

Community Participation and Grassroots Development in Essien Udim Local Government Area

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ABSTRACT

Grassroots development projects often fail due to a lack of community participation, resulting in poor maintenance and unsustainable outcomes. The study examined the influence of community participation dimensions of community decision-making, community contribution, and leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Participatory Development Theory framework was used as its theoretical foundation, using a descriptive survey design, data were collected from 384 respondents determined using Cochran's (1977) formula. Data were collected through structured questionnaires and analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency tables and percentages, while hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25 at 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that community decision-making, community contribution, and leadership involvement had positive and significant influence on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA. The study concluded that active participation of community members significantly promotes grassroots development. The study recommended amongst others that local government authorities should encourage inclusive participation in community activities and build collaboration between leaders and community members for sustainable grassroots development.

Keywords: *Community participation, grassroots development, community contribution, leadership involvement, decision-making, Essien Udim.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Grassroots development remains a critical challenge in Akwa Ibom State, despite various efforts by both governmental and non-governmental organizations. Rural communities in the state continue to experience widespread issues such as inadequate infrastructure, low-income levels, poor healthcare services, and limited educational opportunities (Akinwale & Okorie, 2019)

Grassroots development focuses on improving the living conditions of people at the local level through the provision of social amenities such as roads, schools, electricity, healthcare facilities, and water supply. Todaro and Smith (2021) observed that grassroots development emphasizes local empowerment and community-participation initiatives aimed at improving socio-economic wellbeing.

According to Oakley and Marsden (2019), community participation is to the active involvement of people in identifying problems, making decisions, implementing projects, and evaluating developmental activities within their communities. Community participation promotes transparency, accountability, and collective responsibility in development projects.

Community participation has become an important aspect of development planning and implementation across the world. The involvement of local people in development activities ensures that projects are relevant to the needs of the people and promotes

sustainability. Grassroots development refers to development efforts that originate from the local level with active participation of community members (Oakley & Marsden, 2019).

In Akwa Ibom State and Essien Udim in particular, many rural communities still suffer from inadequate infrastructure and poor social services despite government interventions (Akpan et al, 2024). Most communities in the area experience poor road networks, unemployment, inadequate healthcare services, and poor educational facilities. Community participation has therefore become necessary in complementing government efforts toward development.

Statement of the Problem

There appears to be inadequate participation of community members in development projects in Essien Udim which has affected the sustainability and success of many initiatives. Some communities are not adequately involved in decision-making processes, while leadership conflicts and poor mobilization also affect development efforts (Akinwale & Okorie, 2019)

Studies done on this subject have focused mainly on government policies and rural development programs with little attention given to the role of community participation in grassroots development. This study therefore seeks to examine the influence of community participation dimensions of community decision-making, community contribution, leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to examine the influence of community participation on grassroots development in Essien Udim Local Government Area.

The specific objectives were to:

1. determine the influence of community decision-making on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.
2. examine the influence of community contribution on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.
3. investigate the influence of leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.

Research Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated for the study:

H0₁: There is no significant influence of community decision-making on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.

H0₂: There is no significant influence of community contribution on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.

H0₃: There is no significant influence of leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Community Participation

World Bank, (2020) asserted that community participation involves to the process through which individuals and groups within a community actively engage in planning, decision-making, implementation, and monitoring of development projects affecting their lives. It encourages local ownership and collective responsibility toward community projects.

Community participation involves people taking part in decision-making processes, resource mobilization, project implementation, and benefit sharing in development activities (Cohen & Uphoff, 2018). It improves project sustainability because members feel a sense of

ownership over development initiatives within their communities (Uford, 2026).

Community Decision-Making

Community decision-making is to the involvement of community members in identifying community needs and making decisions concerning developmental projects (Aref & Redzuan, 2019). It allows members of the community to contribute ideas and opinions regarding issues affecting their welfare

Participatory decision-making enhances transparency and ensures that development projects reflect the actual needs of the people (Aref & Redzuan, 2019).

