

## **Participation among Youths and Community Development Program in the Niger-Delta Region of Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*The relationship of participation and the extent in which it can predict community development among youths is the major objective of this research. The study adopted a cross-sectional survey as its research design, using self-administered questionnaire and simple random sampling as its sampling techniques. Sample size of 322 emerged from 2125 youths who benefited from Shell Petroleum Development Companies (SPDC's) micro-credit loan designed for youths and business development based on the list of beneficiaries provided by the micro-credit scheme for agricultural development (MISCAD). Instrument of measurement for this study was derived from literatures in line with indicators of measuring each of the construct variables as the test and retest prove the instrument to be valid and reliable since the cronbach's alpha of the constructs recording not less than 0.604. Findings from the outcome of the result show that there is strong relationship between participation and community development (CD) among youths with  $r = 0.238$ ,  $p = 0.0002$ . Furthermore, participation was discovered as the major predictor of CD among youth. The study recommends that clear relationship between youth's and supporting agencies should be increased and encouraged in CDY programs as further steps such as program design, proper information and orientation, integration and perceiving youths as resources and not problems will help in building this positive relationship.*

**Key Words:** Participation, community development and youths

### **1. Introduction**

The position of Shell Petroleum development company (SPDC) and role it plays in Nigeria economy has created room for higher expectation in the frontline of reducing poverty and youths unemployment that has engulfed the people of Niger-Delta in particular and Nigeria in general. The reason for this expectation is as a result of problems emanating from disarticulation of economy and environment of Niger-Delta People caused by oil exploration activities in the region. This disarticulation which has put both fishermen and farmers out of job has caused damaging fluctuation on the relationship between the company and their host communities. Youths are the most affected in this disarticulation which has continued to affect their participation in SPDCs activities and its Community development of youths program(CDY) that are seen with mixed feelings. This article's objective intend to examine the relationship of youths participation and community development among youths through CDY program which aim to reduce poverty and youths unemployment. Microcredit program for youths and business development in the Niger-Delta is one of community development programs from SPDC for the youths.

However, Community development among you the hazel ways been a challenging responsibility which is a major reason why governments of many nations are coming up with national you the Policies (Lloyd, 2004). The goals for this move haven of been flopped neither can it claim to be very flourishing. Recent research projects on Youths in Nigeria and South Africa hash owns much valuable community development programs being pursued and achieved, which focus on development of youths.

In the presence of these innovation programs, however, youths has continued to feel bitter and frustrated on the ground that program administration has left them confused, disoriented, and without guidance at levels of their participation (Francis and Amuyunzu-Nyamongo, 2008). Youths participation can only be achieved where technical and financial capital are invested within the context of broader economic and social forces that will re-enforce in suitable community development programs, as well as other projects created within the spectrum of participatory community development. However, the development to regional approaches to economic issues, provision of leadership for improvement of partnerships which will assist these regions and communities in creating and executing comprehensive strategic development plans for CDYs should be seen as basic principles that will recharge participation in community development programs (United States Department for Agriculture, 2005). These principles will make community development of youth's program stogy beyond solving problems, but also will include identification of factors that serve as bottlenecks which hinders youths from participating in programs designed for their development (Baker, 1977)

Identifying these factors will help in positioning youths to be competence in other to be the major players in the development of their communities. Building capacities becomes one of the reasons why community development of youth's programs should be given more priority as it brings out the resilience which strengthens and support skill acquisition in community development among youths. Resilience among youths has become an important goal to pursue if community development of youths (CDY) programs target to strengthen capacity and promote skills (Bruce, et al, 2009). The resilience can only be discovered when youths are engaged, involved and participate actively in CDY programs.

