

COMMUNITY LEADERS CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICES TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH- EAST, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study investigated the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East States of Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions and three null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study while the population of the study consisted 11, 836 respondents comprising 1,300 traditional rulers and 10,536 town union executives in the 95 local government areas of the five South-East States of Nigeria. The sample size for the study was 1,186 respondents, comprising 310 traditional rulers and 876 town union executives selected through multi-stage sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a researcher's structured questionnaire titled "Community Leaders' Capacity Building for Sustainable Community Development Questionnaire" (CLCBSCDQ). The instrument was face validated by three experts. Reliability scores of .75, .78 and .78 were obtained from the three clusters of the instrument while its overall reliability coefficient of 0.77 ascertained using Cronbach's Alpha Method was an indication that it was highly reliable. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistic. The findings of the study revealed among others that: the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation, financial and conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria is high. Based on the findings of the study, some recommendations were made among which were that; Community development experts should jointly work hand-in-hand with community leaders in creating awareness on the need for community members to support and to take active part in the developmental efforts of their community and its sustainability.

Keywords: Community leaders, capacity building practices, sustainable community development

Introduction

Community leaders' capacity building is crucial for the success and sustainability of community development programmes. Development experts view capacity building as a key strategy to address developmental challenges in communities, particularly in developing nations. Capacity building enhances community leaders' competencies, enabling them to effectively utilize resources (financial, human, technological, and technical) to achieve development goals (Hartwig, 2010). It encompasses abilities, skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, relationships, behaviours, motivations, and conditions that enable individuals and organizations to achieve their objectives over time (Owede & Mbadiwe-Woko, 2018). Capacity building is defined as the process by which individuals and groups enhance their abilities to perform functions, solve problems, and achieve objectives (Babu & Sengupta, 2006). In this study, it refers to enhancing community leaders' skills to initiate, execute, and sustain development programmes.

Leadership is central to successful community development, influencing participation, mobilization, and decision-making (Udensi, Udo, Daasi and Igbara, 2012). Effective leadership enables resource mobilization and community development (Foribor, Marof & Zahid, 2009). Leadership involves influencing others to achieve specific goals, providing direction through mobilization and encouragement (Ajeh, 2014). Community

leadership involves bringing partners together, influencing local services, engaging citizens, and creating a vision for the community (Randle & Hatter, 2005). Community leaders, including traditional rulers and town union executives, play a critical role in disseminating information, developing policies, managing finances, resolving conflicts, and mobilizing resources to promote community participation and development. In South-East Nigeria, community leaders are responsible for sustainable development through a bottom-up approach, addressing community challenges and objectives (Association of South-East Town Unions, 2018). Community development aims to improve life at the local level, develop all aspects of community living, and utilize external technical assistance (Ogili, 2004). It is a continuous process of improving the quality of life through active involvement and leadership (Rubin & Rubin, 2001).

Sustainable community development meets present needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own needs (Idris, 2017). It ensures that achieved development is maintained over time (Ajeh, 2014). Operationally, it involves active participation of community members and leaders in addressing developmental needs effectively and efficiently (Nwoba & Udoika, 2016). Community leaders' capacity building involves equipping them with competencies in awareness creation, financial management, conflict management, and resource mobilization (Mojola, Nwajiofor & Ukadike, 2010). Many community development efforts in Nigeria fail due to leaders' lack of capacity to sustain these efforts. Therefore, the goal is to equip leaders with the necessary skills to utilize resources effectively and build positive relationships for sustainable development (Majale, 2003). Capacity building is essential for planning, organizing, executing, and evaluating community development programs.

Awareness creation is the first necessary step and foundation of every community development effort, as information makes it possible for community dwellers to be more knowledgeable about the happenings in their community (Ajeh, 2014). Awareness creation is dependent on effective communication as communication is central to all forms of human interactions and endeavors. This is true given that communication, irrespective of the level or settings, carries with it meaningful messages that could lead to healthy exchange of ideas, knowledge, feelings, experiences and other factual information (Nwodu, 2007). Thus, capacity building of community leaders on effective awareness creation is indispensable in any effort directed towards enhancing sustainable community development (Ozor & Nwankwo, 2008). This is because, awareness creation begins with arousal of interest among community members, through it, community members are persuaded and sensitized on existing community problem(s) that needs urgent attention and the benefits derivable from participation in solving such problems prevailing in their community (Ajeh, 2014).

