

**COMMUNAL PARTICIPATION CORRELATES AND IMPLEMENTATION OF
SOCIAL WELFARE PROJECTS IN ODUKPANI AND BIASE LOCAL GOVERNMENT
AREAS, CROSS RIVER STATE.**

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ABSTRACT: *The study was carried out to investigate the extent to which communal participation correlates influence the implementation of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State. Two hypotheses were formulated to guide the study. Two hundred and fifty (250) respondents were randomly selected from ten (10) council wards in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State, using stratified and simple random sampling. Communal participation in the implementation of social welfare projects questionnaire (CPISWPQ) was used for data collection. The data was analyzed using population t-test analysis for single mean and one way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The research findings revealed that the level of indigenes' participation in the implementation of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase is significantly high. Perceived leadership style of leaders do not significantly influence communal participation in social welfare projects. It was recommended among other things that government should in partnership with rural communities initiate and implement social welfare projects to improve the living conditions of the people. Enlightenment campaigns on the need to comprehensively and sincerely implement social welfare projects be intensified in rural areas.*

KEYWORDS: Communal Participation, Social Welfare, Odukpani, Biase Local Government Areas, Cross River State.

INTRODUCTION

The deteriorating living conditions of people dictate that concerted efforts be made to bring about some measure of improvement. Improving the quality of the living standards of people entails the collaborative efforts of the people themselves with those of external agencies to ensure sustained community development. This implies that people must first and foremost make deliberate efforts towards finding solutions to community problems, raising their standard of living as well as promoting social welfare, justice, community cohesion and the development of their material and human resources to the fullest extent. Anyanwu (1992) states that such communal efforts contribute substantially to improving the system of values, structure, and usages of local communities. In essence, people must participate actively in the process of community development if such efforts must be sustainable. Communal participation is considered important, a democratic right and as a means of achieving sustainable development, poverty alleviation and improved social conditions of the people. Communal participation is a backbone to the development of any community. For over the years and from different individuals and bodies, various conceptualizations of participation have emerged (Ekong and Sokoya 2008), for example,

it is sometimes defined in terms of making people respond to development projects meant to ameliorate their impoverished socio-economic conditions.

According to Paul (2007) participation is conceived as organized individuals' efforts to control community resources over which they hitherto had no control. The problem with this point of view is that it fails to identify at what stage of the development project the indigenes are to participate. Ajari (2008) defines communal participation as the active involvement of people in the making and implementation of decisions targeted at providing social amenities for their general wellbeing. Similarly, Simons (2004) conceives communal participation as sensitizing people to increasing their receptivity and ability to respond to community based social welfare projects. The core of this definition is based on the premise that community participation is a form of education which helps to awaken community members from their slumber to be actively involved in their community based projects for their self improvement. This implies that the state of underdevelopment of any community should not be seen as an act of God but rather as an opportunity or challenge, which communities can address through organized methods of galvanizing the untapped local resources within their reach for development.

Non-Governmental Agencies also provide social amenities projects to communities. Example of such agencies are the Micro-Projects Programme in the Six States of the Federation (MPP6), Cross River State Community Based Poverty Reduction Agency, Niger Delta Development Commission (NNDC) to mention a few. These agencies provide basic social amenities to communities such as construction of access roads, provision of health centres, building of schools, provision of water and electricity. The Odukpani and Biase communities are also beneficiaries of these projects provided by the afore-mentioned agencies.

Pacions (2008) claims that people participate more meaningfully in those social development programmes they initiate for their betterment than those imposed on them by outside agents. It is always displeasing to the communities when the ideas from the top are imposed on the people without taking their basic needs into consideration. Even when they have these programmes, imposed on them, the rural dwellers are not adequately sensitized to the requisites for their effective usage and maintenance. Erim, Akpama and Asor (2011) observes that community based agencies such as age grade and social clubs mobilize community members to actively participate in projects meant to improve the sordid social conditions of rural communities in Nigeria. It is against this backdrop that Ackley (2008) observes that effective communal participation in any development project improves substantially the living conditions of members in the community and pre-supposes the existence of two important conditions in the handling of such projects, these are the creation of awareness and arousal of interest. The people ought to be aware of the nature of the project and be informed about its capability to induce desirable social change for better living in their communities. This highlights the need for the formulation of clear and precise objectives for whichever project is planned for the improved conditions of the masses. The people's understanding of such objectives, and their conviction in the efficacy of the project to foster their social betterment, will ensure their spontaneous participation in the implementation of such social improvement projects.

