

Roles of Youth Leadership in Community Development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas in Rivers State

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Abstract

The study investigated the role of youth leadership in community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State. Correlational research design was used in conducting the study. Three research questions and three hypotheses were posed to guide the study. The population of the study comprised of 4,141 registered youths in Emohua and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State. Where Emohua had eleven youths organization with a population of 1,721 members, Obio/Akpor had 2,420 members. Simple random sampling technique was used to derive a sample size of 1,222 youths for the study. The Instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Roles of Youth Leadership in Community Development Questionnaire” (RYLCDQ). The reliability of the research instrument was obtained using test-retest method; the Pearson Product Moment Correlation coefficient of .68 was established. The instrument was validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundation of Faculty of Technical and Science Education, Rivers State University. The data retrieved was analyzed using mean for the research questions and simple regression analysis for the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results obtained indicated that youth leadership involvement in projects and decision making fosters development within the community. It also revealed that there lack of literacy education and poverty is a major setback to youth leadership participation in community development. Thus, the study recommended that government and relevant stakeholders should do well to get youths involved in decision making and community development projects as well as provide opportunities for educating youths.

Keywords: Youth, Leadership, Community, Development

Introduction

Leadership at any level is essential to the survival and development of any community or nation. Hence, an effective leadership in the administration and management of any organization is crucial. In view of this, a community leader is expected to be a guide to the people in the planning, execution, utilization and evaluation of community development programmes in his or her community. The Youths are important human resource of any community to be developed and for this reason they are often regarded as the future leaders and builders of any community. Oyebamiji (2008) notes that, the future is the youth, the youth in modern world are seen in all areas of development such as in politics, sports, schools, factories, offices, farm lands and social activities. It may be reasonably argued that any nation or community that lacks this important resource is most likely to remain undeveloped. The youths have been variously described as a big reservoir of labour (FRN, 1987). The most vibrant age bracket in human population, the “marrow of the human

resource of any country” and the exuberant persons on the threshold of mature adulthood” are the youth (Okoh, 2007).

Youth leadership, according to Wikipedia (2006) is the practice of teens exercising authority over themselves or others, Youth leadership has been elaborated upon as a theory of youth development in which young people gain skills and knowledge necessary to lead civic engagement, education reform and community organizing activities. Thus, the youths are important arm of governance in any given community because they are the strength and watch-dog of the community. Youth are a dynamic force for social transformation and rural community development.

Community development is an activity or a measure which enable rural people to recognize their ability to identify their problems and use available resources to build a better life for themselves. On this note, youth act as central parts of the community development process and also have the capability to improve local well-being, (Oyebamiji, 2008). Youths, as the active population of any society, must contribute in a large measure if society must achieve its purpose, their negative contributions may hinder community development, while their negative contributions will propel community progress. Youth involvement at various levels, both as an organization and individual can take both passive and active dimensions, which can result to both negative and positive implications on the development of a community, (Ifekwe, 2012). The roles of youth leadership in community development can be said to be those functions youths perform or service render in the community which purpose and aim is to help people learn how to become active, informed and responsible members of their community. Udensi, Daasi, and Igbara (2012), are of the opinion that, youth serve as civically engaged leaders to access community issues by performing some functions such as:

- i.** Campaigning on the rights and responsibilities of community members as it concern democracy.
- ii.** Engaging in social responsibility such as the promotion of self-help activities like construction of culverts, rehabilitation of farm roads and so on.
- iii.** Participating in Agriculture (farming) by acting as change agents, advising the farmers on new innovations on farming methods, giving them necessary information on farming implement, to use credit societies, bank loan and acceptance attitude.
- iv.** Helping the students to involve themselves in school sporting activities.
- v.** Organizing the students for School based clubs.
- vi.** Beautification of their communities without depending on the government in terms of rural electrification.
- vii.** Securing of community projects.
- viii.** Socializing with peers and adults.
- ix.** Rehabilitation of other peers (youths).
- x.** Promote active representative youths within the community.

