading services is insufficient, with different types of reading service entities lacking overall coordination, making service quality and continuity difficult to guarantee. On the demand side, reading poverty among rural residents represents a major challenge, manifesting in both abstract perceptions of reading value [7] and the gap between recognizing reading value and actual reading behavior [8].

Scholars view collaborative governance as a potential solution to these problems. Over recent decades, collaborative governance has become an effective approach to complex public issues [9]. Dong Lijing and Xie Zhiyuan analyzed new urban reading spaces from a collaborative governance perspective, proposing a “four-center” collaborative governance model involving local governments, public cultural service institutions, social groups, and urban residents [10]. Li Yiyu and Ma Deqin examined reading promotion in impoverished mountainous areas through a collaborative governance lens, identifying supply-side dilemmas and proposing a model where schools, individuals and families, non-profit organizations and volunteers, government departments, enterprises, and libraries collaborate to provide reading promotion services. They suggested pathways including resource integration and information sharing, proactive joint collaboration by non-profits and volunteers, enterprises fulfilling social responsibilities to provide material foundations, expanding reading promotion channels, and mobilizing the initiative of impoverished populations [11].

Existing research on collaborative governance mechanisms for reading services primarily defines roles and analyzes cooperative relationships among entities. However, collaborative governance should extend beyond this. Therefore, this study adopts the predictive integrative framework for collaborative governance as a tool to systematically analyze the current status of rural reading service collaborative governance at multiple levels, facilitating understanding of the overall landscape and identification of key propositions.

1 Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Literature Review

On May 16, 2019, the General Office of the State Council issued the *Digital Village Development Strategy Outline* (hereinafter referred to as the *Outline*). As a vital component of public cultural services, reading services are closely related to the *Outline*'s tasks: accelerating rural information infrastructure construction, prospering rural cyber culture, modernizing rural governance capabilities, and deepening information services for public benefit [5]. The *Outline* provides favorable conditions for IT-based grassroots reading services and creates opportunities for service collaboration. Different rural reading service entities exhibit varying degrees of collaboration. Under digital technology and policy environments, this study investigates both supply and demand sides of rural reading services in Hubei Province to explore the collaborative level of multi-entity service provision, identify existing problems, clarify dilemmas, and propose corresponding countermeasures.

1.2 Theoretical Framework for Collaborative Governance

Collaborative governance emerges from the integration of synergetics and governance theory. From a public administration perspective, it can be defined as a formal, consensus-based, deliberate collective decision-making process involving one or more public agencies and non-governmental stakeholders—an institutional arrangement for formulating or implementing public policy and managing public programs and assets [12]. In simpler terms, collaborative governance involves multiple departments promoting joint action through diverse approaches like information sharing and resource complementarity to achieve goals unattainable by single departments [13]. It represents both an institutional arrangement for solving public problems and an emphasis on diverse participants, extending from formal government agencies and NGOs to markets, society, communities, and even citizens [14].

During collaborative governance development, various frameworks have emerged to enhance understanding and practice. Among them, the integrative framework proposed by K. Emerson and T. Nabatchi comprehensively integrates environment, drivers, collaborative dynamics, and outcomes, rather than focusing solely on pathways and strategies. This nested framework was first published in 2012 [16] and finalized based on feedback from academics and practitioners. The outermost layer is the system environment, the innermost layer is collaborative dynamics, with drivers and outcome mechanisms in between. The general system environment includes all factors related to and facilitating collaborative dynamics, such as policies, laws, socioeconomic factors, existing power relations, and conflict histories among participants. Drivers primarily involve leadership, uncertainty, interdependence, and incentive mechanisms. Collaborative dynamics consist of principled engagement, shared motivation, and joint action capacity—encompassing processes like discovering interests, negotiation,

and joint decision-making; trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and commitment; and effective actions that can be co-created. The outcome dimension includes collaborative actions, reliable effects, and adaptive capacity [Figure 1: see original paper].