According to Paul (2007) communal participation is an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the implementation of social welfare projects rather than merely receiving a share of project benefits. It therefore means that communal participation is seen as a weapon that can be used to conscientise member communities to dictate the tune and direction of development in their communities.

Statement of the problem

It is obvious that governments at different levels initiate and implement programmes meant to improve the living conditions of people in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas. Among these social welfare programmes include Better life for Rural Women, Family Support programmes, Peoples Empowerment Programmes Initiative, Poverty Reduction Programmes and so on. Most of these programmes are well intended to alleviate the problems of the rural masses. However, most times, they are imposed on the people without thorough need assessment and consultation to ascertain the actual needs of the people. This top down approach deprives the people an opportunity to identify their community problems and actively participate in the implementation of these life enhancement programmes targeted it at solving their problems. In essence, when governments impose on the rural people projects undermines the aspirations of the people and this results in poor participation, low patronage and judicious utilization of the resources of the people for the purpose of development. The non involvement of benefiting communities in project initiation and implementation also results in the uncooperative attitudes of the people and, in some cases, in abandonment of such projects or the unsustainable use of such social welfare projects.

Consequently, this study ascertained the extent to which communal participation influence the implementation of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the extent to which communal participation correlates influence the implementation of social welfare projects in Oudkpani and Biase Local Government areas of Cross River State. Specifically, the study sought to find out:

1. The extent to which Odukpani and Biase indigenes' participate in community based social welfare projects.
2. The extent to which perceived leadership style of leaders influence communal participation in community based social welfare projects.

Research hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide this study.

- 1) The level of indigenes' participation in community based social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase is not significantly high.
- 2) There is no significant influence of perceived leadership style of leaders on communal participation in community based social welfare projects.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of communal participation

According to Gaventa (2001) communal participation can be defined as the involvement of people in community programmes to solve their own problems. People cannot be forced to participate in projects which affect their lives but should be given the opportunity where possible. Prentice (2003) maintains that community includes all relevant and interested parties involved in a process of shared decision-making and that involvement should be at all levels and stages of development programmes. Gaventa (2001) claims that participation enables development to be built on the strength, beliefs and values of communities. The values of the community apparently include its social organization, indigenous skills, aspiration, local leadership and energy potential. In the same vein, Carrol (2001) maintains that participation helps to empower communities in the sense of increasing their capacity to define, analyze and act on their own problems. He further states that capacity building is a process of strengthening grass-root group so that it can act on its own behalf. Community participation is a logical way of arresting the acute problem of projects abandonment (Hillery,2005). The community members are to be autonomous to be able to participate freely in development programmes. This implies that the propensity of the NGOs to intervene in promoting social welfare programmes without the participation of the beneficiaries does not yield the desired ends. Chambers (2003) is of the opinion that the community should feel committed to the development programmes of their community.

The justification of communal participation is that the community members are psychologically relieved as they are made to understand that the projects are theirs and they are involved in them (Lowndes,2005). Similarly Goetz (2008) argues that the old feeling of resignation, passive and submissive attitudes become effaced as communal participation is fostered in the promotion of community based projects. Thus, the intervention roles of non-governmental organizations are geared toward fostering maximum communal participation. Communal participation is seen as a modern approach to rural development and a potent strategy to launch a massive attack on community problems of poverty, illiteracy, lack of good drinking water, good health services, roads and electricity. Communal participation according to Hajer (2003) is essential for sustainable social development. More significantly, development projects in which the people are involved, articulating their needs themselves, have better chances of not only being understood, but accepted, supported and valued. Blair (2000) underscores this by stating that the bedrock of sustainable development is participation by the beneficiaries.