Oyebamiji (2005) asserted that the Federal Republic of Nigeria in its report on youth in 1999 stated that the most valuable asset of a country or nation is the youth, not just to be seen as the future of that nation in terms of leadership but the great potential possession which when galvanized leads to the development of communities and Nigeria at large; which is also in line with the extent to which a country can be sustained with regard to reproduction. Accordingly, Lagun (2002) noted that, investment in youth development for quality leadership is the best way to turn the fortune and future of any country that must develop positively.

Statement of Problem

There is a global concern that with youth involvement in criminal activities especially communal activities or crises such as the case of Ogbakiri, Rumuekpe, Ibaa, Omudioga, Obelle in Emohua local government area and Ogbogoro in Obio/Akpor local government area, community development will be hampered hence creating avenues for under development, poverty and impoverishment in these areas.

The understanding of the involvement of youth leadership in any community development issues is very paramount. Although, it is not new in this part of the world that there is poor youth involvement in community development, due to lack of basic literacy, poverty, non-participation of youth in decision making in their communities and so on; the clamor for youth to be engaged fully had continue to top discussions in relevant quarters. This is the case of the youths in Emohua and Obio/Akpor local government areas resulting to non-encouragers of youths in terms of leadership decision making, community development projects in their areas.

Quite often, the youth population is overlooked because much attention is geared on building local capacities of adults whereas the youth which are the active component is on the increase. Evidences also abound on youth leadership as instrument of community instability, inter-communal wars, inter-cult wars which have halted community development, causing major colossal losses of both lives and property. Reports also have it that several developmental projects within Rivers State, especially in Emohua and Obio/Akpor have been forestalled by youth demand for gratification from contractors, who carry out these projects in their locality. This situation as observed hampers development and as such there is a need to appraise the roles of youth leadership in community development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of youth leadership in community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State.

Specifically, the sought to:

1. To ascertain the extent to which youth involvement in the construction of culverts and rehabilitation of farm roads will contribute to community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. To examine the extent to which youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision making in community projects will contribute to community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. To find out the extent to which youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education can alleviate basic literacy and poverty for community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent does youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads contribute to community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
2. To what extent does youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision-making in community projects contribute to community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?
3. To what extent does youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education, alleviate basic literacy and poverty for community development in Emohua

and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested;

1. There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
2. There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision-making in community projects and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.
3. There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education and illiteracy alleviation and poverty and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Methodology

The correlational research design was used in conducting the study. The population of the study comprised of 4,141 registered youths in Emohua and Obio/Akpor local government areas of Rivers State. Where Emohua had eleven youths organization with a population of 1,721 members, Obio/Akpor had 2,420 members (*Source: Offices of the Secretary and Supervisor for Youth Development, Emohua and Obio/Akpor LGAs, 2017*). Simple random sampling technique was used to derive a sample size of 1,222 youths for the study. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Roles of Youth Leadership in Community Development Questionnaire” (RYLCDQ). The instrument provided response to the three research questions which comprised of sections A and B. Section A of the questionnaire provided demographic information of the respondents, while section B consist of the questionnaire items, which were used in the achievement of the study objectives with the used of the four point rating scale of Strongly Agree (SA) 4 points, Agree (A) 3 points, Disagree (D) 2 points, Strongly Disagreed (SD) 1 point. To establish the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity by three experts from the Department of Educational Foundation of Faculty of Technical and Science Education in Rivers State University. To ensure the consistency of the instrument, the test-retest method of reliability at an interval of 2 weeks was adopted. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to process the result. A reliability coefficient of .68 was established. The data analysis was done using the mean to analyze the research questions while simple regression was used to test the hypothesis. The mean was obtained by the summation of all responses as assigned to a rating scale in an item divided by the total number of responses: $4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$. The mean score of 2.50 and above was accepted, while those below 2.50 were rejected.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent will youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads contribute to community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State?

Table 1: Mean Scores of Youths Involvement in the Construction of Culverts and Rehabilitation of Farm Roads in Emohua and Obio/Akpor LGAs.

