

CORRELATES OF SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PRACTICE IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Citizen participation in community development is often determined by some factors all over the world, including African nations. Some of these factors are local while some are global in nature. In Nigeria, community development practice has not received enough enthusiasm among people as a veritable tool for personal and sustainable community development. The study adopted the descriptive survey research design of ex- post facto type. The respondents for the study were 435 comprising community leaders, political class, religious leaders, and community members from Awe (220) in Afijio Local Government Area, Oyo State and Ikire (215) in Irewole Local Government Area, Osun State using multi-stage sampling technique. A self - constructed scale "Determinants of Sustainable Community Development Practice Scale" $r = .86$ was used. Findings from the study revealed that good governance ($r=0.841$, $df=433$, $P < 0.05$), political and community education ($r=0.278$, $df=433$, $p<0.05$) and government funding development ($r=0.641$, $df=433$, $p<0.05$) significantly correlated with citizen participation. Based on these findings, it is recommended that community members should be more mobilised to participate in community development; government should embark on political and community education, and provide responsible leadership based on the principles of good governance. Also, Government at all levels should provide financial support to communities particularly in Africa for sustainable community development programmes.

Key Words: Good governance, Citizen Participation, Sustainable Development practice, Community education.

Introduction

Different factors determine citizen participation in community development programmes all over the world, including African nations. Some of these factors are local while some are global in nature. These factors often affect the pace of community development, making the pace either accelerated or slow or inactive. The local factors that have been identified by researchers in Nigeria were religious, cultural, illiteracy and gender factors.

However, there are other determinants of citizen participation in community development programmes that affect all nations. These factors include level of community education, funding, good governance, size of the community, communication, democratic values, political and community education, community leadership, motivation from within the community, social cohesion and community social capital.

One of the most preferred definitions of community development is that of United Nations which describes the concept as a joint effort and collaboration of the government and community members. However, most people in Nigeria believe that it is the responsibility of government to provide, maintain and sustain all infrastructures. Hence, there is over-dependence on government for development. Sustainable development is virtually ignored in the scheme of things (Anyanwu, 1992; Abiona, 2009).

In Nigeria, community development practice has not received enough enthusiasm among people critical instrument for personal and sustainable community development. This could bring about low citizen participation, poor implementation and abandonment of projects. Though community members are aware of the importance of community development as a veritable tool for development, certain factors inter-play in determining sustainability of sustainable community development practice. Some variables (good governance, leadership skills, political and community education and funding) are important determining factors affecting sustainability of community development in South-West, Nigeria.

Community participation implies that the people in the community should take part in the identification of needs, planning, execution, utilisation and evaluation of programmes or projects. Participation brings about greater interest in community development programmes. It fosters sentimental attachment to the community and the programme to be executed. It creates the pride of ownership whereby people can refer to community projects as "ours" (Anyanwu, 1992; Abiona, 2009). Community members will readily commit

their human and material resources to the programme/project in which they are deeply involved. Citizen participation creates self-fulfillment in the minds of community members. It brings about positive change through cooperative efforts of the people to solve problems (Phillips & Pittman, 2009).

A key factor of sustainable development is an effective political system where democratic values are cherished. Sustainable development requires a political system that ensures citizen participation in decision-making. McConnell (2014) noted that an important role in community education is grassroots democracy and community development. Also, Halliru (2013) and Babangida (2013) observe that the success of community driven development programme hinges on grassroots democracy whereby all members of the community take part in decision making and implementation. Similarly, Akoroda (2012) notes that community education has not done enough in making people aware of the need to participate in self-help community development projects. Twelvetreets (2008) also stresses the importance of the community officer in the process of educating and organising the community for change.

Researchers have stressed the importance of good governance in the process of promotion of community development. Among them are Omolewa, (2001), Adewoye (2009), Awe, (2009) Kolzow (2009) and Patrick (2013). They observe that good governance is very important in community development. In Nigeria and developing countries generally, sustainable community development can only succeed where there is transparency and accountability in all sectors. Many programmes have been poor in quality or abandoned midway due to corruption,

embezzlement of fund, nepotism and other vices. Transparency and accountability will make members of the community develop psychological interest in the mobilisation programme of government towards self-help projects.