Hamijoyo (2004) supports the same view by submitting that the vertical or top-down relation can give way to bottom-up relationships between the community and agents intervening in the promotion of development projects. Hence, if community base projects with the interventions of non-governmental organizations and the community leaders are to be sustained, there must be an apparent and drastic shift from top-down development to bottom-up participatory pattern. Hajer (2003) and Hiller (2001) hold a similar view that the central focus in the concept of communal participation is the liberation of the people from certain constraints against their self-reliance and self-development. Also Hoban (2001) maintains that such participation increases the chances of achieving the immediate objectives, as well as long-term sustainability and an equitable

distribution of the project benefits. Communal participation in the planning, design and implementation of social improvement projects is seen as an efficacious tool in enhancing project sustainability through increased in community ownership and commitment (Blair,2000). Similarly Birch (2002) based on World Bank experience suggests that such participation tends to increase the access of disadvantaged communities to project benefits, enhance motivation of communities, increases ownership of projects, encourage self-reliance by transfer of skills, build institutional capacities and ensure that greater proportions of project benefits flow directly to targeted and deserving beneficiaries.

The idea that people should participate in planning, implementation and managing of community projects has gained acceptance among government and development agencies (Gita, 2004). In the same vein, Blair (2000) maintains that communal participation has been sustained for long, and ultimately it means a readiness of both the government and the indigenes to accept responsibilities and perform activities. It also means that the value of each group's contribution is seen, appreciated and used. The honest inclusion of a community's representatives as "partner" in decision-making, makes for successful communal participation. Similarly, effective and comprehensive participation of the local community in the planning and implementation of community programmes helps in maintaining continuous dialogue between the government and community so that a coordinated and integrated approach can be effected and conflicts resolved. (Blair 2000 & Clark 2002). Kindervatter (2001) in his own interpretation of the concept of communal participation views it as one of several empowering processes and argues that participation can enable individuals to exercise some control over planned change.

The implication of the definition given by Kindervatter is that communal participation is an instrument per-excellence for community mobilization. This is because it will help elicit the interest, willingness and preparedness of the people to participate and contribute either in cash or material to their own community development. Communal participation according to Oakley (2000) is making people respond to social development programmes. Based on this view one can deduce that communal participation is a process of information dissemination on development programmes, which will in the end create awareness needed by members of the community to become effective in the process of development. It is therefore a process of mobilizing people for their own community advancement and improvement. In the same vein, Carol (2001) defines communal participation as the involvement of a significant number of persons in situations or actions which enhance their social well being. By implication, communal participation is not just a selection of those who are faithful to the agents of change but the involvement of a broad spectrum of the community in need identification, planning, implementation and evaluation of community projects.

Communal participation could also be viewed as making people take decisions, allow them to work on the implementation of these decisions in the end benefit from the activity (Chamsery,2008). By implication, communal participation does not end at decision-making alone but working towards realization of such decisions. Simmons (2004) describes communal participation as the ability to control and manage resources not only in a sustainable way, but also in a manner that meets their solid, cultural and socio-economic needs.

This definition perceives communal participation beyond getting people involved in decision-making alone, but identifies some other valuables that generates to the social, cultural and economic needs of the community. In this connection communal participation is more of a tool for community empowerment. It is also an instrument for the preparation of indigene's to the challenges of developing themselves in their own communities.

Horwich (2003) corroborates this assertion and further states that communal participation is an educative process, a way of preparing community members for their own development. It helps in laying a solid foundation for self-directed and self-sustaining process of development. Communal participation therefore is a powerful weapon for improvement of the living conditions of rural dwellers.

Leadership style and communal participation

A review of extent research findings show that leadership and leadership style have an impact on communal participation in the implementation of community based projects.