In other words, awareness creation practices that are effective and efficient, makes it possible for community members and their leaders to harmoniously establish strong positive social and working relationship. It raises their understanding, abilities and skills in influencing community development programmes within their community. Regrettably, many community development efforts in Nigeria (South-East States inclusive) have failed to achieve their main objectives, probably due to community leaders' lack of knowledge and required capacity in awareness creation practices (Ugwudu, 2016). Consequently, their limited capacities seem to have resulted in their passive participation and contribution in such development projects (Owolabi, 2011). For instance, failure or abandonment of community development projects in Ebonyi State such as rural electrification, road construction etc. (Nwobashi & Itumo, 2017). Conversely, Udensi,

Udoh, Daasi and Igbara (2012) claimed that lack of interest in community development projects by the leaders; non-inclusion of community members in planning and execution of the projects by community leaders and disagreement between community leaders and members are the challenges faced by community leaders' towards promoting community development projects. Consequently, community leaders lack of needed capacities in awareness creation constitute a cog in the wheel towards sustaining community development programmes.

Financial management on the other hand, has been identified as an important aspect of sustainable community development efforts. Paramasivan and Subramanan (2009) asserted that financial management is an application of general managerial principles to the area of financial decision making. Financial management is indispensable in any attempt directed towards the actualization of community development programmes as it is at the base of every community development effort. Effective leadership within the community is necessary to help assert successful action, encourage social wellbeing and improve community viability. However, Bello (2001) alleged that huge amount of naira is lost through one financial malpractice or the other in Nigeria, which to say the least, drains the nation's meager resources through fraudulent means with far-reaching and attendant consequences on the development or even socio-economic or political programmes of the nation. This bewildering allegation of the author can be attributed to lack of required financial management competencies by major community development actors. However, embezzlement of financial resources meant for development projects provokes suspicion and distrust among the people and makes it difficult for community development programmes to be actualized or sustained. Thus, building capacity of community leaders on financial management and probably on conflict management for engendering community development remains a useful foundation for galvanizing cooperative actions and stable community development.

Conflict management is another important area community leaders' capacity requires building so as to enable them drive community development and its sustainability. This is because no meaningful development can take place in a society devoid of peace and tranquility. Peace is essential in attaining lasting development because whatever height a country or community is able to attain or achieve in making life better for her citizenry can easily be destroyed when there is violence. Writing on the impact of instability on sustainable development in Nigeria, Obeka and Agwu (2016) noted that Nigeria is plagued with political instability and insecurity, religious and ethnic violence which is impinging on attainment of sustainable community development programmes in Nigeria. This situation is worst with rural communities where ethnic violence, conflict and unrest are destroying the environment, displacing them from their own communities and preventing them from achieving self-fulfillment, self-realization and growth in a sustainable manner. Similarly, Asogwa (2011) claimed that leadership conflict in Enugu State which is one of the South-East States of Nigeria has resulted to loss of lives and properties as well as the abandonment of on-going community development projects. Thus, capacity building of community leaders on conflict management will help them mobilize both human and material resources to achieve the objectives of community development programmes and its sustainability.

On the other hand, strengthening community leaders' capacities to solve their community problems through community mobilization strategies is also one of the fundamentals of sustainable community development (Majale, 2003). Mobilization consists primarily of movements, drives or campaigns specifically designed to activate the

masses into an accelerated process of change (Ajeh, 2014). It is an important tool in the planning and implementation of any programme tailored towards development. Community leaders embark on community development projects, mobilize resources and community-based organizations (CBOs) for effective implementation of community development programmes (Ihejirika & Ogbugo, 2018). Thus, in any quest for a successful mobilization, leadership is an essential tool (Ajeh, 2014). The author further noted that members of the community look up to their leaders to be at the fore-front in community action and building. Community leaders need to be mobilized to accept the undeniable fact that positive changes in the community are crucial for development. The leaders are to encourage and sustain the process of mobilization that has taken place. Regrettably, sponsors of community development programmes often do not adequately utilize inputs from community members (leaders) in planning community development (Owede, 2006). This bewilderingly allegation may be attributed to the inability of community leaders to galvanize community members to participate in community development programmes due to the fact that they lacked the needed capacity, thereby increasing community development problems and underdevelopment issues generally.

Capacity building is an ongoing process through which community leaders' abilities, skills and competencies are enhanced so as to enable them identify and meet various community development challenges. The aim of capacity building is to establish a group that can influence community mobilization activities and development generally (Okide, 2015). It usually consists partners that have a stake in the issue as well as influential groups and members of the community such as formal and informal leaders; religious and traditional leaders (men and women). Community leaders carry their community members along to accomplish development projects that will be of benefit to the entire community (Ihejirika & Ogbugo, 2018). The authors further noted that as custodian of culture and traditions of their land, they are looked upon in most cases, for decision bordering on the general welfare of the people. However, Anyanwu (2002) claimed that community leaders are more interested in power sharing and the creation of positions than in the solution of community problems which is an indication that they lack the needed capacity to drive community development efforts and its sustainability in general.