S/N	Statements	EMOHUA (507) \bar{X}	O/AKPOR (715) \bar{X}	TOTAL \bar{X}	DEC.
1.	Involving youth leaders in recruiting workers for building of culverts/rehabilitation of farm roads in various communities fosters development.	3.2	2.2	2.7	HE
2.	Involving youth leaders in the purchase of materials for building of culverts/rehabilitation of farm roads in various communities fosters development.	3.1	2.8	3.0	HE
3.	Involving youth leaders in supervision of building of culverts/rehabilitation of farm roads in various communities' fosters development.	3.0	3.0	3.0	HE
4.	Involving youth leaders in need assessment of building of culverts/rehabilitation of farm roads in various communities fosters development.	2.9	2.9	2.9	HE
5.	The contributions of youth leadership can be seen in helping the youths to become more responsible in protecting community development projects.	3.0	3.0	3.0	HE
6.	Involving youth leaders in disposal of waste generated in building of culverts/rehabilitation of farm roads in various communities' fosters development.	2.9	2.9	2.9	HE
GRAND MEAN		3.0	2.8	2.9	HE

Source: Field work, 2018.

The data in Table 1 showed that the respondents agreed to the statements above with the various mean scores of 2.7, 3.0, 3.0, 2.9, 3.0 and 2.9. The average mean score of 2.9 indicates that youth leadership involvement in the construction of culverts and farm roads foster's development within the communities.

Research Question 2

To what extent will the involvement of youth leadership in community decision making improve community development in in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Areas of Rivers State?

Table 2: Extent of involvement of youth leadership in Community Decision Making for improved community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor LGAs

S/N	Statements	EMOHUA (507) \bar{X}	O/AKPOR (715) \bar{X}	TOTAL \bar{X}	DEC.
7.	Youth involvement in community leadership is a factor that promotes the contribution of youth leadership to community development projects.	3.0	2.8	2.9	HE
8.	Effective representation of the youths in decision making is a factor that promotes the contribution of youth leadership to community development projects.	3.1	2.9	3.0	HE
9.	Youth involvement in choice of community development projects promotes development.	2.9	2.6	2.8	HE
10.	Youth leadership participation in community development programme fosters development.	3.0	3.0	3.0	HE
11.	Youth leadership participation in project planning /execution promotes community development in Emohua Local Government Areas.	3.2	3.0	3.1	HE
12.	Project monitoring and evaluation by youth leadership enhance community development.	3.2	2.9	3.1	HE
GRAND MEAN		3.1	2.8	2.9	HE

Source: Field work, 2018.

The data in Table 2 showed that the respondents agreed to the statements above with the various mean scores of 2.9, 3.0, 2.8, 3.0, 3.1 and 3.1. The average mean score of 2.9 indicates that youth leadership involvement in decision making fosters development within the communities.

Research Question 3

To what extent will the lack of basic Literacy and poverty militate against youth leadership involvement in community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State?

Table 3: Extent at which lack of basic Literacy and poverty militate against youth leadership involvement in community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor LGAs

S/N	Statements	EMOHUA (507) \bar{X}	O/AKPOR (715) \bar{X}	TOTAL \bar{X}	DEC.
13.	Wrong selection of community felt needs /priority needs.	3.2	2.9	3.1	HE
14.	Incessant youth agitations without recourse to constituted authorities.	3.0	3.1	3.1	HE
15.	Poor and visionless youth leadership in community development due to lack basic literacy.	2.8	3.1	2.9	HE
16.	Poor funding of youth leadership affect community development projects /programmes.	3.4	3.2	3.3	HE
17.	Abandonment of community development projects/programmes due to poverty.	3.3	3.1	3.2	HE
18.	Corruption and misuse of available funds and resources.	3.2	3.1	3.2	HE
GRAND MEAN		3.2	3.1	3.2	HE

Source: Field work, 2018.

The data in Table 3 showed that the respondents agreed to the statements above with the various mean scores of 3.1, 3.1, 2.9, 3.3, 3.2 and 3.2. The average mean score of 3.2 indicates that lack of basic Literacy and poverty militates against youth leadership involvement in community development.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 4: Summary of relationship between youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads and community development

Variables	L/Sig	r-cal Value	r-crit Value	Decision
Youth involvement in construction of culverts and rehabilitation of farm roads.	0.05	0.457	0.116	HO ₁ Rejected
Community development.				