According to Ackley (2008) leadership style is one of the pre-requisites needed in an organization for the achievement of the organizational pre-determined goals. Similarly Edem (2003) views leadership as a process through which persons or groups intentionally influence others in the development and attainment of organizational goals. Also MC- Farland (1988) asserts that leadership is the ability of an individual to influence others to work beyond ordinary levels to achieve goals. Similarly, Brown (2007) conceives leadership as total interaction between leader and the led. Similarly, Halpin (2000) asserts leadership as the functional behavior of the leader in relation with subordinates to facilitate accomplishment of group goals. Donne (2009) conceives leadership as influencing people to follow in the achievement of a common goal. The way a leader exercises his authority depicts his leadership style. Leadership style according to Edem (2003) means.

- i) Domination in which the leader uses his legal power to enforce compliance to his legal commands and orders and depends on threats of punishment for non compliance.
- ii) The leader may attempt to provide extra services that place subordinates under an obligation to offer him in return their loyalty and obedience.
- iii) The leader may choose to connive at breaches of rules.

Edem, (2003) maintains that, such leadership styles correspond to the patterns generally recognized as authoritarian, democratic and laissez-faire respectively. If the method of control adopted by a leader satisfies the subordinates, command their respect, and win their allegiance, then their compliance with his directives itself becomes a source of the legitimacy of his control beyond the legally prescribed limit. That is to say, whichever leadership style that is obtainable, if it is such that carries the people along, they will be royal to it and facilitate its success.

Authoritarian leadership style and communal participation

According to Sehested (2003) authoritarian leadership is the behavior of the leader which is evidenced by the use of force, command, threats, blames, insults and rigid instances upon conformity. Edem (2003) states that authoritarian leadership is control by domineering leader and is exemplified by:

- i) The dictation of all policies and procedures by the leader with little or group participation in decision-making.
- ii) The imposition of tasks and methods on the subordinates, and an absence of effective communication between leaders and the subordinates.

Similarly, Obi (2001) asserts that this style of leadership is similar to MC- Gregor's Theory. MC-Gregor (1960) believes that human beings have inherent dislike for work and must therefore be controlled, directed and threatened with punishment to get them to work. The following implications of autocratic leadership are seen by the researchers as having negative influence on the attitude of people towards communal participation in implementation of social welfare projects. This type of leadership brings about unfavourable climate which reduces genuine support and cooperation from community members. Community members who are aggrieved may form cliques aimed at opposing or frustrating the leader and for doing this, the community members may not be committed to the achievement of the pre-determined goals of the implementation of such social welfare projects.

Democratic leadership and communal participation.

To assess the effect of democratic leadership style on communal participation, Edem (2003) describes this type of leadership style as one that supports the control of all social welfare activities, which gives strength to the feeling of personal dignity and self-respect among the members. This system permits self-expression, creativity and group interaction. Similarly Obi (2001) asserts that democratic leadership style is the type in which the leader is neither autocratic nor laissez-faire. Here the leader demonstrates respect for every person and responsibilities are shared. Obi (2001) maintains that in democratic leadership, decision-making is based on consultation, deliberation, and participation among the group members and this increases input. This method of leadership is considered the most acceptable because most practitioners have achieved great success in running their organizations' with it. Similarly, Eblem (2008) asserts that leadership style that gives equal consideration to both productivity and human welfare yields the best outcomes. Also, Chaskin (2007) maintains that democratic leadership fosters communal participation in implementation of community improvement projects. Blair (2000) asserts that community leadership should be such that enable community members share in decision-making that affects them.

Hence from the fore-going, there is a positive relationship between democratic leadership and communal participation in implementation of community based social welfare projects this is because both the leader and the led see themselves as partners in the pursuance of implementing such community projects. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivational strategies are used by community leaders toward task accomplishment. This is because both the leader and the led participate in decision-making and implementation policies meant to fast track the project execution process.