Community Contribution

Mansuri and Rao, (2021) stated that community contribution refers to the financial, material, and human support provided by members of a community toward the execution of development projects, such contributions may include communal labour, financial donations, provision of land, and other forms of assistance.

Communities that actively contribute to projects are more likely to sustain and protect such projects after completion. (Mansuri and Rao, 2021).

Leadership Involvement

Leadership involvement refers to the active role played by traditional rulers, youth leaders, village heads, and community executives in mobilizing people for development activities (Ezeani, 2020). Effective leadership promotes unity, accountability, and coordination in community development efforts.

Ezeani, (2020) affirmed that good leadership encourages participation and helps in resolving conflicts that may hinder grassroots development.

Grassroots Development

Grassroots development is the development initiatives aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of people at the local level through active participation and collective action (Todaro & Smith, 2021). It focuses on providing basic amenities and empowering local communities.

Todaro and Smith (2021) further stated that grassroots development includes construction of roads, schools, markets, healthcare facilities, electricity projects, and water supply schemes.

Theoretical Framework

Participatory Development Theory

This study is anchored on Participatory Development Theory propounded by Robert Chambers (1997). The theory traces the importance of involving local people in development planning and implementation.

According to Chambers (1997), development becomes more sustainable and effective when beneficiaries actively participate in identifying problems and implementing solutions. The theory supports bottom-up development approaches where local communities play active roles in decision-making processes.

The relevance of this theory to the study lies in its emphasis on collective participation, empowerment, and community ownership of development projects.

Empirical Review

Adekoya (2021) examined community participation and rural development in Ogun State, Nigeria. The study adopted survey design, while the stratified random sampling

technique was adopted to select 1,984 respondents. Data were analysed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation. Results showed that there is significant relationship between grassroots participation in development programmes and sustainability of development programmes. Furthermore, political instability, leadership problems, communal clashes, inadequate funding and poor accountability impeded sustainability. It was recommended that the problems of political instability, leadership, inadequate funding, communal clashes, accountability, and communication gap should be considered in grassroots decision making in development programmes.

Okafor and Eze (2020) investigated the role of local leadership in community development in Enugu State. A total of 420 people participated in the study. The study sample of 420 persons comprised 220 community development officers selected from the study area and 200 adult educators randomly selected from Enugu State. A 21-item structured questionnaire developed by the researchers was used as the instrument for data collection. Findings revealed that effective leadership positively influenced successful execution of community projects. It was concluded that local leaders should be involved in the training and mentorship community development officers in Enugu State.

Ibrahim and Hassan (2022) studied grassroots participation and infrastructural development in Northern Nigeria. Employing a mixed-methods approach, data were collected from 150 community members, project beneficiaries, and local leaders through structured questionnaires and interviews. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between grassroots participation and infrastructural development. The study revealed that community contribution significantly enhanced project sustainability and maintenance

Similarly, Udo and Akpan (2023) investigated the role of community participation in promoting sustainable rural development in Eket Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. A mixed-methods research design was adopted to select 384 respondents using a multi-stage sampling technique. Quantitative data were analyzed using the Chi-square statistical method at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings show a significant relationship between community participation and rural development. The study concludes that community participation is essential for achieving long-term rural development. The study recommends establishing regular community decision-making forums, creating local savings and loan groups, building multi-stakeholder partnerships, and launching awareness campaigns.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study comprised residents of Essien Udim Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

A sample size of 384 respondents was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula. Convenience sampling technique was adopted in selecting respondents for the study.

Data were collected through structured questionnaires designed in line with the objectives of the study. The questionnaire contained close-ended questions measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

The instrument was validated by experts in research and measurement while reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha reliability test with coefficients above 0.70, as recommended by (Uford, 2017).

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequencies and percentages while hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 25 at 0.05 level of significance.

4. DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

The presentation, analysis and interpretation of data collected from 384 respondents who are residents of Essien Udim LGA. The purpose was to assess the influence of

community participation indicators namely decision-making, contribution and leadership involvement on grassroots development using multiple regression analysis to test the hypotheses.

Table 4.1: Summary of multiple regression analysis for the joined influence of decision-making, contribution and leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udiim

	B ₁	SE	B ₂	t-value	Significant (2 tailed)
Constant	0.666	0.211		2.949	0.002
Community decision-making	0.690	0.073	0.785	19.338	0.000
Community contribution	0.650	0.022	0.062	1.768	0.003
Leadership involvement	0.550	0.029	0.258	7.945	0.000
Dependent Variable: Development					
R =	0.851				
R ² =	0.801				
Adjusted R-Square =	0.800				
Std. Error of estimate =	0.71936				
F-statistics =	606.611				
Probability (Significant p-value) =	0.000 ^b				

**significantly related at 5% (p<0.05). B₁= unstandardized beta, B₂= standardized beta, SE= standard error.*

Source: The Researcher’s Compilation (2026).

The regression coefficient (R²) = 801 in table 4.1, meaning that community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement jointly explained 80% change in grassroots development. An indication that community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement jointly accountable for 80% of the changes in grassroots development, while 20% of the changes in grassroots development could be attributed to factors that cannot be accounted for.

The joint influence of the independent variables in the model and the dependent variable was very strong at R= 0.851. The regression model of this study is said to have a very strong explanatory power of the dependent variable, since the coefficient of determination R²= 0.801 and the adjusted coefficient of determination; adjusted R² = 0.800.

In addition, the F-ratio = 606.611 and p-value < 0.000 on the ANOVA revealing that the results of the regression model could not have occurred by chance and that community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement significantly predicted the grassroots development.

The regression results show that community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement all significantly affect grassroots development.

Discussion Of Findings

From the findings of the study, results revealed a significant influence on each of the three variables of community participation namely community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom state. From the first hypothesis, result shows that community decision-making had a significant influence on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State. This agrees with Adekoya (2021), who found that participatory decision-making promotes successful implementation of community projects.

The result of the second hypothesis shows that since the calculated probability (Sig.)

of 0.000 was less than the p-value of 0.05, we concluded that there is a significant influence of community contribution on grassroots development in Essien Udim, Akwa Ibom state. This finding supports Ibrahim and Hassan (2022), who observed that communities that contribute financially and materially to projects are more committed to sustaining them.

The third hypothesis reveals the calculated probability (Sig.) of 0.000 was also less than the p-value of 0.05 from table 4.1, which shows that there is a significant influence of leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom state. This is consistent with Okafor and Eze (2020), who found that effective community leadership enhances mobilization and project execution.

5. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study was carried out to examine the influence of community participation on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State. Data were collected from 384 residents of Essien Udim Local Government Area. Community participation variables investigated were community decision-making, community contribution and leadership involvement. Multiple regression analysis was used to analyze the data. The results of the study revealed that there is a positive significant influence of community participation on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State. The results also indicated that community decision-making with high scored impacted positively on the grass roots development.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were made based on the findings:

- (1) There is a significant influence of community decision-making on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State.
- (2) There is a significant influence of community contribution on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State.
- (3) There is a significant influence of community leadership involvement on grassroots development in Essien Udim LGA, Akwa Ibom State.

Recommendations

1. Community members should be actively involved in decision-making concerning development projects.
2. Local government authorities should encourage community contributions toward developmental activities.
3. Community leaders should promote unity, transparency, and accountability in executing community projects.

Suggestions For Further Studies

1. Future studies should examine community participation and grassroots development in other local government areas in Akwa Ibom State.
2. Researchers should also investigate the challenges affecting community participation in rural development projects.

Contribution To Knowledge

This study contributed to knowledge by:

1. Providing empirical evidence on the relationship between community participation and grassroots development.
2. Expanding existing literature on participatory development in rural communities.

3. Assisting policymakers and local government authorities in formulating strategies for sustainable grassroots development.

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