2 Data Collection

The research team conducted surveys in Hubei Province from February 1 to March 2, 2021, targeting rural residents and reading service providers through field visits, questionnaires, and interviews, with questionnaires as the primary method. Questionnaire content and interview outlines were determined through multiple discussions among team members (see Table 1).

The questionnaire survey employed stratified sampling combined with snowball sampling. Based on the *Hubei Province Rural Revitalization Strategic Plan (2018-2022)*, which advocates regionally and categorically differentiated implementation [17], the survey targeted the “three zones” (Jiangnan Plain Rural Revitalization Demonstration Zone, Urban Suburban Rural Revitalization Pioneer Zone, and Poverty Alleviation Area Rural Revitalization Experimental Zone) and “four village types” (cluster development villages, farming heritage villages, characteristic protection villages, and relocation/merger villages). Questionnaires were distributed to villages under the jurisdiction of Yangxin County (Huangshi City), Luotian County (Huigang City), Zhushan County (Shiyan City), Xiaochang County (Xiaogan City), Xiaonan District (Xiaogan City), Qianjiang City, and Danjiangkou City, via websites, email, mobile terminals, and manual distribution. A total of 694 rural resident questionnaires were collected from 130 administrative villages. Provider questionnaires were distributed to institutions involved in grassroots reading services in the same areas, yielding 158 responses. Additionally, the team visited Fengjiao and Baowan villages in Jiyukou Town (Qianjiang City), and Guchengzhai Village in Dahe’an Town (Luotian County), obtaining meaningful details. Basic respondent information is shown in Table 2 .

Surveyed reading service providers included rural reading rooms, school libraries, township cultural stations, district/county libraries, and relevant government units like culture and tourism bureaus. Among them, 68 were from village-level units, 44 from township-level, 28 from district-level, and 18 from county-level. The survey results were analyzed using the collaborative governance integrative framework to identify current status and problems in system environment, drivers, and collaborative dynamics from both supply and demand perspectives, forming the basis for proposing countermeasures.

3 Analysis of Current Status of Rural Reading Service Collaborative Governance

3.1 System Environment Analysis

The collaborative governance system environment—the arena where collaboration occurs—includes relevant policies and laws, existing reading resources, cultural environment, trust levels between service entities and residents, and conflict histories.

3.1.1 Policy and Legal Environment In recent years, grassroots reading service collaboration at the rural level has received support and encouragement. The *Public Library Law of the People's Republic of China* and provincial/city-level nationwide reading initiatives advocate social participation in reading promotion, spawning numerous cross-sector practices. The *Outline* also creates a favorable technological ecosystem. Thus, rural reading services enjoy sound policy conditions for collaborative governance. Among surveyed providers familiar with the digital village strategy, 77.59%, 72.41%, 70.69%, 68.97%, and 72.41% respectively agreed that information infrastructure promotes nationwide reading, that nationwide reading positively impacts rural cyber culture prosperity, that reading services represent concrete rural governance practices, that reading services constitute information services for public benefit, and that reading services indirectly promote rural agricultural development and economic prosperity. However, only 36.71% of surveyed providers had specifically studied relevant documents. While the policy environment is favorable, downward communication and interpretation require strengthening.

3.1.2 Resources From the demand perspective, among 694 surveyed villagers, 84 had no reading experience. Among the remaining 610, digital reading device contact rates (82.46%) exceeded paper reading material contact rates (48.85%), primarily due to convenience (79.15%), multimedia support (61.15%), abundant resources (45.9%), and timely updates with rapid dissemination (45.57%). One villager noted: “More people read online; the village reading room has fewer visitors.” As shown in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper], preferred content types include current affairs, health preservation, leisure entertainment, and children’s education. For resource and service acquisition, villagers primarily accessed paper reading recommendations and guidance, followed by online promotion via WeChat public accounts or websites, and digital device and reading promotion, with less offline digital resource usage guidance (see Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper]). Digital reading content was mainly obtained through social platforms and news websites, with some use of public cultural service digital platforms and commercial reading platforms (see Figure 4 [Figure 4: see original paper]).

