

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE OF YOUTH PARTICIPATION ON SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN ONELGA, RIVERS STATE.

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Abstract

The study investigated the perceived influence of youth participation on sustainable community development projects in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State. Two research questions and two hypotheses guided the study. Employing a descriptive survey design, the population of the study comprised thirteen thousand (13,000) respondents in Ogba/Egbema Local Government Area of Rivers State. The Taro Yamane model of sample size determination was used to obtain the sample size of 250 youths (110 males, 140 females). A validated 10-item research instrument titled “Perceived Influence of Youth Participation on Sustainable Community Development Projects Questionnaire (PIYPSQDPQ)” was used for data collection. The PIYPSQDPQ questionnaire was patterned in line with the four point Lickert rating scale response pattern of Very High Extent (VHE) = 4points, High Extent (HE)= 3points, Low Extent LE = 2points, and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1point. A reliability coefficient of 0.78 was obtained with the test retest method, using Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient Statistics (r). Mean and standard deviation statistics were used to answer the research questions, while Z-test statistics was used to test the hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance. The study among others revealed that youth participation in Community Development Projects eradicates poverty in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State. the study concluded that companies operating in the Local Government Area should rise to their corporate social responsibility in the development of communities in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State.

Key Words: Community Development, Youth Participation, Projects.

Introduction

Virtually everyone knows the community he or she belongs to and consciously understands to some extent when there is overlap, but it is a herculean task to put this understanding into one acceptable and harmonious definition. Professionals and practitioners are greatly divided as to what could be considered acceptable definition for the word community Dokubo (2015). She posited that community can be viewed in two perspectives: a group of people living within a particular geographical area as a result of unity, rootedness, intimacy, language, beliefs, values and position of hierarchy. Ojoko in Deekor & Nnodim (2005) described a community as

constituting those residing in a given locality who share interest, common backgrounds and goals.

However, it is certain that as a community there must be certain notable values shared in common that binds the people together.

Development on the other hand is seen as a constant positive change that is sustainable for the betterment of the people. This is because development is a multi-dimensional word meaning different things to different people. According to Dokubo (2015), the federal government of Nigeria in 2014 announced to the world that Nigeria is the ‘biggest economy in Africa’, this proclamation triggered a lot of controversy, even till date. While the government based their argument on the Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP), critics reasoned that the per capita income of the average Nigerian hardly fits the description of the Government. Against the backdrop, Todara (1979) and Onyeozu (2008) cited in Dokubo (2015) defined development as “the multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, reduction in inequality, poverty eradication, organization and reorientation of entire economic and social systems”.

Although community development has its ancestry as a union of community organization and economic development, rural sociology, adult education, and the extension movement, it is new as a discipline. It was first mentioned internationally at the 1948 Cambridge Summer Conference. There, it was agreed that the compound word ‘community development’ should be used in place of ‘mass education’ and defined as: A movement designed to promote better living with the active participation and if possible, on the initiative of the community but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to ensure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement (Koabni & Alozie, 2015).

Haven't extensively defined all the components presently surrounding community development and itself it is pertinent to opine that Community development projects are meant to develop youths, eradicate extreme poverty, hunger, cultism, people in the community crisis among youth and multinational companies. Community Development Projects are projects that support the individuals and communities earn a living that could lead to the enhancement and continuity of the general economic activities of the area. A 2015 Report of the United Nations on the Millennium Development Goals indicates that the goals were eight development strategies designed to be achieved by the year 2015, these include eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and women empowerment, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, combating HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and develop global partnership for development. The report of the United Nations development Programme (UNDP) further reveals that progress made in those fifteen years (15) have been tremendous, as the number of people who are hungry is reduced by half, extreme poverty down by half, more children now go to school, improvement in child mortality and maternal health, improvement in the fight against HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases and others. Today these countries want to build on the achievements recorded over the years, hence the concept of sustainable development goals (SDGs), which is a blueprint aimed at maintaining the recorded achievements and ensure continuity to end poverty, hunger, child mortality, HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases and enthrone economic empowerment, (Akpomi, 2009).