Laissez faire leadership style and communal participation

According to Obi (2001) "Laissez faire is a French word which means *"let things to their way"*. This type of leadership exist where the leader is characterized by indecision and indifference and allows complete freedom to the group and its individual members to do as they wish. The leader does not believe in exercising any degree of control over the conduct of workers under him. In his opinion Edem (2003) maintains that this type of leadership is marked by indecision, vacillation,

and indifference. The leader seldom has a clear vision of organizational goals and develops no policies. Similarly Edem (2003) describes the leader as one who seldom initiates actions, and is indifferent to issues. Obi (2001) observes that it is not likely that laissez-fair type of leadership will lead to organization effectiveness. Similarly, Donne (2009) observes that a Laissez-fair leader is really no leader at all, he holds the formal leadership position and acts as the group figure head. Laissez-fair leadership does not encourage communal participation in implementation of community social development projects. This leadership style does not foster initiative or active participation in the implementation of community based projects meant for community improvement.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research design

The survey research method was employed for the study.

Population of the study

The population of the study consisted of all the inhabitants of Biase and Odukpani Local Government Areas of Cross River State between ages eighteen years and above.

Sampling technique

Stratified random sampling was adopted to select ten (10) council wards from the two local government areas. From each ward, simple random sampling technique was used to select two communities. From each communities, twenty five (25) adult male and female respondents were selected to participate in the study. In this case the researchers used “hat and draw” (balloting) method. Numbers were written on slips of papers, each of the slips was rolled into a paper ball mixed thoroughly into a container and blindly the required number of respondents was selected.

Instrumentation

Communal participation in implementation of social welfare projects questionnaire (CPISWP) was the instrument used for collecting data for the study. Items included in the questionnaire were derived from the literature review. The questionnaire had two sections, A and B. Section A dealt with issues such as age, sex and perceived leadership style. Section B had (20) items based on the dimensions of social welfare projects which measured (4) items per variable. Five point Likert-type scale was used to measure communal participation in implementation of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas.

Each item required the respondent to indicate the frequency of his/her various responses under very often, often, occasionally, once in a long while and never. The respondents were required to tick(√) in the appropriate columns.

Procedure for data collection

The validated questionnaire was administered in each of the communities sampled for the study. The respondents were informed about the essence of providing honest responses which were treated with strict confidentiality. The help of reliance friends and leaders of each community were elicited which ensured a hitch-free data collection exercise. At the end of the exercise, two hundred and fifty copies of questionnaire were successfully completed and used for the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Hypothesis -by-hypothesis presentation of results

In this section, each hypothesis of the study is re-stated. The analysis of the data collected and the interpretations (findings) arising there from are presented. All the hypotheses are tested at .05 level of significance.

Hypothesis one

The level of indigenes' participation in social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase is not significantly high. In this hypothesis only one variable is involved, which is the level of indigenes' participation in social welfare project. The variable however had five dimensions.

To test this hypothesis, population t-test also known as (t-test of one sample mean) was used to compare the sample mean on each item with a population mean (reference mean score). The population mean (reference mean score) was obtained by multiplying the mid-point of the scores attached to the responses "often" and "occasionally" by the number of items measuring the variable. Therefore the population mean for each of the five variables representing dimensions of indigenes' participation in social welfare $2.50 \times 4 = 10.00$. The results of the statistical analysis is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Population t-test analysis of whether level of indigenes' participation in social welfare projects is high.

Dimensions of social welfare projects	t	critical t	Mean	df
indigenes' participation in provision of educational facilities	17.0	1.96	17.0	499
indigenes' participation in provision of health facilities	18.20	1.96	18.20	499
indigenes' participation in provision of recreational facilities	19.94	1.96	19.94	499
indigenes' participation in provision of economic facilities	11.60	1.96	11.60	499
indigenes' participation in providing infrastructure	26.10	1.96	26.10	499

* Significant at .05 level, critical t = 1.96; df = 499, N = 250

The results in Table 1 have shown that the calculated t-values for each of the five dimensions of social welfare projects (17.0, 18.20, 19.94, 11.60, and 26.10) are each greater than the critical t-value

of 1.96 at .05 level of significance with 499 degrees of freedom. With these results, the null hypothesis is rejected in each of the five dimensions of social welfare projects.

The interpretation is that, the level of indigenes' participation in each of the five dimensions of social welfare project is significantly high.

Hypothesis two

There is no significant influence of perceived leadership style of leaders on communal participation in social welfare projects.