Moreover, sustainable community development also depends on good economic system that is able to withstand test of time (Haines, 2009). It is capable of solving problems in the process of development. The idea is that if the economy of a nation has a strong base, it should be stable and ready to meet the challenges of the present generation and at the same time make provision for the future generation. It is a system whereby employment rate is high and the level of poverty is minimal (Abiona, 2009). In Nigeria, for example, there is over-dependence on oil production as the main source of revenue. However, the main source of survival in the rural area, which is agriculture, is not well promoted.

There should be equal access to resources for sustainability of community development. In many communities, lack of access to resources confines people to abject poverty. Thus, their livelihood and survival as a people depend on limited resources that they can muster to exist. In this case, there are often classes of wealthy people alongside the lower stratum of the women and children that are the most vulnerable in such communities. Moreover, the inequalities make it possible for the mighty or the rich to mismanage collective available resources.

In a society where there is poverty, high unemployment, lack of access to basic needs of livelihood like Nigeria, it is difficult for people to team up for community development purposes. Where people attempt to come together, in most cases, many community members do not participate due to poverty and inability to

contribute their share to the development of the community. Funding of community development programmes is negatively affected in many developing nations due to poverty. Ogwumike, (2002) and Alese (2010) note that a growing number of households are unable to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, there have been many interventions from international bodies, such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) the World Bank and UNICEF in rendering assistance to poverty reduction in Nigeria and other developing countries, Alese (2010). World Bank (1996) describes poverty in terms of the inability to meet basic physical needs like food, health care, education, shelter, income and physical needs as participation and identity requirement for a meaningful life. Thus, Olajide (2004) perceives poverty in terms of inability to purchase basic goods and services which are nutrition, shelter, water and healthcare.

Despite the benefits of community development, government and communities, especially in developing countries fail to identify factors such as good governance, leadership skills, political and community education and funding that determine successful implementation of projects and programmes. The pace of development in different communities and nations depend on these factors. Such factors are international in nature while some are local. Community participation ensures that members of a community contribute their resources, energy, and time towards development of the community. They are involved in decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation of programmes for development.

In Nigeria, community development practice has not received enough enthusiasm among people as a veritable tool for personal and sustainable community development.

This could bring about low citizen participation, poor implementation and abandonment of projects. Though community members are aware of the importance of community development as a veritable tool for development, certain factors inter-play in determining sustainability of community development practice. This study was conducted using comprehensive scope of respondents' coverage with some variables (good governance, leadership skills, political and community education and funding) to determine the factors affecting sustainability of community development in South-West, Nigeria.

In Nigeria and most developing countries, the will and motivation to participate in community development is determined by factors which can be internal, within the community itself and external, outside the control of the community. The identified factors determining citizen participation include good governance, leadership skills, community education and political will, governmental support of projects, poverty and the like. This study, therefore, investigated the factors which determine citizen participation in Ikire and Awe communities in Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to investigate the various factors that determine citizen participation in community development programmes. Specifically, this study focuses on:

- (i) investigating the influence of good governance/leadership skills on citizen participation in community development in the two communities;

- (ii) ascertaining the influence of community and political education on citizen participation in community development; and
- (iii) examining the extent of collaboration and support of the government in encouraging and funding community development in the two communities.

Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were raised in the study. These were:

- (i) there is no significant relationship between good governance/leadership skills and citizen participation in community development;
- (ii) there is no significant relationship between community and political education and citizen participation in community development and
- (iii) there is no significant relationship between government funding development and citizen participation in community development.

Methodology

The research design for the study is descriptive survey of expo-facto type which examined the factors that determine citizen participation in community development projects in Nigeria. This is because the variables of interest in the study were not manipulated by the researcher.

Population: The population for the study was made up of community members consisting of men, women and youths, community leaders and political leaders from the two communities.

Sampling Technique: A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select respondents who are community members,

members of women associations and youth associations, community leaders and political leaders. This involved the purposive sampling technique to select two communities from Osun and Oyo States. The second stage of "fishbowl" sampling was employed to select the women associations, youth organizations, community leaders and community members. The third stage is the stratified random technique to select 435 members from the two communities.