Community development projects in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area aims at maintaining and ensuring continuity of such projects as employment of youths, hospitals,

electricity, markets, roads, portable waters, etc., which support household income, encourage small scale businesses in the area, create a future devoid of poverty and hunger, where people can work and live above \$1.25 per day. Community development projects are strategic people orientated projects designed to accelerate and integrate the participation of the youths and communities in sustaining economic activities of the area to alleviate poverty and promote self-reliance among the people, (Akpomi, 2009). These projects support the youths and communities earn a living that could lead to the development of the community. Ezeji & Okorie (1988) avers that Nigeria's social and economic problems could reduce drastically if the youths are empowered. Wokocha (2002), asserts that unemployment, hunger, and poverty breed frustration which at long the run leads to criminality, kidnapping, cultism, and oil pipelines vandalism. Sustainable development projects in this context include, but not limited to Youths Employment, Skills, vocational training, and provision of social amenities like portable water, markets, hospitals, roads, and electricity in the various communities, (Amadi & Akpomi, 2008).

Akinpelu (1992) in Kobani and Aloze (2015) noted that development is of man rather than of infrastructures and public works, supermarkets, skyscrapers, and highways though they are indices. Balogun (2002) agrees with this assertion when he said that the emphasis of development is on the people.

Frank and Smith (2013) view community development as a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems. Alozie (2012) see Community Development as a structured intervention that gives consideration to the definitions above, given by organizations and individuals, shows that Community Development

has been described as a movement, a method and a process. The implication is that community development tool manifests in different forms depending on the practitioner.

Participation according to the World Bank's learning Group is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1996). The 1999 Nigerian constitution, subsection (a) of section 17, makes provision for this when it states that every citizen shall have equal opportunity of right, obligations, and opportunities before the law.

Participation principle therefore stipulates that the local people should take part in the planning, execution, utilization, and evaluation of developmental projects and programmes designed to improve the warfare. It is such participation that gives the people the pride of ownership of the completed projects.

Participation emphasizes the initiative of the people as a means of stimulating the active involvement of all citizens in the community development activity. This implies that the resource needed for the success of the development programmes must come from both the people themselves and from government authorities.

According to Onyeozu (2007) in Kobani and Aleozie (2015) participation in community development is concerned with; involvement of people in cooperative projects for improvement of their living conditions, involvement of people in activities for acquisition of skills that enable them to adjust to changing realities, and involvement of people in public issues which grow out individual or local interest.

Sustainability is a state of continuity, being able to provide support that could last for a long time. Employment, therefore, affords the individual the opportunity to provide an income for the household which will continue to support the household for a long time even in the face of economic recession. Okebukola (2012) in one of his articles avers that various conflicts in West Africa sub-region certainly are not something to cheer about and to promote development; there must be peace through meaningful engagement of the youths.

Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area is one among the twenty-three Local Government Areas of Rivers State, created in 1991 out of the old Ahoada Local Government Area. It covers an area of about 969 sq. Km with a population of about 284,010 people based on 2006 census report. The Local Government Area is famous in its crude oil and natural gas reserve and it contributes substantially to the revenue earnings of the State and the Nation. The Local Government Area maintains a leading position in the oil and gas industry because of its huge oil and natural gas reserve. The people of the area are predominantly farmers, fishermen and women. The area is endowed with abundant resources, both human and natural, but evidence has shown that the people are extremely poor and hungry, the communities are ravaged by youth restiveness, cultism and cult instigated conflicts that have stopped economic activities if not for the intervention of the Ospam force (local vigilante). It, therefore, becomes pertinent to seek for ways to alleviate the sufferings of the people through promotion and community development projects in the area. This is the basis for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The study examined Perceived Influence of Youths Participation on Sustainable Community Development Projects in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. Examine the extent to which youth participating in community development projects result to peace with multinational companies in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
2. Ascertain the extent to which the absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the companies initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent does youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.
2. To what extent does the absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Hypotheses

- H₀₁ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female youth on the extent to which youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

H₀₂ There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female youth on the extent to which absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Results

The results obtained in this study after data analysis were presented and analyzed below.