From the supply perspective, the proportions of various resources and services provided by all reading service institutions and village-level institutions are shown in Figures 5 [Figure 5: see original paper] and 6 [Figure 6: see original

paper]. Despite policy and technological support and considerable attention to rural reading services, resource allocation remains far from meeting residents' needs, particularly for in-depth digital reading promotion, digital reading guidance, and reading promotion activities. Additionally, the role of social platforms cannot be ignored.

3.1.3 Cultural Environment Reading service engagement is a selective acceptance process based on residents' own quality conditions and preferences [18]. Among surveyed villagers, 26.37% had junior high school education or below, while 38.76% had higher education. Among service providers, 58.86% had higher education, but only 29.4% at the village level. This gap in education levels between residents and providers creates a potential space for reading services but currently limits the capacity to deliver quality, in-depth services.

3.1.4 Trust and Conflict Trust and conflict history are critical elements in collaborative governance and problems to be solved. Rural reading service issues, while complex, are relatively mild compared to housing prices or pollution, rarely causing conflicts. In this survey, some villagers were unaware of the public cultural service nature of reading services, believing they had no right to use them. Similar situations occurred in other surveys, with residents unwilling to make suggestions because "it would be useless." One villager abandoned using a rural reading room after finding outdated content on aquaculture. This lack of trust among rural residents constitutes an invisible barrier to collaborative governance.

3.2 Driver Analysis

Drivers explain why participants transcend their own interests to promote initial conditions [15]. Their presence makes rural reading service collaborative governance possible and needs triggering, including uncertainty, interdependence, incentive mechanisms, and leadership.

3.2.1 Uncertainty Uncertainty is a background factor. In rural reading services, it refers to ambiguous or unstable future conditions, resources, and decisions when participants have limited information. For example, 69.1% of surveyed institutions identified villagers' lack of reading demand and habits as the primary difficulty, yet 77.9%, 48.5%, 38.2%, 48.5%, and 23.5% respectively believed villagers had demand for paper materials, digital devices, offline activities, digital materials, and online activities. This contradiction reflects limited cognition of reading service information. Correspondingly, many villagers were unaware of reading service institutions' existence. Uncertainty mainly manifests as suppliers' incomplete knowledge of demanders' needs and choices, demanders' inability to obtain convenient, efficient, targeted services, and suppliers' inability to construct clear service landscapes using existing resources and technology.

3.2.2 Interdependence Interdependence explains why entities choose collaboration over conflict or competition. In rural reading services, single entities cannot achieve goals alone, creating varying dependencies. At the village level, local governments provide venues (70.89% overall, 61.8% at village level), while reading service institutions depend on this space. Institutions also heavily access public library digital platforms and cultural resource sharing projects (62.03% and 68.35% overall; 42.6% and 61.8% at village level), but rarely commercial platforms (12.66% overall; 4.4% at village level). These projects have their own systems but limited interaction, resulting in uncoordinated dependencies. Social media, news, and commercial reading platforms frequently used by residents are not strongly integrated into service institutions' considerations.

3.2.3 Incentive Mechanisms Incentive mechanisms are crucial triggers. Among surveyed institutions, 33.54% (25% at village level) identified lack of incentives as a difficulty. Regarding collaboration, 54.05% attributed cooperation problems to lack of clear policy guidance, 45.95% to lack of long-term cooperation mechanisms, and 24.32% to weak cooperation willingness. At the village level, these proportions were 55.5%, 27.7%, and 22.2% respectively. Nevertheless, 72.15% (67.6% at village level) supported integrating resources and services across nationwide reading institutions and were willing to contribute effort. While participation willingness is strong, the lack of incentive mechanisms prevents high-level collaborative governance, a deficiency already recognized by participants.

3.2.4 Leadership Leadership is a vital driver. When individuals or organizations facilitate collaboration, they demonstrate leadership. In rural reading services, such entities—typically with dense professional and social networks, credibility, and trustworthiness—can promote collaborative governance. Zhu Yongxin, a nationwide reading ambassador known to various reading organizations, exemplifies such leadership. However, at the village level, entities currently operate separately without sufficient cross-departmental, cross-organizational leadership. Among providers with limited cooperation, 40.54% (33.3% at village level) identified lack of institutional leadership as the main cooperation difficulty.