Instrumentation: The main instrument for the research was a questionnaire tagged: "Determinants of Sustainable Community Development Practice Scale". This was

divided into two sections (A and B). Section A was on the demography of respondents while section B contained items on variables (good governance, leadership skills, political and community education and funding) that are determinants of citizen participation in community development. The instrument was validated in terms of face and content and internal consistency. Based on the pilot study, a test re-test co-efficient of 0.86 was obtained.

Method of Data Analysis: Data were analysed through frequency counts, percentages and Pearson Product Moment Correlation.

Results

Percentage number of respondents from the two communities

Table 1: Showing Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age Range		
15 – 30	85	19.6
31 – 40	104	23.9
41 – 50	151	34.7
51 and above	95	21.8
Total	435	100.00
Gender		
Male	254	58.4
Female	181	41.6
Total	435	100.00
Educational Level		
Non Formal Education	64	14.7
Primary/Basic Education	105	24.1
Secondary Education	170	39.1
Higher Education	96	22.1
Total	435	100.00
Marital Status		
Single	65	14.9
Married	343	78.8
Separated	12	2.8
Divorced	15	3.5
Total	435	100.00

Table 1 on the demographic features shows that sample between 41- 50 years is the largest. The respondents in this sample were 34.7% while age group 31- 40 was 23.9%. Ages 15-30 and 51 and above were 19.6% and 21.5% respectively. This implies that those in age groups 31 – 40 and 41 – 50 seemed more active in community development programmes. They constitute the working class in the communities and participate more in communities' activities.

Moreover, 58.4% of the respondents were males while 41.6% were females. The implication is that there are more male participants in community development activities than females. This might be as a result of cultural value which has not given women enough opportunity to participate in communal activities.

Community development should involve people of all ages, men, women and youths, therefore, female members of the community are expected to show more interest and their

readiness to participate in community development. There is more awareness than before on the part of female gender to be involved in community development (Alese, 2010; Osaghae, 2012).

The educational qualifications of the sample indicate that only 14.7% of the respondents have no formal education. The educational qualifications range from primary/Basic Education (24.1%), Secondary education (39.1%) and Higher education (22.1%). By implication, it should be easier to disseminate information on community development within the communities because many are educated.

From the table, the marital status of the sample indicates that there are more married respondents than others. The married were 78.8%, single 14.9%, separated 2.8% and divorced 3.5%. The implication is that they are expected to be responsible members of the communities as married couples.

Results and Findings

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between good governance and citizen participation in community development.

Table 2: Relationship between good governance and citizen participation correlation table

Variable	N	Mean	Std. dev	Df	R	Remarks
Good governance	435	44.04	8.53	433	.841	S*
Citizen participation	435	31.45	7.43			

S* denote significant correlation at 0.05 level of significant

Table two indicates that there is a significant relationship between governance/ leadership skills and citizen participation in community development. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected and alternative position is taken. The finding in this respect

agrees with the submission of Abiona, (1995); Patrick, (2013), and that lack of accountability, transparency and good leadership quality which are indices of good governance affect the pace of community development. The belief of people,

generally, is that since leaders are corrupt and they embezzle government fund meant for development, there is no reason to use personal resources to develop their communities. Moreover, the political leaders made empty promises when canvassing for

election without fulfilling them. This position agrees with Abiona, (2009) and Patrick, (2013) that the political class negatively influences the interest of community members to participate in community development.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between political and community education and citizen participation in community development

Table 3: Correlation between political and community education and citizen participation in community development

Variable	N	Mean	Std. dev	Df	R	Remarks
Political and community education	435	109.60	7.91	433	0.278	S*
Citizen participation	435	99.39	8.05			

S* denote significant relationship at 0.05 alpha level.

Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between political education and community education and citizen participation. Finding indicates that members of the community are of the view that they do not have enough knowledge of what political and community education is about. They argue that they are not adequately informed of what their duty and expectation should be in the community. Participation in community development

depends on giving the right political and community education. This is in line with McConnell's (2014) views on the importance on mobilisation and community education in communities for self-help development. Akoroda (2012) also notes that community education has not done enough in creating awareness among community members to participate in self-help community development projects.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant relationship between government funding development and citizen participation in community development

Table 4 : Correlation between government funding development and citizen participation in community development.

