# Extent of Youth Involvement in Community Development Activities in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State

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**Abstract**
The study examined the extent of youth involvement in community development activities in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Three research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was used for the study. The population of the study was made up of 82,611 youths aged 18-35 years in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. A sample of 225 youths aged 18-35 years in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State was used for the study. Accidental sampling technique was used to obtain the sample. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-developed questionnaire titled "Extent of Youth Involvement in Community Development Activities Questionnaire (EYICDAQ)." The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by three experts. The data collected was analyzed using mean score. The study revealed that youths have been involved in community development activities such as environmental sanitation, road maintenance and security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State to a high extent. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended among others that community development stakeholders should see the youths as an important segment of the populace and future custodian of the community, who should be given opportunity like others, in all aspects of community development efforts such as, in the planning process, implementation, supervision and evaluation of community projects. Conclusion and implications of the study were made as well as suggestions for further studies.
**Keywords:** Youth Involvement, Community Development Activities

## Introduction

Nigeria is endowed with enormous human and natural resources. However, strategies and policies by various governments have not effectively harnessed these resources to the benefit of the country and the citizens. Community development has an implicit potential to improve the collective wellbeing of citizens and make positive inclination for everyone to embrace the democratic ideals of fairness, justice, transparencies and hard work (Mbamalu & Ewuim, 2021). Furthermore, Abasilim (2021) posited that the nature and scope of community development is very important factors upon which dimension of development in community is

based or structured. This is well understood amidst a thorough study of communities and the basic environment for the development of community.

Development is regarded as a process involving the fulfillment of the necessary conditions for the realization of the human personality. Some of the necessary conditions include education and skill, employment, welfare programmes, and accessible health care system. Chioke et al. (2020) regarded development as utilizing the available resources (human, material and money) in such a way that the entire populace will have equal opportunity to meet their basics needs of food, shelter, clothing, education, health, portable water and security, including the right to work now and into the future. Mbamalu and Ewuim (2021) sees development as the transformation of the rural community in to socially, economically, politically, educationally, orderly, materially of desired conditions with the purpose of improving quality of life of the rural communities or population. However, Igbokwe (2020) asserted that community development in developing countries generally entails the emphasis on participation of youth by the local community. He further stated that involvement of people in programme entail understanding the nature of the problems involved, those directly involved and those peripherally affected.

Community development is a movement and process with its specific goal centered on fostering better living for the whole community with the active participation of the masses in such community (Nwankwo et al., 2021). The development of community is a process that embraced all spheres of the society including the youths. Community development is the process of restructuring the political economy in order to satisfy the material, social and economic needs, as well as the aspirations of the people; and to promote individuals and collective incentives to participate in the process of development, the people participate in making the decisions that will affect their lives. Community development programmes can either be initiated by the people or the government or both of them coming together to pool the resources together for the good of the community. Thus, the people and the government can be classified as partners in progress. Though, government can be said to be the senior partner because of its control of instruments of force and coercion.

Community development seeks to empower individuals and groups of people with the skills they need to effect change within their communities. These skills are often created through the formation of social groups working for a common agenda. Community developers must understand both how to work with individuals and how to affect communities' positions within the context of larger social institutions. Community development also aims to improve the living standards of the people. It enhances and promotes participatory democracy, sustainable development, rights, economic conditions, equality and social justice in

a community through organizing and capacity building of the people (Nwankwo, *et al.*, 2021). Thus, young people are the vital component that might bring the desire development of the community.

Young people also regarded as youths, is regarded as the time of life when one is young especially the period between childhood and maturity. Ajani et al. (2017) opined that youth consists of those aged 15 to 34 years. Continuing, Ajani et al. argued that youth is best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. That is why, as a category, youth is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Yet, age is the easiest way to define this group, particularly in relation to education, empowerment and employment, because 'youth' is often referred to a person between the ages of leaving compulsory education, and finding their first job. Thus, youth involvement is crucial for community development.

Youth involvement is the active participation and engagement of young people throughout their own communities. It is often used as shorthand for youth to participate in any many forms, including decision-making, sports, schools and any activity where young people are not historically engaged. According to Chioke et al. (2020), through active participation, young people are empowered to play a vital role in their own development as well as in that of their communities, helping them to learn vital life-skills, develop knowledge on human rights and citizenship and to promote positive civic action.