The independent variable in this hypothesis is perceived leadership style of leaders which had three levels in this study. These were "autocratic", "democratic" and "laissez-fair". The dependent variable in this hypothesis is indigenes' participation in social welfare projects which had five dimensions.

The statistical analysis technique used in testing this hypothesis was one way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and the hypothesis was tested on each of the five dimensions of social welfare projects. The results of the analysis is presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Analysis of variance of the influence of perceived leadership style of leaders on communal participation in social welfare projects

Dimensional variables	Sub-groups	df	Sum of squares	F-ratio	Significance
Educational facilities	Autocratic	167	547	7.13	0.001
	Democratic	168	588		
	Laissez-fair	164	518		
Economic facilities	Autocratic	168	552	7.28	0.001
	Democratic	167	574		
	Laissez-fair	163	532		
Social facilities	Autocratic	167	574	7.37	0.001
	Democratic	168	648		
	Laissez-fair	162	542		
Infrastructure	Autocratic	168	518	7.02	0.001
	Democratic	167	572		
	Laissez-fair	164	572		

F-value is significant at .05 level, critical $F_{2,497} = 3.02$, $N = 250$

The results of ANOVA presented in Table 2 have shown that none of the five F-ratios for the five dimensions of community development projects. (0.713, 2.924, 2.883, 2.377 and 3.02) is significant

at .05 level. Each is less than the critical F-ratio of 3.02 at .05 level of significance with 2 and 497 degrees of freedom.

With these results, the null hypothesis is upheld, implying that there is no significant influence of perceived leadership style of community leaders on the indigenes' participation in social welfare projects in all the five dimensions selected for the study.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The level of indigenes' participation in community development projects in Odukpani and Biase is not significantly high.

The result obtained from the analysis of hypothesis one revealed that, the level of indigenes' participation in the five dimensions of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase is significantly high. This result lends credence to the assertions of Ngwu (2003) that community members provide financial and material support for development projects in various communities of Cross River State. This result is also in consonance with the observation of Hillery (2005) that community members are to be autonomous to be able to participate freely in development projects. Also Chambers (2003) in support of this result asserts that community members are psychologically relieved as they are made to understand that the projects are theirs and they are involved in them for their common good.

The result of the findings also supports Horwich (2003) assertion that, community members should be involved in identification, planning and implementation of social welfare projects, and that this helps to lay a foundation for self-directed and self-sustaining process of development. Pacions (2008) in agreement with the findings maintains that people participate more meaningfully in the development projects they initiate for their betterment than those imposed on them by outside agents. The result of the study is also in consonance with Stighz (2007) that planning for the implementation of social welfare projects should be based on the felt needs of the community for this will evoke the enthusiasm and active participation of the people in such social welfare projects. However, one may say that the effective participation of the people in community based projects is due to the fact that the projects are executed to improve their welfare.

There is no significant influence of perceived leadership style of leaders on communal participation in social welfare projects.

The result obtained from the analysis of hypothesis 2 revealed that, there is no significant influence of perceived leadership style of leaders on communal participation in social welfare projects. This result lend credence to the assertion of Chaskin, (2007) that an effective leader is a person who is not only able to make subordinates want to do what they have to do, but also recognize that they must be motivated to ensure that they willing participate in projects meant to improve their welfare. The result of the finding is also consistent with the assertion of Edem (2003) that perceives democratic leadership style as one that supports the control of all activities which gives strength to the feeling of personal dignity and self-respect among the community members.

CONCLUSION

The outcome of this study revealed that, the level of indigenes' participation in the five dimensions of social welfare projects in Odukpani and Biase Local Government Areas of Cross River State is significantly high. Perceived leadership styles of leaders did not impact considerably on communal participation in the five dimensions of social welfare projects.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study the following recommendations were made:

- i) Government should, in partnership with rural communities, initiate and implement more social welfare projects to improve the living conditions of community members.
- ii) Community leaders should adopt good leadership style that encourage effective participation of members in social welfare project.
- iii) Enlightenment campaigns on the need to comprehensively implement social welfare projects be intensified in rural areas.

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