

Adult Participation in Community Development in Bayelsa State: A Perceptual Study of Amassoma and Kaiama Communities

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Abstract

The main objective of this perceptual study was to examine the adults' participation in community development in Bayelsa State. Data were collected using an instrument named "Adult Participation in Community Development Questionnaire" (APCDQ). 670 adults from Amassoma and Kaiama communities responded to the questionnaire. The survey design was adopted and simple random sampling technique was used to draw sample from 6,738 adults in the communities. Two research questions were used and two null hypotheses guided the study. Mean and grand mean were used to answer the research questions, while the t-test statistic at .05 level of significance was used to test the null hypotheses. The result of the data analysis revealed that the perception of adults on participation in community development was positive. Some of the factors identified as inhibiting participation included, among others, that the community development programmes are not as desired by the adults in the community. The study did not also reject the null hypothesis that significant difference was found in the mean perception of adults on their participation in community development but rejected the factors influencing community development. Some recommendations were made which included the inclusion of adults in the planning and execution of community development programmes. Implication for practice included that practitioners should assist both the providers of community development programmes and the adults in the community to workout modalities to monitor the community development programmes.

Keywords: adult , participation, community, community development

Introduction

Bayelsa State is in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria characterised by high rainfall with periodical superfluity of water. The main features are water bodies forming the delta that gradually drain into the Atlantic Ocean.

Kaiama community is situated in the south-east of Bayelsa State, while Amassoma community is in the central zone of Bayelsa State. These two communities occupy very important place in the affairs of the state in that Kaiama community had advantage of early influence of western education as well as strategic political events of the state and Amassoma community houses the only state university.

Similarly, the concept 'adult' can be explained to mean different things in many societies, and could also assume varying meanings under different situations. The concept therefore is nebulous as such certain parameters are utilised to identify the adult individual. In line with some of these parameters, Ezima (2004) observed an adult as a mature citizen who is recognised in the group to which he belongs and in the context of his life finds meaningful expression. Nzeneri (2008) also stated that an adult is a person who is socially, economically and politically responsible. Consequently, an individual with the mentioned parameters should have an understanding of his or her community and would be willing to participate in what ever activity that goes on in the place.

Participative theory is among some most recent management theories that is based mainly on application of democratic process. Ganiyu (2008) noted that the theory underscores the belief that human beings are more productive, more loyal and more trustworthy if they are granted a role in decision making on issues that affect their lives. He however, observed that participation involves beneficiaries, influencing the direction and execution of development projects, rather than merely receiving a share of the projects benefits. Simmons (1994) and Paul (1987) all agree that participation is an empowering process in which people in partnership with those able to assist them identify their needs and increasingly assume responsibility for themselves to plan, manage, control and access the collective actions that are necessary to achieve the anticipated objective. Invariably, participation is a keen element on every successful community development. No wonder Okediran (1998) joined other scholars like Osuji (1991) and Paul (1987) to share the view that participation engenders acceptability of programmes initiated by government or non-governmental agencies through the people and for the people.

Community development as a concept according to Anyanwu (2002), Akintayo and Oghenekohwo (2004) lack precise definition that caters for its expanding field. It is also difficult to adequately and fully explain what is subsumed in the concept into a definition. In reaction to this, Ojokhetta and Oladeji (2004) explained that numerous definitions from various scholars have little or no divergence in their perception of the concept community development. Ezimah (2004) noted that Osuji, Adewumi and Braimoh (1988) aptly stated that the definition offered by United Nations Economic, and Social Council (ECOSOC) enjoys widest acceptance. It defines community development as the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of government authorities to improve the economic, cultural and social conditions in the communities in order to integrate these communities into the life of the nation and enable them to contribute fully to progress.

However, community development has gone beyond its original defined boundaries of developing economic, cultural and social conditions in the community to what Zuofa (2004) refers to as improving and developing the social environment of the community which she

identified as physical and organisational structures, amenities, attitudes and values as well as patterns of daily life. To this end, community development can be defined as a process whereby members of a community are encouraged through the efforts of government and non-governmental organisations to identify their overall needs as a group, acquire the necessary skills to think and embark upon action plans or programmes to improve both physical and human structures in addition to the well being of all individuals in the community.

The explanation of community development seems to emphasise the need for participation of the members of the community. It is expected that only those recognised as adults in a community should participate in community development. Consequently, the principles of participation should be respected. Such principles, according to Ganiyu (2008) ensure that the people participate from the inception to the end of a development programme. The programme must be in response of their needs, achievable at a specified period and should have opportunity of developing their own model of participation. This also underscores the relevance of capacity building in the community.