Youths constitute the most active labour force of every community. World Bank (2016) reported that there are about 3.7 billion youths between the age bracket of 15 and 24 years old in the world and about 2.1 billion live in developing countries. Similarly, National Bureau Statistics Youth Survey Report (2017) showed that nearly 60% of developing world population is youths within the age bracket of l5 and 35. This is often referred to as the youth bulge, since young people constitute a high proportion of many country's population as evidenced in Nigeria with a population over 174,507,539 million people out of which 72 million are youths with about 54% of them unemployed (Nigeria National Baseline Youth Survey, 2018).

This increase in youth population represents both a challenge and a responsibility to the society, as majority of them may not have any source of income and livelihood. It is visibly noticed in the society today that the lingering effect of youth bulge creates un-conducive atmosphere in various communities with most of them being idle, unemployed and displaying unruly behaviors (Mbagwu et al., 2017). Definitely, being young is a transitional phase of life which carries with it increased vulnerabilities and delinquencies. If the youths are not adequately harnessed it becomes a problem. Youths therefore, could be effectively mobilized and involved as assets, beneficiaries, partners and youth leaders in community

development activities which abound in various communities; instead of displaying their unruly behaviors as militants, terrorists and other restiveness in the community and society today.

Considering the fact that community development has a wide variety of activity such as activities as observed by the researcher in Awka South LGA among the youths include general sanitation, town hall building, social event, school development, social control, market building, vigilante, road construction, filling of potholes, servicing self-help groups, running support and social action groups, building houses, participating in inter-agency meetings, peace talk/parley among others. It is expected that effective involvement of all beneficiaries in the activities gives them the opportunity to learn how to develop their potentials or talents and acquire more relevant skills that would help them to grow and contribute meaningfully to their community.

One begins to ponder on why many projects meant for the people's own welfare are abandoned. Ajani et al. (2017) submitted that most abandoned community projects are attributed to lack of political will, poor planning, implementation, inadequate funding, monitoring, supervision and formative evaluation of the projects; whereas the youths would be very useful in this regard because of their wealth of knowledge, technology and energy they can expend in performing developmental tasks. Njoku (2018) also argued that youths are a heterogeneous group with wealth of life experiences, cultural background, education and social group affiliation that can make positive impacts in the community depending on where they live. Therefore, considering the dividends that may accrue to various communities if the youths are adequately involved and utilized in community development projects, it would to a very great extent help to reduce further abandonment of projects and also help to curb rural-urban drift of youths and various social ills in rural communities and the society.

Most communities in Anambra State and other States in Nigeria as a whole are known for embarking on self-help development projects but the sad irony is that they hardly complete most of these projects. Consequently, it appears that their efforts are not commensurate with all they have invested. It seems not possible to even ascertain the areas and level of involvement of all stakeholders in the communities especially the youths who are supposed to fast track development activities in their communities. Although, literature showed that community development officer and experts especially in Anambra State and other States in Nigeria, have frowned at the low involvement of youths in community development.

So many reasons have been adduced for such abnormality, which includes; considering the youths as immature people and as such have been excluded right from decision making process, planning, implementation, supervision and

evaluation of community development projects by community development stakeholders. The stakeholders in question include all parents, community leaders in the community. In some rare occasion, when the youths willingly participated in community development activities, they seem not to be given a free hand to participate in vital issues like, decision making process, project implementation, supervision and evaluation. Could it be that community leaders and other stakeholders are not convinced that if the youths are effectively involved in their own community development projects, it would to a great extent reduce abandonment of self-help projects, make significant impact on the lives of the people now and in future, as well as help to curb various social ills which has eaten very deep like cankerworms into the fabrics of societies world over. Hence, the study sought to determine the extent of youth involvement in community development activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the study was to determine the extent of youth involvement in community development activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. Specifically, the study sought to determine the extent to which:

1. Youths were involved in environmental sanitation in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State.
2. Youths were involved in road maintenance in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State.
3. Youths were involved in security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent have youths been involved in environmental sanitation in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?
2. To what extent have youths been involved in road maintenance in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?
3. To what extent have youths been involved in security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?

