

Environmental factor as predictors of citizens' participation in development activities in Ogbomosho town, Oyo state, Nigeria

Abstract

The involvement of citizens in developmental endeavors is crucial to achieving rapid and enduring progress. However, the social context often displays varying attitudes that impact community participation. Despite numerous studies on citizen engagement, there is a shortage of research on how different environmental factors influence involvement in community development. This study, investigated the environmental factors that could predict citizens' participation in developmental activities in Ogbomosho, Oyo State. The descriptive survey research design was adopted. The simple random sampling was used to select 100 respondents from the community of Ogbomosho North Local Government. The data was analysed using the descriptive statistics of percentage, frequency count and inferential statistics of multiple regression. Environmental factors (leadership impact and involvement in community groups) jointly influenced citizens' participation in development activities ($R = 0.46, p < 0.05$). These factors accounted for 0.20% of the total variance in citizens' participation in development activities. The relative contribution of the variables is as follows; Leadership impact ($\beta = 0.36; t = 3.59; p < 0.05$) and Involvement in community groups ($\beta = 0.17; t = -1.68; p > 0.05$). The result showed that citizens participate in development activities irrespective of their involvement in community groups and leadership greatly influences citizens' participation in developmental activities. Since leadership determines peoples' participation in community development projects, it is recommended that community leaders should be exemplary in discharging their duties and also visualise projects that are need-based.

Keywords: environmental factor, citizens' participation, development project, community leaders

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Introduction

The active involvement of citizens is an essential prerequisite for development. The idea of people participating in their own development has gained momentum as a means of promoting human empowerment and progress. Development experts have been advocating for citizen participation in development projects, believing that these projects cannot achieve their objectives without meaningful involvement of the people. Mensah¹ argues that citizen participation in development projects may lead to effective social change, rather than imposing external cultures on societies.

In recent times, the concept of participation has become a crucial ingredient in development. The belief is that integrating local people will effectively mobilize available resources, energy, wisdom, and creativity for development purposes. Empowered communities that solve their own problems function better than communities that depend on external services. Community members are crucial to democratic decision-making because participation allows individuals to impact and affect political, social, economic, and public decisions. Community members who wish to have a say in decisions that affect their lives actively shape participation. It is also seen as an evolutionary process where beneficiaries actively participate in shaping and carrying out development projects rather than just being passive recipients of their benefits.^{2,3}

Community empowerment is an element of community engagement, which is a cyclical and cumulative process.³ Community development projects must involve rural residents in decision-making, implementation, and execution. If they participated in these programs,

the needed support would be provided. According to Ega and Ejembi in Ochepe,⁴ the majority of rural communities in rural Nigeria face substantial issues with regard to poverty, sickness, illiteracy, conflict resolution, environmental degradation, and other natural calamities. Rural residents frequently wait for outside assistance and are unaware of the importance of their knowledge and abilities in bringing about social change and resolving local issues. Therefore, social mobilization is needed to encourage and empower communities to participate in development programs actively.

In Ochepe,⁴ Ega and Ejembi proposed a method for community involvement in development that entails consulting with rural residents to incorporate their knowledge and expertise into initiatives to promote development, allowing them to contribute resources to the success of development programs. According to Persson and Liljestrom,⁵ including communities in a project's planning and management increases its chances of success while fostering sustainability and a feeling of community. The term "citizen participation," often referred to as "public participation" or "public involvement," has become increasingly common in western culture over the past thirty years as a result of the humanist movement's "people first" values. Participation emphasizes community members' total control, with less government imposition, emphasizing self-help and democracy, as claimed by Anyanwu, cited by Adekola and Oyebamiji.⁶ Involvement of beneficiaries in planning, executing, and evaluating government and NGO-initiated programs is crucial for their sustainability, and participation requires more than informing communities about interventions without their input. Abiona and Osu⁷ suggest that environmental awareness is also crucial in understanding people's

willingness to participate in communal projects, and understanding public perception of community development requires insight into the environmental factors involved and their potential influence on participation.

Akpunne⁸ highlighted that environmental factors can greatly influence people's perception and willingness to participate actively in projects that will bring significant development to the community. Different environmental factors can cause people to react differently towards such programs. For example, in rural communities, there may be a common assumption that community development projects are solely the responsibility of the people due to government negligence. This mindset may lead to low or no participation in community development efforts.