Source: Field work, 2018.

Analysis of data in table 4 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.457 at 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical value at 0.116, hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is significant relationship between youth involvement in the construction of culverts and the rehabilitation of farm roads and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision-making in community projects and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 5: Summary of relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision-making in community projects and community development

Variables	L/Sig	r-cal Value	r-crit Value	Decision
Youth involvement in decision making in community projects.	0.05	0.399	0.116	HO ₂ Rejected
Community development.				

Source: Field work, 2018.

Analysis of data in table 5 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.399 at 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical value at 0.116; hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of decision-making in community projects and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Hypothesis 3

There is no significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education and illiteracy alleviation and poverty and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Table 6: Summary of relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education and illiteracy alleviation and poverty and community development

Variables	L/Sig	r-cal Value	r-crit Value	Decision
Youth education, illiteracy alleviation and poverty.	0.05	0.496	0.116	HO ₃ Rejected

Community development.

Source: Field work, 2018.

Analysis of data in table 6 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.496 at 0.05 level of significance is greater than the critical value at 0.116; hence the null hypothesis is rejected. This shows that there is significant relationship between youth involvement in community leadership in terms of education and illiteracy alleviation and poverty and community development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State.

Discussion of Findings

The major findings of the study are discussed in line with the research questions. The analysis of the study carried out with respect to research question one as shown in table 1 revealed that the involvement of youth leadership in the building of culverts and rehabilitation of farm roads promotes community development. This finding agreed with the views of Udensi *et al.*, ((2012) who noted that youths are involved in social responsibility such as the promotion of self-help activities like construction of culverts, rehabilitation of farm roads and so on, securing of community projects and promote active representative citizen within the community which fosters development. Also, this finding agreed with Onyeozu (2010) who identified some contributions of youth to community development to include, servicing of boreholes, provision of furniture and equipment to schools, building of market stalls, construction and rebuilding of dilapidated community halls, cutting and filling of bad spots on community roads.

The extent of youth leadership involvement in community decision making in the aspects of effective representation, involvement in need identification process, project planning/execution, monitoring and evaluation, helps in fostering development within the communities. This finding is in agreement with the opinions of Okonda, (2017) who observed that youth involvement in community leadership, decision making, empowerment programmes and effective leadership promotes community development. Also, Brennan *et al.*, (2007) also revealed that if youths are given the platform to participate or involved in community development as well as given central role to play in the system of a community, they can provide local well-being using their capacity as youth.

Findings in research question three; extent to which lack of basic literacy and poverty militate against youth leadership involvement showed that, wrong selection of community felt need/priority needs, incessant youth agitations, poor and visionless leadership, poor funding, abandonment of community projects and corruption/misuse of available funds and resources are some of the identified factor that militate against youth leadership involvement in in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. These findings agreed with the views of Wilson (2013) who maintained that agitation of youth for inclusion in community development and governance without due consultation has negative effects on community development process. Similarly, Omoruyi (2008) opined that one major problem facing youth leadership in community development is illiteracy, ignorance and apathy, according to him, the level of illiteracy is very high, particularly in the rural community. The findings of the study also agreed with the work of Adesope, Agumagu, Mathews-Njoku and Ukpongson (2010) who stated that educational advancement, money making activities, and information influenced the attitude of youths towards community development.

Conclusion

From the result of this study, it can be concluded that youth leadership to community development is crucial and pertinent and constitutes a major means of sustaining development in Emohua and Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State. In view of this, youth leadership is expected to be a guide to the people in the planning, execution, utilization and evaluation of community development programmes in their various communities and that youth leaders should be fully involved at every stage of community development projects.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were put forward;

1. Government and community leadership should at all-time involve youth leadership in community development projects owing to their contribution to community development with laws put in place to guide their operations.
2. Youth leaders should be fully involved in the decision making processes with the communities; this will help protect the interest of the general youth body, groom them to be better future leaders, foster peaceful coexistence and development.
3. Youth educative programmes should be carried out on the damagers of youth involvement in crime, cultism and other social vices and opportunities should be put in place to see that our youths are educated.

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