**Research Method**

The study was a descriptive survey design. The population of the study was made up of 82,611 youths aged 18-35 years in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. A sample of 225 youths aged 18-35 years in Awka South L.G.A of Anambra State was used for the study. Accidental sampling technique was used to obtain the

sample. The instrument for data collection was a researcher-structured questionnaire titled "Extent of Youth Involvement in Community Development Activities Questionnaire (EYICDAQ)." The instrument was validated by three experts. The data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean).

**Data Analysis**

**Research Question 1:** To what extent have youths been involved in environmental sanitation in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?

**Table 1:** Mean responses of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in environmental sanitation N = 218

| S/N | Item | VHE (4) | HE (3) | LE (2) | VLE (1) | Grand Total | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Controlling pest | 94 (376) | 109 (327) | 13 (26) | 2 (2) | 218 (731) | 3.35 | **High Extent** |
| 2 | Controlling human excreta | 83 (332) | 118 (354) | 12 (24) | 5 (5) | 218 (715) | 3.28 | **High Extent** |
| 3 | Managing solid waste | 88 (352) | 118 (354) | 10 (20) | 2 (2) | 218 (728) | 3.34 | **High Extent** |
| 4 | Managing waste water | 96 (384) | 100 (300) | 20 (40) | 2 (2) | 218 (726) | 3.33 | **High Extent** |
| 5 | Waste disposal | 94 (376) | 113 (339) | 8 (16) | 3 (3) | 218 (734) | 3.37 | **High Extent** |
| 6 | Waste burning | 80 (320) | 112 (336) | 21 (42) | 5 (5) | 218 (703) | 3.22 | **High Extent** |
| 7 | Culvert cleaning | 78 (312) | 111 (333) | 22 (44) | 7 (7) | 218 (696) | 3.19 | **High Extent** |
| 8 | Culvert inspection | 91 (364) | 108 (324) | 13 (26) | 6 (6) | 218 (720) | 3.30 | **High Extent** |
| 9 | Sewage drainage | 85 (340) | 106 (318) | 19 (38) | 8 (8) | 218 (704) | 3.23 | **High Extent** |
| 10 | Fumigating the environment | 81 (324) | 117 (351) | 15 (30) | 5 (5) | 218 (710) | 3.26 | **High Extent** |
| | **Total Mean** | | | | | | **32.87** | |
| | **Cluster Mean** | | | | | | **3.29** | **High Extent** |

Table 1 shows the mean scores of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in environmental sanitation in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. The analysis revealed that youths agreed to a high extent with all the items 1 to 10 with the mean scores of 3.35, 3.28, 3.34, 3.33, 3.37, 3.22, 3.19, 3.30, 3.23 and 3.26 respectively that the youths have been involved in environmental sanitation in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. However, the cluster mean of 3.29 revealed that the respondents rated all the items on the extent to which youths have been involved in controlling pest, controlling human excreta, managing solid waste,

managing waste water, waste disposal, waste burning, culvert cleaning, culvert inspection, sewage drainage and fumigating the environment to a high extent.

**Research Question 2:** To what extent have youths been involved in road maintenance in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?

**Table 2:** Mean responses of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in road maintenance N = 218

| S/n | Item | VHE (4) | HE (3) | LE (2) | VHE (1) | Grand Total | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lane marking | 75 (300) | 113 (339) | 20 (40) | 10 (10) | 218 (689) | 3.16 | **High Extent** |
| 2 | Drainage clearing | 94 (374) | 109 (327) | 15 (30) | - (-) | 218 (731) | 3.35 | **High Extent** |
| 3 | Bridge maintenance | 72 (288) | 121 (363) | 20 (40) | 8 (8) | 218 (699) | 3.21 | **High Extent** |
| 4 | Culvert maintenance | 85 (340) | 122 (366) | 11 (22) | - (-) | 218 (728) | 3.34 | **High Extent** |
| 5 | Grass cutting on road sides | 90 (360) | 110 (330) | 12 (24) | 6 (6) | 218 (720) | 3.30 | **High Extent** |
| 6 | Tree trimming | 78 (312) | 111 (333) | 22 (44) | 7 (7) | 218 (696) | 3.19 | **High Extent** |
| 7 | Replacing road signs | 85 (340) | 121 (363) | 10 (20) | 2 (2) | 218 (725) | 3.33 | **High Extent** |
| 8 | Filling in pot holes | 96 (384) | 122 (366) | - (-) | - (-) | 218 (750) | 3.44 | **High Extent** |
| 9 | Street sweeping | 87 (348) | 99 (297) | 24 (48) | 8 (8) | 218 (701) | 3.22 | **High Extent** |
| 10 | Culvert inspection | 100 (400) | 118 (354) | - (-) | - (-) | 218 (754) | 3.46 | **High Extent** |
| | **Total Mean** | | | | | | **33.00** | |
| | **Cluster Mean** | | | | | | **3.30** | **High Extent** |