On the ground of the above, there is urgent need to work together in utilizing the potential deposits in the life of youths which remain powerful resources for development. This will be an effective response that requires collaborative practice since it will help in building interactions that facilitated better community service that are sustainable (Michael ides, et al., 2013). The important of collaboration in this regard is its ability to provides supporting relationships that help in building better responses to complex situations and improvement of ideas that will gear toward less cost of resources needed for community development among youths (Dettmer, Thurston, and Dyck. 2005; Mandell, 2003). Collaborating with youths in development is very vital in reduction of mistrust between them and their elders since young people possess the capacity to address risk factors that can cause this mistrust once the resilience in them are utilized (Kurtz and Linnemann, 2006; McLaren, 2002). When his happen, participation has taken its course as youths involvement and engagement are well recognized and supported.

ThesesupportswillplaceCDYtoaglobalstageofenhancingpositiveattitude,competence,valueandskillswhichthesocietyneedasresourcestoenhancesustainability.Achievingtheaboverequiresbuildingcapacityofyoungpeople,throughactiveparticipatorycommunityactionswhereyouthswillseethemselvesasmajorplayersandstakeholderinbothleadership,anddecision-makingoftheprogram(UNESCO,2012).

## **2. Youths and Participation**

Youth's involvement in community development programs has become a challenge to supporting agencies which need urgent attention (Cavet and Sloper, 2004). This is because youths participation in decision-making that shapes the formation of policies in community development process will leads to more accurate, credible and healthy decisions. Youths participate in community development programs because of benefits such as true participation and empowerment, learning of new skills; creating of positive change and development of relationship that enables them make healthy decisions and contributor to community development (McLaren, 2005; McLaren, 2002). Community development of youths programs are geared towards sustainability of development by supporting young people with necessary competencies, skill and capacities to be more effective and functional as the move into adulthood (Lemmon, 2008; Ife, 2002) This is the major objective that guide the principle of the concepts of community development among youths.

Participation has remained a popularly people oriented approach serving as a hallmark that determines development. Through participation, community members develop a high sense and feelings of ownership that make them see themselves as majors and not minors in community development programs. It is now considered as a crusader's channel that champions the course of social movement in the last three decades (Botes and Rensburg, 2000).

Since participation has emerged as a channel for development, it should be assessed base on participation in problem identification, planning process, program implementation, and monitoring /evaluation, while taking cognizance of timing and factors that promote or hinder youths from participating in CDY programs.

This is where participation reflects to be a means and its outcome becomes the end. Participation can be perceived positively when it has grassroots involvement of people who are made to be aware of the dividends of the programs as there are ongoing rapport building, interactions and consultations between the staff of supporting agencies and masses. Presence of supporting agencies in communities is important in encouraging and facilitating participation (Shepherd, 1998).

However, participation cannot be completed when the voices of the people are silent especially in making decisions that affect their lives. Decision-making remains the determining factor for progress or failure in any community development process as it involves the ability of stakeholders to make a choice between good and bad situations while considering the best option(s) that is favorable or damaging to a situation. Baker et al (2001) defines decision-making as "an efficient involvement of series of steps that require the input of information at different stages of the process, as well as a process for feedback." These stages incorporate identification and defining the problem, which helps to limit assumptions while determining a requirement for such a decision and establishing the anticipated goal that the decision is expected to meet. Bastein, and Holsapple (2008) opined that decision-making is shaped by daily perception of individuals in practical sense, even though there is wide believe that decision-making role is an issue that has a pragmatic relationship with management and leadership. The view that decision-making role lies in the hands of managers and organizational leaders are wrong and contrary to community development practitioner views that discredits an executive dominated oriented decision-making process which always focused on preference and propensities. The variation in this view become the major link between decision-making that guarantees peoples participation and community development programs.