Research Question 1: To what extent does youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 1: Extent to which youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

| S/N | Items | Youth (male) (N =140) | | | Youth (Female) (N = 110) | | |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | | \bar{X}_L | SD _L | Decision | \bar{X}_E | SD _F | Decision |
| 1 | Participation in community development projects enabled youths to live in harmony. | 3.20 | 0.89 | High Extent | 2.95 | 1.03 | High Extent |
| 2 | I have acquired certain skills through participation in community projects. | 2.92 | 1.08 | High Extent | 2.81 | 1.05 | High Extent |
| 3 | Through participation youths can Function effectively and efficiently as responsible members of the community. | 3.00 | 1.04 | High Extent | 2.65 | 1.08 | High Extent |
| 4 | Participation in projects has enabled youths to gain experience. | 2.81 | 1.07 | High Extent | 2.55 | 1.08 | High Extent |
| 5 | Through active participation in community development projects, youths are adequately empowered. | 3.21 | 0.90 | High Extent | 2.60 | 1.08 | High Extent |
| Grand Mean and SD | | 3.03 | 1.00 | | 2.71 | 1.06 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data on table 1 revealed that item 1-5 have mean values that fell within the range of high extent.

Therefore, with a grand mean of 3.03 and standard deviation of 1.00 for male and grand mean of 2.71 and standard deviation of 1.06 for female, it was evident that both male and female youth agreed to high extent that youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 1: Extent to which absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

| S/N | Items | Youth (male) (N =140) | | Decision | Youth (Female) (N = 110) | | Decision |
|--------------------------|--|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| | | \bar{X}_L | SD _L | | \bar{X}_E | SD _F | |
| 1 | Lack of participation has created idle youths in the community. | 2.90 | 0.85 | High Extent | 2.90 | 1.04 | High Extent |
| 2 | Youths are unable to relate with others due to isolation. | 2.92 | 1.09 | High Extent | 2.92 | 1.03 | High Extent |
| 3 | Cultism is on the high due to absence in community development projects. | 2.67 | 1.03 | High Extent | 2.71 | 1.08 | High Extent |
| 4 | Youths have resulted in vandalization of company infrastructures. | 2.81 | 1.05 | High Extent | 2.58 | 1.07 | High Extent |
| 5 | Through active participation in community development projects, youths are adequately empowered. | 3.00 | 1.07 | High Extent | 2.70 | 1.09 | High Extent |
| Grand Mean and SD | | 2.86 | 1.02 | | 2.76 | 1.06 | |

Source: Field Survey, 2022

The data on table 2 revealed that item 6-10 have mean values that fell within the range of high extent. Therefore, with a grand mean of 2.86 and standard deviation of 1.02 for male and grand mean of 2.76 and standard deviation of 1.06 for female, it was evident that both male

and female youth agreed to high extent that absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female youth on the extent to which youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 3: Z-test Analysis of Difference in Responses of Male and Female Youth on the Extent to which Youth Participation in Community Development Projects Result to Peace with Multinational Company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

| Respondents | N | \bar{X} | SD | DF | Level of Significance | z-Cal. | z-Crit. | Decision |
|-------------|-----|-----------|------|-----|-----------------------|--------|---------|----------|
| Male | 140 | 2.86 | 1.02 | 227 | 0.05 | 1.25 | ±1.96 | H_{01} |
| Female | 110 | 2.76 | 1.06 | | | | | Accepted |

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The data on table 3 showed that the z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at 1.25 while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 227 as degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, hypothesis therefore, was accepted by the researcher.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female youth on the extent to which absence of youth in community development projects result to conflict with the company(s) initiating the project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