Table 2 shows the mean scores of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in road maintenance in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. This implies that youths agreed to a high extent with all the items 1 to 10 with the mean scores of 3.16, 3.35, 3.21, 3.34, 3.30, 3.19, 3.33, 3.44, 3.22 and 3.46 respectively that the youths have been involved in road maintenance in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. However, the cluster mean of 3.30 revealed that the respondents rated all the items on the extent to which youths have been involved in lane marking, drainage clearing, bridge maintenance, culvert maintenance, grass cutting on road sides, tree trimming, replacing road signs, filling in pot holes, street sweeping and culvert inspection to a high extent.

**Research Question 3:** To what extent have youths been involved in security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State?

**Table 3:** Mean responses of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in security activities N = 218

| S/n | Item | VHE (4) | HE (3) | LE (2) | VLE (1) | Grand Total | Mean ($\bar{X}$) | Remark |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Investigation services | 90 (360) | 102 (306) | 19 (38) | 7 (7) | 218 (711) | 3.26 | **High Extent** |
| 2 | Detective services | 86 (344) | 110 (330) | 20 (40) | 2 (2) | 218 (716) | 3.28 | **High Extent** |
| 3 | Delivery services | 83 (332) | 115 (355) | 15 (30) | 5 (5) | 218 (722) | 3.31 | **High Extent** |
| 4 | Patrol services | 88 (352) | 123 (369) | 7 (14) | - (-) | 218 (735) | 3.37 | **High Extent** |
| 5 | Guard services | 92 (368) | 118 (354) | 6 (12) | - (-) | 218 (734) | 3.37 | **High Extent** |
| 6 | Formulating security policies | 88 (352) | 101 (303) | 23 (46) | 6 (6) | 218 (707) | 3.24 | **High Extent** |
| 7 | Inspection services | 72 (288) | 121 (363) | 15 (30) | 5 (5) | 218 (686) | 3.15 | **High Extent** |
| 8 | Security emergency | 91 (364) | 127 (381) | - (-) | - (-) | 218 (745) | 3.42 | **High Extent** |
| 9 | Arresting criminals | 93 (372) | 125 (375) | - (-) | - (-) | 218 (747) | 3.43 | **High Extent** |
| 10 | Sensitizing the community with some security tips | 87 (348) | 99 (297) | 24 (48) | 8 (8) | 218 (701) | 3.22 | **High Extent** |
| | **Total Mean** | | | | | | **33.05** | |
| | **Cluster Mean** | | | | | | **3.31** | **High Extent** |

Table 3 shows the mean scores of respondents on the extent to which youths have been involved in security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. This implies that youths agreed to a high extent with all the items 1 to 10 with the mean scores of 3.26, 3.28, 3.31, 3.37, 3.37, 3.24, 3.15, 3.42, 3.43 and 3.22 respectively that the youths have been involved in security activities in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State. However, the cluster mean of 3.31 revealed that the respondents rated all the items on the extent to which youths have been involved in investigation services, detective services, delivery services, patrol services, guard services, formulating security policies, inspection services, security emergency, arresting criminals and sensitizing the community with some security tips to a high extent.