Despite the importance of public participation and increasing interest from community members, citizen participation in government-initiated programs has been limited. This can be attributed to two broad factors: institutional and local/individual factors. Institutional-based factors refer to barriers caused by the government, such as inadequate consultation with professional bodies, lack of transparency, and late preparation of programs. Individual-based factors refer to barriers from community members, such as cultural, socio-economic, and environmental factors. These barriers impede citizens from participating, and institutional-based factors exacerbate the individual-based barriers by reducing citizens' interest to participate and limiting access to information, thereby compromising the effectiveness of community development programs.⁹

Eniayejuni and Evcan¹⁰ noted that citizen participation goes beyond merely participating in the electoral process. It involves citizens participating in planning, budget monitoring, and decision-making processes that directly affect their daily lives. Citizen participation in developmental activities is not just being a beneficiary of a project but shaping government policies, which is crucial for the effectiveness of government and achieving sustainable development.

Anyanwu, as cited by Oyebamiji and Adekola,⁶ emphasized that designing and implementing projects for people is not enough; the success of such projects lies with the protective values of the projects. The involvement of the people in the design and implementation of a project leads to its durability and sustainability. However, levels of involvement can vary although this is dependent on the need of the project and resources, goal setting, execution, utilization, and impact assessment.

The word environment originated from the French word "Environ" meaning "surroundings". It includes abiotic elements like light, air, water, and soil as well as biotic elements like people, plants, animals, and microorganisms. According to Kalavathy, cited in Haque and Talukder,¹¹ the environment is a complex system that includes people and other living things in addition to water, air, land, and their interactions. It is made up of variously connected physical, chemical, biological, social, and cultural components.

The social aspect of the environment refers to the norms, standards, and community structures that shape the individual's adjustment. In contrast to primitive societies, modern societies have complex social systems that require greater adjustment from their members. The social and ecological systems are intertwined and function as a complex adaptive system.

One of the challenges faced by governments and communities is the low participation of individuals in development efforts, despite the positive results associated with participation. Demographic factors

like sex, education, and socioeconomic standing have previously been associated to participation. Sociological research by Osborne¹² revealed that middle-class families were more likely to engage in community organizations than lower-class families because they have access to resources that foster engagement.

Environmental factors play a critical role in community participation, requiring strategic planning, resource allocation, time, and commitment. Involvement in community development activities, according to Samah and Aref,³ entails starting, choosing, planning, carrying out, controlling development processes and activities, as well as satisfying group needs and expectations to address shared development difficulties.

Over the years, community-driven development strategies have been used to varied degrees of success. Initiatives for community development are considered participatory when they address community issues and incorporate community perspectives.¹³ Without community engagement, development processes and projects are unlikely to be successful. It is a core principle and tenet of people-driven development. Intrinsic, extrinsic, catalytic, and militating factors all influence beneficiary community participation in development objectives.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study is to examine environmental factor as predictors of citizen's participation in developmental activities in Ogbomosho town, Oyo State. Specifically, the study will:

- 1) Determine the Joint contribution of Leadership Impact and Membership of Community Groups on citizens' participation in developmental activities.
- 2) Determine the relative contribution of Leadership Impact and Membership of Community Groups on citizens' participation in developmental activities.
- 3) Explain which of the independent variables that contribute most to citizens' participation in developmental activities.

Research questions

The following three research questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study:

- 1) What is the joint contribution of Leadership Impact and Membership of Community Groups on citizens' participation in developmental activities?
- 2) What is the relative contribution of Leadership Impact and Membership of Community Groups on citizen's participation in developmental activities?
- 3) Which of the independent variables contribute most to citizens' participation in developmental activities?

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was used for the study. This research design was chosen because it is mainly concerned with finding, describing and interpreting what is, without manipulation of variables of interest. The independent variables were studied and measured in retrospect for their possible influence on the dependent variable.

The target population of this study comprised all community members living in Ogbomosho town in Oyo state. The simple random

sampling technique was used for this study. The ballot method of the simple random technique was used and Ogbomosho North Local Government was selected out of the five local government in Ogbomosho. One hundred participants were selected from Ogbomosho North Local Government.