### **3. Methodology**

Cross-sectional survey was the design for this research which adopted the use of self-administered questionnaire to achieve the objective of the research which is to examine the relationship of youth's participation and community development among youths in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria. Sample sizes were drawn from population of 2125 beneficiaries of Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) micro-credit loan for youths and business development in the Niger-Delta region of Nigeria based on lists provided by the disbursing micro-credit institutions under the name Microcredit Scheme for Agricultural Development (MISCAD). It consists of youth's (male and female) age between 15 and 39 that are single, divorced, separated or widowed who has either passed through secondary, technical/vocational, diploma, bachelor or other academic qualification. The location of this study was drawn from two local government's area each from Imo (Owerri and Oguta), Rivers (Port-Harcourt and Ikwerre) and Delta states (Aniocha south and Aniocha North) which are three out of the nine political Niger-Delta states. Through simple random sampling technique, the population of 2125 beneficiaries which target to get 239 as the specimen expected to meet the statistical sample determination based on Bartlett, Kotrilik and Higgins (2001). Instrument of measurement for this study was derived from literatures in line with indicators of measuring each of the construct variables as the test and retest prove the instrument to be valid and reliable since the cronbach's alpha of the constructs recording not less than 0.604. Descriptive, correlation and regression statistical analyses were used to break down the data to identify the level of participation and Community development among youths while finding out the strength of their relationship and ability of each of the construct variables of participation and decision-making to predict community development among youths.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

Finding the relationship between participation and community development among youths remains the dominating objective of this study. The level of participation and community development among youths were measured in terms of variations of low, moderate and high. Also, the relationship of the variables were broadly investigated through a correlation analysis to find out how the variables relates with each other while trying to find out the predicting variable of community development among youths.

Overall result shows moderate level of participation among youths with (M=3.71, SD=.442). From the result presented in table 1 shows that the machineries that will encourage participation were provided to some extent as

evidenced in decision-making where the gap was not much difference in the three levels of Low, moderate and high, used to categorize participation in the study.

Empowering young people and proper dissemination of information about the program in terms of level of consultation, corporation, recognition and support will create room for high participation in CD programs.

This should be achieved through improvement in program designs, agreements, and opportunity that will push for more contribution, understanding, and response of youths to CD program

**Table 1. Level of Participation Among youths**

Variables	Range	Mean	(SD)	%Male	%Female	%Total
<b>Participation Overall</b>		3.71	.442			
Low	(1 – 3.268)			10.2	7.1	17.4
Moderate	(3.269– 4,151)			36.3	30.7	67.1
High	(4.152 – 5)			8.4	7.1	15.5
<b>Participation</b>		3.69	.619			
Low	(1 – 3.071)			9.0	5.6	14.6
Moderate	(3.072– 4.308)			38.8	33.9	72.7
High	(4.309 – 5)			7.1	5.6	12.7
<b>Decision -Making</b>		3.72	.371			
Low	(1 – 3.349)			12.4	8.4	20.8
Moderate	(3.350– 4.090)			23.6	22.0	45.7
High	(4.091 – 5)			18.9	14.6	33.5

Note : Scale range 1=SDA to 5=SA

Table 2 shows the level of CD among youths which were measured by the construct variables of social, economic and psychological development. Overall, the level of community development among youths were moderate with the (Mean=3.65) and (SD=.371).the results shows moderation with 74.1% while 13.8% are low and 12.2% of the respondent's CD levels are high. In the three constructs used to measure variable for CD among youths, moderation level dominated in both social (74.1%), economic (70.2%) and psychological (73.6%) as this shows that the level of CD among respondents were not high nor low based on statistical evidence from the result.

**Table 2. Level of Development Among youths**

Variables	Range	Mean	(SD)	%male	%female	%Total
<b>Community Development</b>		3.65	.371			
Low	(1 – 3.279)			7.8	5.9	13.8
Moderate	(3.280-4.020)			41.6	32.5	74.1
High	(4.021 – 5)			5.9	6.2	12.2
<b>Social Development</b>		3.60	.680			
Low	(1 – 2.92)			8.7	6.8	15.5
Moderate	(2.93 – 4.27)			37.6	32.6	70.2
High	(4.28 – 5)			8.7	5.6	14.3
<b>Economic Development</b>		3.67	.604			
Low	(1 – 3.066)			6.5	5.9	12.4
Moderate	(3.067– 4.273)			42.2	36.6	78.9
High	(4.274 – 5 )			6.2	2.5	8.7
<b>Psychological Development</b>		3.68	.645			
Low	(1 – 3.035)			10.6	5.9	16.5
Moderate	(3.036 – 4.324)			38.5	35.1	73.6
High	(4.325 – 5)			5.9	4.0	9.9

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5.