**Discussion of Findings**

The results from the analysis of data collected to answer research question 1 in Table 1 showed a cluster mean of 3.29 which implies that youths have been involved in environmental sanitation such as controlling pest, controlling human excreta, managing solid waste, managing waste water, waste disposal, waste

burning, culvert cleaning, culvert inspection, sewage drainage and fumigating the environment in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State to a high extent. The findings are in agreement with the findings of Ajani et al. (2017) and Brondi et al. (2019). Ajani et al. (2017) contended that youths are involved in several activities such as agricultural development programmes, environmental sanitation, social control, servicing self-help groups, vigilante, among others. Brondi et al. (2019) disclosed that there is high level of participation of Italian adolescents in environmental issues involving managing disposal waste and culvert cleaning.

The results from the analysis of data collected to answer research question 2 in Table 2 showed a cluster mean of 3.30 which implies that youths have been involved in road maintenance such as lane marking, drainage clearing, bridge maintenance, culvert maintenance, grass cutting on road sides, tree trimming, replacing road signs, filling in pot holes, street sweeping and culvert inspection in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State to a high extent. The findings are in line with the findings of Mbagwu *et al.* (2017) and Njoku (2018). Mbagwu *et al* (2017) findings showed that the Nsukka youths embarked on road maintenance, rural electrification, construction of boreholes, water drainage facilities market building, security activities (vigilante), keeping of social order and keeping the environment safe, among others. Njoku (2018) revealed that young people are involved in neighborhood development activities such as road maintenance activities, environmental cleaning, safe guarding activities, building houses, participating in peace talk and social events.

The results from the analysis of data collected to answer research question 3 in Table 3 showed a cluster mean of 3.31 which implies that youths have been involved in security activities such as investigation services, detective services, delivery services, patrol services, guard services, formulating security policies, inspection services, security emergency, arresting criminals and sensitizing the community with some security tips in Awka South L.G.A. of Anambra State to a high extent. The findings are in consonance with the findings of Umar and Mohammed (2016) and Mbamalu and Ewuim (2021). While Umar and Mohammed (2016) disclosed that most of the youth contributed to community development through communal labour, provision of security activities and maintenance of footpaths and re-orientation of moral support, Mbamalu and Ewuim (2021) contended that youth involvement in community development in the areas of security activities is inevitable.

**Implications of the Study**

Based on the findings of the study, the educational implications of the study are as follows:

1. Youths been involved in environmental sanitation have helped in community development as they are involved in some forms of activities that bring about community development, help to maintain health and increase life-span of the people, while poor involvement of youth in environmental sanitation reduces human well-being, social and economic development due to impacts such as anxiety, risk of sexual assault and lost educational opportunities.
2. Youths been involved in road maintenance breed community development. This implies that well-maintained roads reduce the cost of operating vehicles by providing good running surface. Proper maintenance also keeps the roads open and ensures greater regularity, punctuality and safety of transport services. Postponing road maintenance results in high direct and indirect costs. Poorly maintained roads constrain mobility, significantly raise vehicle operating costs, increase accident rates and their associated human and property costs, and aggravate isolation, poverty, poor health, and illiteracy in rural communities.
3. Youths been involved in security activities which have bring about community development. This implies that youth involvement in security activities are concerned with safeguarding and expanding people's vital freedoms. It requires both protecting people from critical and pervasive threats and empowering people to take charge of their own lives. Security cultivates situational awareness and maintains balance. Without security, individuals often become complacent and miss unusual behaviour.

**Conclusion**

The study concluded that youths have been involved in community development activities such as environmental sanitation, road maintenance and security activities to a high extent.

**Recommendations**

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

1. Community development stakeholders should see the youths as an important segment of the populace and future custodian of the community, who should be given opportunity like others, in all aspects of community development efforts such as, in the planning process, implementation, supervision and evaluation of community projects.

2. Parents should make the education of their youths a top priority so that they can actively be involved in community development activities, as this will contribute immensely to civic engagement of youths than parental modeling.
3. The elders in the community should cooperate and co-exist in a peaceful and friendly environment with youths who are the prospective elders and leaders of tomorrow.
4. There is need to channel and redirect young people's energies towards positive direction by creating an environment that will enable them to reclaim their space for creative cultural expression. This will inculcate in youth a sense of belonging, self-worth and self-identity. This can be achieved through active mobilization and engagement of youth on issues affecting their lives.

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