Osuji (1991) was quick to observe that it is not every action of the community members that should be regarded as participation. He therefore identified some elements of participation as follows:

- Taking part in decision making to identify needs
- Taking part in the mobilisation of resources and planning projects to be undertaken
- Taking part in the activities to implement, and put the project in place
- Taking part in monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Ezima (2004) is of the view that effective participation requires knowledge, skills and understandings that can be learned. This implies that the education of the adults is relevant and would go a long way to increase their participation in community development.

Statement of the Problem

Community participation is an avenue of ensuring that the people themselves are involved in the programmes and efforts designed for community development that would improve the living condition of the people. It was observed however that in most communities in Bayelsa State, the adults were seen not to participate actively in community development programmes that go on. This informed the need to examine the perception of the adults in Amassoma and Kaiama communities on why they do not participate actively in community development programmes.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the perception of the adults in Amassoma and Kaiama communities on their participation in community development. It also identified the factors that influence their participation in community development.

Research Questions

The following research questions were developed in order to effectively carry out the study:

1. What is the perception of the adults on participation in community development, in Amassoma and Kaiama communities in Bayelsa State?
2. What is the perception of the adults on the factors that influence participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama communities in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

Ho₁: There is no significant difference in the mean perception of adults and their participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama, Bayelsa State.

Ho₂: There is no significant difference in the mean perception of adults on the factors that influence community development in Amassoma and Kaiama communities in Bayelsa State.

Methodology of the Study

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The population for the study was 6,738 adults from the two communities and simple random sampling technique was used to draw out 670 adults from the population who responded to the questionnaire. The instrument used for the study was questionnaire titled, “Adult Participation in Community Development Questionnaire” (APCDQ) which was validated by the researchers’ colleagues who were experts in Measurement and Evaluation. Two research questions and two null hypotheses guided the study. Mean and grand mean were used to answer the research questions, while t-test statistic at 0.05 level of significance tested the null hypotheses.

The decision rule was that any mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted as agreed, while below 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. If a t-calculated value was equal to or more than its critical value, the hypothesis was rejected, but was not rejected if the calculated t-value was less than the critical value.

Research Question 1

What is the perception of the adults on participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama communities in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Grand Mean of Adults Perception on Participation in Community Development in Amassoma and Kaiama Communities Bayelsa State

S/N	Items	Amassoma	Kaiama	Decision
1.	The participation of adults in community development is encouraging.	2.46	2.44	Disagreed
2.	Adults are part of decision making process in community development projects and programmes.	2.38	2.26	Disagreed
3.	Adults participate in community development by mobilising resources among themselves.	2.41	3.05	Disagreed/ agreed
4.	Participation in community development helps the adults to identify their needs.	2.93	2.93	Agreed
5.	Sensitising the adults has improved their attitude towards participation in community development.	2.82	3.00	Agreed
6.	Adults participate in the execution of community projects so they have confidence in the providers of such community development projects.	2.41	1.91	Disagreed
7.	Adults participate equally in all programmes of community development.	2.41	3.09	Disagreed/ agreed
	Grand mean	2.61		Agreed

Source: Field Research Survey: 2012

Research Question 2

What are the factors that influence participation of adults in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama communities in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean Ratings and Grand Mean of Adults on the Factors that Influence Participation in Community Development

S/N	Items	Amassoma	Kaiama	Decision
1.	Many adults do not participate in community development because of illiteracy.	2.15	3.07	Disagreed/ Agreed
2.	The adults are ignorant of the benefits of community development programme.	2.18	3.00	Disagreed/ Agreed
3.	Low involvement of the adults in planning and organising community development programmes are not barriers to their participation.	2.11	2.01	Disagreed
4.	Community development in my community had never been combined efforts of the adults and the providers.	3.29	3.35	Agreed
5.	The development programmes are as desired by the people.	1.97	1.91	Disagreed
6.	Community development programmes are executed by the adults from the community that has enhanced their participation in community development.	2.04	2.04	Disagreed
7.	Community development programmes have not created opportunity for the adults to participate in the community programmes.	3.20	3.26	Agreed
	Grand mean	2.54		Agreed

Source: Field Research Survey: 2012

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean perception of adults and their participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama in Bayelsa States.