A Pearson correlation was conducted to determine the relationship of independent variables of participation (participation and decision-making) and youth's community development variables (Social, Economic and Psychological) in other to determine the relationship between participation and community development among

youths. The result shows that there is a positive correlation between the two major variables of participation and community development among youths with  $r = 0.238$ ,  $n = 1$ ,  $p = 0.0002$ .

A summary of results in table 3 overall, shows that there was a positive correlation between youth’s participation and community development among youths.

**Table.3. Correlation between Participation and CDY**

	Participation	Decision-Making	CD
Participation			
Decision-Making	.021		
CDY	.157**	.018	
** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level			

The regression results in table 4 show that participation can significantly predict community development among youths. Participation in the table emerged as a predictor of community development among youths; although, the p value is 0.54.

**Table 4. Standard Multiple Regression That Predict CDY**

Independent Variables	Standard Beta	t-value	sig
Participation	.063	1.931	.054
Decision-Making	.008	.252	.801
Sex (male=0, female=1)	.041	-1.034	.302

( $R^2 = .105$ ,  $F = 6.176^{***}$ )

**5. Discussion**

Youths participation according to Checkoway (2010) remain a social practice that is driven by culturally competent and age appropriateness, which determines the level of participation practices being shaped by people’s needs and functions in accordance with situation. This means that people’s situation and need coupled with their cultural competency and age are seen as determinant of participation of youths in CDY programs. In the same vein, Previous publication by Mueller et al (2011) hold the view that a complete participation process is more likely to experience positive contribution in the decision-making process as this became valuable when individuals possess basic skills and confidence base on social learning occurring from contributions of participants. The opportunity of youths contributing to the decisions in a program will really allow them to learn directly from their folks, which make learning easy and also help them in building confidence that will position them to do better in line with the objectives of setting up CDY programs. The result of this research shows that there is integration of all and sundry in the decision-making as respondents were left to make decision and not compelled to engage in the program. Evidence of this is the he level of percentage variation in the level of decision-making (moderate 45.7% and High 33.5%) which have close gap when compared with other variables studied in the research.

Before the emergency of participation as a recommended approach towards achieving CDY programs, previous pathways of community development aimed at improving the wellbeing of the people failed but instead end up perpetuating marginalization , injustices and voiceless to majority of individuals who face frustrations from practical asymmetric power relationship in their civil, social, economic and political life. The power relationship in this regard should be assessed based on the optimal level of people’s contributions and interest to participate in community development program, thus becoming a approach to recognizing their full potential, capabilities and skill in producing unique knowledge for a promising outcomes (Bonnell and Zizys, 2005).

All the same, the result of this research has vividly cleared that participation must be recognized as a viable approach in community development program because of its ability to provide solution to social problems through social action and integration that enhances collective responsibility and environmental manipulation that ushers in positive attitude to social and political right of individual members of the community.

**Conclusion**

Based on this result, participation serves as a base line for positive power relationship in CDY programs such as the SPDC’s loans him me for youths and business development. Participation among youths in CDY program

remains a practical factor that will help policy implementation workers in designing CD programs so that it will give opportunities and supports to young people in the decision-making process, especially on issues that affect them.

Youth's leadership also has morale to raise consciousness that is sustainable and efficient for CD among youths. Finally, the concept to you the participation is very important if CD among youths is to be sustained, since the result has point edits predictor of CD among youths. However, improve enlightenment, orientation and education will boast this consciousness which will activate the resilience spirit among them. If this is done, participation in CD program will be higher than it is in the life of youths.

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