Table 4: Z-test Analysis of Difference in Responses of Male and Female Youth on the Extent to which Absence of Youth in Community Development Projects Result to Conflict with the Company(s) Initiating the Project in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area, Rivers State.

| Respondents | N | \bar{X} | SD | DF | Level of Significance | z-Cal. | z-Crit. | Decision |
|-------------|-----|-----------|------|-----|-----------------------|--------|---------|-----------------|
| Male | 140 | 2.88 | 1.01 | 227 | 0.05 | 1.24 | ±1.96 | H ₀₁ |
| Female | 110 | 2.69 | 1.08 | | | | | Accepted |

Source: Field Survey, 2020

The data on table 4 showed that the z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis stood at 1.24 while the critical z-value stood at 1.96, using 227 as degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated z-value is greater than the critical z-value, hypothesis therefore, was accepted by the researcher.

Discussion of Findings

Results from Table 3 produced 1.25 z-test analysis of difference in responses between male and female youth on the extent to which youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. This implied that there is no significant difference in their mean responses. On the extent to which youth participation in community development projects result to peace with multinational company(s) in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area of Rivers State. Results in Table 1 revealed that participation in community development projects enabled youths to live in harmony, I have acquired certain skills through participation in community development projects, through participation in community development projects youths can function effectively and efficiently as responsible members of the community, participation in community development projects have enabled youths gain experience, through active participation in community development projects, youths are adequately empowered.

These findings are in agreement with Akpomi (2009) who opined that Community development projects are strategic people orientated projects designed to accelerate and integrate the participation of the youths and communities in sustaining economic activities of the area to alleviate poverty and promote self-reliance among the people. Sustainability is a state of continuity, being able to provide support that would last for a long time. Employment, therefore, affords the individual the opportunity to provide an income for the household which will continue to support the household for a long time even in the face of economic recession

Results from Table 4 produced 1.24 z-test analysis of difference in responses between male and female youth on the extent to which absence of youth in community development projects result to conflicts with company(s) initiating the projects in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State. This implied that there is no significant difference in their mean responses. On the extent to which absence of youth in community development projects result to conflicts with the company(s) initiating the projects in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government Area in Rivers State. Results in Table 1 revealed that lack of youth participation in community development projects has created idle youths in the community, cultism is on the high due to absence of youths in community development projects, youths are unable to relate with others due to isolation, youths have resulted to vandalization of company properties, through active participation in community development projects, youths are adequately empowered.

These findings are in agreement with Wokocha (2002), who averred that unemployment, hunger and poverty breed frustration which at the long run leads to criminality, kidnapping, cultism and oil pipelines vandalism. On the contrary, unemployment has been a major socio-economic problem in Nigeria as successive governments in Nigeria had introduced various programmes

aimed at creating jobs and generate employment for the youth and people of the community and by extension reduce poverty and hunger among the people. Okebukola (2012) avers that various conflicts in West Africa sub-region certainly are not something to cheer about and to promote development in our communities; peace must be promoted through meaningful engagement of the youths.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the researchers draw inference that community development projects are important factors that are very relevant to youth and bring sustainable development in Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni Local Government in Rivers State and the multinationals companies operating in the area must address the matter to cushion the effect on the people. In line with the findings of the study, therefore youth employment, would substantially enhance sustainable community development in the communities and support household incomes and alleviate extreme poverty and hunger, checkmate cultism and youth restiveness in the Local Government Area.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the researchers make the following recommendations.

1. That companies operating in the Local Government Area should rise up to their corporate social responsibility in the development of communities of the Local Government Area.
2. That the youths should be gainfully engaged in pensionable employments by both the government and the multinationals operating in the area.

3. That the practice of casual job, which is prevalent in the area should be stopped, by logical extension, the youths are hired as casual workers today and fired the next day no stability and sustainability.
3. That multinational companies should establish sustainable projects in the Local Government Area to address the issue of unemployment, poverty, hunger and self-reliant among the youths and promote peace and development in the area.

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