3.3 Collaborative Governance Dynamics Analysis

Analyzing dynamics reveals why and how participants engage, what problems remain, and whether effective collaboration is possible [15].

3.3.1 Principled Engagement Principled engagement refers to purposeful contact to solve problems, resolve contradictions, and create value, including processes of discovering, defining, negotiating, and deciding [15]. In practice, rural reading services mostly follow top-down institutional arrangements lacking purposeful engagement, both among providers and between supply and demand

sides. This relates to the public cultural nature of reading services, which lack clear, tight interest connections to facilitate engagement.

3.3.2 Shared Motivation Shared motivation encompasses trust, mutual understanding, internal legitimacy, and commitment. In rural reading services, it includes inter-entity trust, understanding of each other's interests and differences, and formation of consistent motivation—interpersonal validation and internal legitimacy [19]. Survey results show both supply and demand sides intend to establish understanding. For instance, a rural reading room manager in Zhushan County expressed need to “research villagers’ reading needs and provide relevant professional books and materials” and to “develop non-profit reading organizations and volunteers.” However, this intention lacks leadership and incentive drivers, remaining at the willingness level without 促成 commitment.

3.3.3 Joint Action Capacity Joint action capacity is the functional dimension of dynamics, comprising procedural and institutional arrangements, leadership capacity, and knowledge and resources. In procedures and institutions, public libraries and press/publication systems extend services to rural levels—for example, Luotian County Library delivers books to farmers at least 50 times annually based on policy support—but lack deep cooperation mechanisms with other stakeholders. A Nanzhang County Library staff member noted the need to “integrate management levels, as rural reading rooms are managed by publicity departments (press and publication bureaus) while township cultural centers are managed by culture and tourism bureaus.” This reflects absent collaborative leadership. Knowledge capacity manifests as professional competence of reading service personnel. Multiple village-level providers expressed need for enhanced training, indicating insufficient action capacity. While some villages have retired teachers as staff (e.g., Baowan Village, Jiyukou Town, Qianjiang City), this is 偶然 rather than policy-based. Regarding resources, surveys show entities have begun cooperating, demonstrating joint action capacity through integrating digital platforms, local government provision of venues and supervision, and donations from publishers and non-profits (73.55%), collaborative activities, digital resource sharing, and service point establishment (see Figures 7 [Figure 7: see original paper] and 8 [Figure 8: see original paper]). Basic facilities like venues and paper materials have a sound foundation, but convenient digital services and professional human resources remain lacking, particularly severe at the village level. Overall, joint action capacity requires improvement.

4 Countermeasures for Rural Reading Service Collaborative Governance Under the Digital Village Strategy

As a complex public affair, rural reading services require multi-party collaboration. The digital village strategy provides opportunities to address these issues [20]. Specifically, a collaborative governance framework for rural reading ser-

vices can be built upon digital reading service platforms (see Figure 9 [Figure 9: see original paper]). The platform's core integrates rural information facilities, physical and digital reading resources, and online/offline services through interactions among system environment, drivers, and collaborative dynamics. Collaborative actions and effects manifest at three levels: micro-level strategies in specific contexts, meso-level cooperation mechanisms like incentive systems and leadership catalysis, and macro-level structural institutionalization of entity and element interactions [21]. These interactive levels can improve various framework elements. Based on the analysis, this study proposes countermeasures.

4.1 Enhancing Collaborative Governance Environment Through Parallel Utilization and Creation

4.1.1 Multi-Party, Multi-Level Coordination for Policy Communication and Resource Allocation For policy communication, digital reading service platforms integrating multiple devices and media forms can convey and interpret nationwide reading and digital village strategies to both supply and demand sides. For resources, horizontally integrate sources like digital rural reading rooms, public library online platforms, and free online resources into a unified platform with unified search to avoid redundant construction. Vertically, promote multi-level coordination within each entity's system to achieve resource 下沉. Digital facilities in villages facilitate more convenient allocation of digital resources and services.