Variable	N	Mean	Std. dev	Df	R	Remarks
Government funding development	435	57.16	13.27	433	.641	S*
Citizen participation	435	67.89	17.78			

S* denote significant correlation at $P= 0.05$ significant level

Table 4 above indicates that there is a significant relationship between government funding development and citizen participation in community development. Government's collaboration with communities is key to the process of development but the over dependency on government negatively affects citizen participation (Abiona, 2009).

The belief in government funding of projects other than capital projects like road network, schools and hospitals might be due to the poverty prevailing generally in the communities. This is in line with the submission of Anyanwu (1992), Abiona, (2009) and Ogwumike, (2002) and Alese (2010) which emphasised that poverty is affecting citizen participation in community development. The poor people naturally think of their basic needs over the communal needs, hence when asked to make certain contribution for the development of the community, only a few members of the community will be willing to participate.

Moreover, the political class influence affects the morale and attitude of the citizenry towards participation in community development. The political class contributes to the poor level of community development, over-dependence on government and poor attitude of people towards development. Comparatively,

political class in advanced countries encourages citizens to participate in community development voluntarily, discussing policy issues rather than promising personal intervention in the communities that vote for them. In Nigeria, the provision of basic infrastructure is an issue during campaign for election, instead of educating the people on the need to embark on self-help development, (Abiona, 1995, 2009, Patrick, 2012).

Discussion

Findings from the study reveal that good governance, political education, community education and government funding development significantly correlate with citizen participation.

Finding from hypothesis one above indicates that members of the community blame the leaders for bad governance which reflects in lack of transparency and accountability in all sectors. It is, generally, believed that Nigerian leadership is foremost in corruption and lacking in integrity. International Integrity ranked the nation as number four in the world. Many programmes have been poor in quality or abandoned midway due to corruption, embezzlement of fund, nepotism and other vices. With this view in mind, community members believe that the fund

being embezzled ought to be used to develop the communities and no need expecting community members funding development. Lack of governance has negatively affected the will of community to embark on self-help projects.

Also in hypothesis two, finding shows a significant relationship between political and community education and citizen participation in community development. Though the level of literacy is good in the two communities, the political and community education that ought to galvanise the communities to take positive steps towards community development is lacking. There is the problem of adequacy of trained community development officers in the two communities. Hence, the expected mobilisation towards participation does not manifest.

Finding indicates that there is a significant relationship between government funding development and citizen participation in community development in Hypothesis Three. The finding can be traced to the perception of the community members on poverty as in hypothesis one of this research. Most respondents of the research mentioned the problem of meeting daily basic need as a major factor hindering community participation. They argued that where there is poverty; government has to be responsible for all developmental projects. Another major view is the prevalent of corruption and bad governance among government officials and political class.

Conclusion

The study shows that the pace of community development is rather slow in the two communities on the account of bad governance/ leadership, political and community education and lack of sufficient financial support from the government.

Poverty has been a key factor that brings about over dependency on government to fund projects and inability to participate in community development.

Recommendations

It is, therefore, recommended that these major determinants should be addressed in order to enhance citizen participation in self help community development in Nigeria. These include:

- (i) responsive, accountable, and transparent leadership in Nigeria that would serve as good models for the citizenry. In other words, good governance will promote the course of community development and encourage citizen participation;
- (ii) the leaders and the general citizenry need community and political education to curb the rate of corruption and also imbibe spirit of good citizenry to develop the nation generally;
- (iii) there is need to encourage community members to believe in and participate in self-help development programme in order to attain sustainable development. The community members should realise that only citizen participation can ensure that the projects in their community can be sustained;
- (iv) despite the perceived poverty in the communities, little contributions from the resources of community members will sum up to immense contribution which can be harnessed to develop the community. Community members should not wait till every member of the community would be out of poverty before participation in community development;

(v) the culture of over-dependency on government funds and resources should be discouraged through political and community education for the political class and the general public. The political class should address issues to mobilise the people towards positive contribution to community development programme instead of the falsehood which characterize campaign promises.

(vi) Government and non-governmental agencies that are involved in community development need to employ trained community officers who are in better position to mobilise and encourage citizen participation in community development;

(vii) communities should determine their felt needs instead of depending on government patronage in order to develop. The people in the community should take positive steps towards addressing the various prevailing problems. They should be able to identify their needs, take decisions on solving the problems and implement the decisions through local resources.

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