The data for the study was collected through two sets of structured questionnaire; they are Citizen's Participation Questionnaire and Environment Factors Questionnaire. The questionnaires focused on questions relating to citizen's participation in community development programmes and issues related to social environment vis-à-vis participation in development programmes. The reliability of citizen's participation questionnaire and environmental factors questionnaire was tested using the Cronbach alpha reliability technique these yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.83 and 0.70 respectively.

Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis.

Result of research questions

RQ1: What is the Joint contribution of Environmental Factors on citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities?

Table 1 Showing the joint contribution of environmental factors on citizens' participation in developmental activities

Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Regression	251.933	2	125.967	13.147 ^a	.000 ^b
Residual	929.427	97	9.582		
Total	1181.36	99			
R = 0.462 R ² = 0.213 Adj R ² = 0.197					

a. Dependent VARIABLE: Citizens' participation.

b. Predictors: (Constant), involvement in community groups, leadership impact.

Table 2 Showing the relative contribution of environmental factors on citizens' participation in developmental activities

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardize coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	22.443	2.118		10.596	0
Leadership impact	0.307	0.086	0.361	3.594	0.001
Involvement in community groups	0.216	0.128	0.169	1.684	0.095

a. Dependent Variable: Citizens' participation.

Discussion of findings

The findings from Table 1 showed that environmental factors greatly influenced citizen's participation in developmental activities, This is revealed by 0.46 (0.20%) of the participant that environmental factors influences their willingness to participate in developmental activities. It has been observed that trustworthy leadership, level of education, socio-economic status and membership of community groups enhances citizen's participation in developmental activities. This is observed in the findings of Idris, cited in Lee, Idris, and Tuckey,¹⁴ that citizen's participation in community development is influenced by many variables like leadership style, level of exposure, level of education, insufficient fund. The study is also in line with the findings of Bappi, Singh, Dahiru¹⁵ that citizen's level of education influences their understanding of the situation before they can participate in community development activities. This was also corroborated by Adekola¹⁶ that the socio-economic status of urban dwellers significantly influences their participation in community development programmes. They therefore concluded that the higher the socio-economic status of individual, the higher their

level of participation in community development projects. Similarly, findings from the study conducted by Ige further revealed that, several social problems such as unemployment, rape, gender and education discrimination, domestic responsibilities, emotional trauma affects women's participation in community development activities.

RQ2: What is the relative contribution of Environmental Factors on citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities?

Table 2 shows that leadership impact relatively contribute to citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities ($\beta = 0.36$; $t = 3.59$; $p < 0.05$) while Involvement in community groups does not relatively contribute to citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities ($\beta = 0.17$; $t = -1.68$; $p > 0.05$).

RQ3: Which of the independent variables contribute most on citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities?

Table 3 reveals that Leadership impact predict most on citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities ($\beta = 0.36$; $t = 3.59$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that Leadership impact is the most important independent variable which may predict most on citizens' Participation in Developmental Activities.

expectations, and lifestyles, often making people uncomfortable. Effective leadership is crucial in promoting community development, as confirmed by Springer, Walkowiak, and Bernaciak's¹⁸ research that found a positive relationship between effective leadership and citizen participation in achieving their vision. Therefore, leaders should strive to gain the trust and support of their constituents and sponsors, and dedicate their time and effort transparently towards achieving success in community development programs. The study also found that citizen participation in developmental activities is essential for promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria, and that leadership plays a significant role in determining the level of participation in a given community.

Recommendations

- 1) Community leaders should be trustworthy and proactive in addressing the numerous prevalent problems in the community which may endanger community development.
- 2) Public enlightenment should be carried out from time-to-time to make the people aware of the need to join community groups and participate actively in community development projects.
- 3) Communities should do a critical reappraisal of their leaders to ensure that the regressive, unsustainable conditions that come through leadership, prevailing in some communities are eradicated.
- 4) Community leaders and stakeholders are encouraged to integrate citizens into identification, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of projects regardless of their economic and social status.

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Conflicts of interest

There is no conflict of interest in the study.

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