4.1.2 Cultural Environment Cultivation On one hand, villagers stated: "Reading atmosphere is insufficient" and "Increase investment and vigorously promote the importance of reading." Promotion through low-cost, replicable digital methods is effective. On the other hand, professional talent is needed to guarantee specialized services. In-depth services require appropriately educated professional reading service personnel. One villager from Haokou Town, Qianjiang City, suggested: "There should be dedicated cultural administrators with higher salaries to keep reading rooms open year-round, regardless of farming seasons, so we can read anytime in summer and winter." A staff member from Maochen Town Cultural Station, Xiaonan District, Xiaogan City, stated: "Township libraries should have designated personnel and staffing to alleviate manpower shortages. Regular professional training should ensure vibrant development. Social resources should be integrated to maximize effectiveness." While the talent cultivation system remains incomplete, digital platform-based talent integration and remote services can temporarily alleviate shortages.

4.1.3 Multi-Channel Establishment of Public Trust in Reading Services Public reading services are products of civil society, related to citizens' awareness of and trust in public services. In China, especially in rural areas, residents underutilize and distrust public cultural services. Digital platforms

can promote public reading services, awaken civic awareness, integrate with frequently used news and short video platforms, and connect services with daily life [22] to build trust. Additionally, leveraging clan relationships—a key feature of rural China—and involving rural elites can help establish trust.

4.2 Strengthening Collaborative Governance Drivers Through Cognition and Action

4.2.1 Promoting Communication to Reduce Uncertainty Uncertainty among reading service entities represents an opportunity for collaboration. Entities should adopt collaborative rather than competitive stances. Digital platforms facilitate understanding of each other’s advantages and disadvantages, awareness of cooperation necessity under external uncertainty, and comprehension of users and other service entities through expert consultation and reading behavior tracking [23], reducing internal uncertainty. For example, villagers in Fengjiao and Baowan villages, Qianjiang City, have compound needs for aquaculture, leisure, and digital government services that require collaborative satisfaction. When digital platforms facilitate viewpoint exchange among groups, internal and external uncertainty becomes more easily perceived and reducible.

4.2.2 Strengthening and Coordinating Interdependence First, integrate various dependency relationships and clearly present them through digital reading service platforms. Specifically, identify and coordinate dependencies centered on space, resources, and services in rural reading services. Surveys show weak dependencies between rural reading services and frequently used social media, news, and commercial reading platforms among residents, requiring strengthening.

4.2.3 Establishing Incentive Mechanisms Given participants’ limited recognition of incentive mechanisms, cooperation with other entities should be incorporated into evaluation systems for reading service providers as direct incentives. Additionally, positive feedback from villagers or collaborators can serve as an incentive [24]. Therefore, platforms should collect and publish service and cooperation feedback. For rural residents, establish reading accounts linked to social media and library accounts for service provision and feedback collection, connecting reading services with news and entertainment needs to promote collaborative engagement and incentivize non-fragmented services.

4.2.4 Promoting Multi-Level, Multi-Center Governance Mechanisms Building on existing foundations, establish specialized coordination working groups to analyze rural reading services across different contexts and levels. Through empowerment, service type and content limitations [15], identify different leadership roles to advance multi-center governance. For example, select influential cultural workers as reading ambassadors at the village or county level to initiate service collaboration.

4.3 Strengthening Collaborative Governance Dynamics to Enhance Effectiveness

4.3.1 Enhancing Principled Engagement Among Entities Information disclosure through digital reading service platforms can facilitate and sustain principled engagement, especially promoting resident participation and understanding of service providers, enabling them to combine available resources with their needs. Through principled engagement, entities can establish their positions in the collaborative governance landscape.