Table 3: t-test Analysis of Significant Difference in the Mean Perception of Adults on their Participation in Community Development in Amassoma and Kaiama

Name of community	No. of Adults	- X	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Amassoma	298	2.55	0.32	668	-5.34	1.96	Accepted
Kaiama	372	2.67	0.27				

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean perception of adults on the factors influencing participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama.

Table 4: t-test Analysis of Significant Difference in the Mean Perception of Adults in Amassoma and Kaiama on factors that influence Participation in Community Development

Name of community	No. of Adults	- X	S.D	Df	t-cal	t-crit	Decision
Amassoma	298	2.67	0.25	668	12.44	1.96	Rejected
Kaiama	372	2.42	0.26				

Discussion of Findings

Ratings to responses to items 1(2.46, 2.44), 2(2.38, 2.26) and 6(2.41, 1.91) in table 1 possess meanscore below 2.50, indicative of low level of involvement of the adults in Amassoma and Kaiama in decisions and execution of development programmes and projects. These have points of convergence with previous studies by Ganiyu (2008), Simons (1994) and Paul (1987), who agreed that for adults to participate in community development, they must be involved and assume collective actions that could achieve anticipated objectives by both community members and providers of development programmes. Item 4(2.93, 2.93) in table 1 has mean above 2.50 indicating agreed that participation helps adults identify their needs in the community. This is in line with Osuji, Adewumi and Braimoh (1998) who consented to the fact that community development requires the integration of the people's effort as well as that of the government or providers of any community development project. Item 5(2.82, 3.00) in table 1 indicated that sensitising the people to participate in community development will improve their attitudes towards participation. This is in line with Zuofa (2004) who identified community development as not limited to development of physical structures alone, but also to improve, the living pattern and attitude of the people.

There are varying mean scores for items 3(2.41, 3.05) and 7(2.41,3.09) indicative of agreed/disagreed for Amassoma and Kaiama. This is suggestive of the fact that there are various elements influencing participation both, physical and resource participation of adults as already observed by Adekola (2004) and Osuji (1991). This indicates that the literacy level in both communities did not necessarily influence their participation, thereby negating Ezimah (2004) whose view is that effective participation requires knowledge, skills, and understanding that can be learned.

On factors influencing participation of adults in community development, the grand mean of 2.54 was realised, indicative of the relative high rate of influence of such factors on adult participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama communities.

For the factors that influence participation, the study found out that the perception of the adults in both Amassoma and Kaiama was common in some items with either agree or disagree in some items. For instance, items 1(2.15, 3.07) and 2(2.18 and 3.00) on table 2 indicated mean scores for Kaiama as agreed while those for Amassoma were disagreed. This may be true as the literacy level of those in Kaiama was high compared to those of Amassoma

Items 3(2.11, 2.01), 5(1.97, 1.91) and 6(2.04, 2.04) were disagreed for respondents in both communities. This is not surprising because the perception of the respondents goes contrary to Ganiyu (2008) who explained that participation involves being efficacious influencing the direction and execution of development projects rather than merely receiving a share of the projects benefits.

Furthermore, items 4(3.29, 3.35) and 7(3.20, 3.26) agreed that community development do not recognise the peoples effort and has not created opportunity for the adults to contribute to it. This however, contradicts ECOSOC's definition of community development as noted by Ezimah (2004) which recognises unification of efforts as well as integrating the people to contribute to the progress of the community.

The grand mean of 2.61 for items in research question one was an indication that the perception of adults on participation in community development in Amassoma and Kaiama was positive. This does not however rule out the fact that items 1, 2, and 6 relating to their actual participation were disagreed. On factors influencing participation of adults in community development, the grand mean of 2.54 was realised, indicative of the level of influence of factors participation in community development programmes.

Recommendations

1. Practitioners of adult education should liaise with the providers of community development programmes and projects to ensure that the adults are involved in both planning and execution of programmes.
2. Community efforts should be integrated with that of the providers of community development programmes and projects.
3. The adults in the communities should be adequately consulted to identify the area of needs in the community before taking up any programme/projects.
4. There is need to adopt appropriate and specific measures to sensitise adults on the benefits of participating in community development programmes.
5. More literacy programmes should be provided for the communities even though the study did not identify illiteracy as a factor influencing participation of adults in community development.

Implications for Practice

Monitoring community development programmes by practitioners is imperative.

Team work as well as cooperative spirit could be a measure to achieve better results and participation in community development programmes.

What currently obtains in communities indicates that either the practitioners are not responsive to what goes on in the community or have not been accorded the right of place by the government and other providers of community development programmes, this makes it imperative for benchmark for both practitioners and providers to be established.

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