4.3.2 Promoting Common Motivation Based on Trust and Understanding Among existing rural reading service entities, lack of trust, understanding, and cooperation awareness hinders collaborative governance. Digital platforms can conduct stakeholder analysis, guide entities to break existing boundaries, make commitments to collaborative services, and transform internal commitments into written contracts, with both internal motivation and external constraints safeguarding collaborative action. Xiamen Shamei Public Library (in an urban village) exemplifies this: its director stated, “Once you enter the community, when they know this benefits the community, people are very helpful” and “When you actually do it, people know we’re doing things for them and become very enthusiastic” [25].

4.3.3 Improving Joint Action Capacity To address insufficient digital resource provision and talent support, digital reading service platforms can integrate distributed resources, conduct cross-departmental professional and volunteer training online, and provide one-stop, cross-regional reading consultation, enhancing joint action capacity.

4.4 Sustainable Collaborative Governance Under Dynamic Adaptation

Expected outcomes of rural digital reading service collaborative governance manifest at different levels: micro-level effective service delivery, meso-level collaborative mechanisms, and macro-level collaborative institutions. The framework is dynamic, requiring continuous adaptation under constant element interaction. Collaborative actions at various levels can improve not only governance capacity but also system environment (through policy awareness, cultural improvement, and trust enhancement), drivers (through reduced uncertainty, strengthened interdependence, established incentives, and multi-center leadership), and dynamics (through increased engagement, clarified motivation, and improved joint action capacity). External policy and technological environments also evolve over time, necessitating dynamic external adaptation—facilitated by digital reading service platforms.

Conclusion

Grassroots reading services at the rural level have attracted academic and practical attention in recent years, showing a trend of multi-entity provision but also collaboration problems. The digital village strategy provides opportunities to alleviate these issues. This study draws on the collaborative governance integrative framework from public administration to analyze this specific issue, addressing the lack of theoretical foundation in existing research. Based on this framework, surveys of rural residents and institutions in Hubei Province were conducted with supply-demand and hierarchical comparisons to understand current status and problems. Analysis reveals that rural reading service collaborative governance in China has established some foundation but remains at a low level. Therefore, a framework and countermeasures under the digital village strategy are proposed. This discussion is comprehensive but may lack detail; deeper research is needed on driver mechanisms, dynamic mechanisms, incentive mechanisms, adaptive mechanisms, and element combinations within different mechanisms.

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Author Contributions

Xie Juan: Proposed research ideas, organized questionnaire surveys, wrote partial drafts.

Li Xue: Determined paper framework, wrote and revised paper.

Li Hong: Implemented questionnaire surveys.

Zhang Xiaoyu: Conducted field investigations.

Qin Xia: Conducted field investigations.

Present Situations and Countermeasures of Collaborative Governance of Grassroots Reading Services Under the Digital Village Strategy: A Survey from 130 Villages Across 7 Counties (Cities) in Hubei Province

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] Focusing on collaborative governance of rural reading services can improve governance levels and enhance the effectiveness of grassroots reading services at the rural level. [Method/Process] A questionnaire survey was conducted for rural residents and reading service providers in Hubei Province. Based on the integrative framework for collaborative governance proposed by Emerson and Nabatchi, the survey results were analyzed to identify the current status and existing problems in collaborative governance of grassroots reading services at the rural level. [Result/Conclusion] The results show that collaborative governance of rural reading services remains at a low level. Regarding the collaborative governance system environment, problems include insufficient downward communication of relevant policies and laws, inadequate reading service resources (especially digital resources), insufficient education of reading service personnel, lack of rural reading atmosphere, and rural residents' insufficient trust in reading services. Regarding drivers of collaborative governance, problems include uncertainty due to lack of communication among service bodies, interdependence lacking coordination, absence of incentive mechanisms, and insufficient leadership across departments and organizations. Regarding collaborative governance dynamics, problems include mechanical and unsystematic principled engagement, insufficient common motivation based on understanding and trust as willingness to act, and inadequate joint action capacity at the grassroots level. Based on the above, a collaborative governance framework for rural reading services based on digital reading service platforms and corresponding action strategies are proposed.

Keywords: rural reading service; grassroots reading service; collaborative governance; digital village strategy; digital reading service

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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