Regrettably, various community development programmes initiated and executed by Nigerian government in the past have all ended prematurely without achieving their stipulated objectives. For instance, community development programmes such as Operation Feed the Nation (OFN), Green Revolution, Better Life for Rural Women, Mass mobilization for Self-Reliance, Social Justice and Economic Recovery (MAMSER), River Basin Development etc. Egbe (2014) noted that there still exists enormous gap between policy formulation and implementation and the reality of the development level of the rural populace. More so, the current National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) and her state counterpart "State Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy" (SEEDS) as well as the nascent National Social Investment Programme seem to be recording few positive results due to some certain neglected issues amongst which are limited involvement of the intending beneficiaries and grassroots leaders, misappropriation and poor implementation due to poor statistical data. Thus, sustainable community development requires concerted efforts by all concerned parties so as to actualize the goal of community development programme and its sustainability.

Actualized community development programmes add inestimable values to their beneficiaries. There are numerous instances of initiated and completed community

projects in South-East States of Nigeria. Such projects include health centres, provision of desks for primary school pupils at Nguru-Nsukka, sinking of borehole at Nru and Anuka communities of Nsukka in Enugu State. While in Anambra State, civic centres were built in Nimo community of Njikoka local government area and Ukpo community of the Dunukofia local government area respectively. More so, recognizing the importance of community leaders in community development programmes, in the year 2018, the government of Anambra State made available in two separate trenches, the sum of twenty million naira each to all the communities in the state through their leaders (traditional rulers and town union executives) with which to engage in any chosen community development programmes of their choice. This noble gesture of the government led to execution and successful completion of various community development projects such as renovation and resuscitation of civic centres, primary health care facilities, road construction, rural electrification, renovation of community schools etc. However, despite the successes recorded from some executed and completed projects, there are still myriads of allegations of mismanagement, corruption and poor execution of the community development programmes by the community leaders.

The researcher has noted with dismay that most community development efforts in South East States of Nigeria have not yielded much positive results or sustained giving rise to many unanswered questions which are; could it be that community leaders are not actively involved in determining and in execution of those community development projects? Consequently, leading to the abysmal failures of such projects or could it be that community leaders lacked the necessary capacity in the areas of awareness creation, management of finance and conflict management and in mobilization. Hence, despite many concerted efforts, many communities in the South-East, Nigeria still cannot boast of good access roads, functional primary health centres, steady power supply, safe drinking water, quality public schools among others.

Community leaders carry their community members along to accomplish development projects that will be of benefit to the entire community (Ihejirika & Ogbugo, 2018). More so, community development programmes initiated by the government, community member and/or non-governmental organizations have also been abandoned or allowed to waste because no efforts have been put in place to sustain them (Ajeh, 2014). The author further alleged that Most people in Nigeria (South-East inclusive) believed that it is the responsibility of the government to provide, maintain and sustain all infrastructures. In current discourse, the vital role of community leaders in fostering sustainable development is prominent (Akanji and Oyitso, 2011). Leadership, capacity building, and sustainability are focal points in contemporary literature. Effective leadership is deemed essential for mobilizing resources and guiding communities towards collective goals. Capacity building initiatives, addressing areas such as conflict management and financial stewardship, are seen as crucial for empowering leaders. Sustainable development, aiming to meet present needs without compromising future generations' abilities, is a core objective. Challenges like ineffective leadership and resource mismanagement can be mitigated through targeted capacity building efforts. Emerging trends include participatory approaches, integrated programs covering multiple areas, and the utilization of technology for enhanced access to resources. Best practices, highlighted through case studies, offer insights into successful community development and capacity building strategies. Hence, citizens' over-dependence on government and/or non-governmental organizations for developmental initiatives could be an indication that majority of the community leaders lack the needed capacity to drive community

development efforts and its sustainability. Worried by myriads of initiated but abandoned community development programmes and how lack of the needed capacity by community leaders affect community development efforts and its sustainability informed the need for the present study which investigated the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices can promote sustainable community development programmes in the South-East States of Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Community development entails active involvement of both the government and community members including the leaders in a joint action geared towards improving the cultural, economic, political and social welfare of the citizenry. The issue of underdevelopment in South-East, Nigeria is a paradox considering its poor state in comparison with the vast natural and human resources within it. Community development reflects the felt needs of the people and their efforts to address those needs. More so, communities in South-East States of Nigeria are renowned for embarking on various community development projects. However, despite the successful initiation and completion of various community development programmes in the areas, there are plethora of uncompleted or abandoned projects within it as well as many developmental challenges facing the areas such as poor access roads, lack of functional primary health care centres, lack of safe drinking water, communal clashes among others. Nevertheless, there have been divergent opinion concerning these developmental challenges as there were allegations that, despite the involvement of community leaders who incidentally are the custodian and mouth piece of their various communities in these programmes that, they failed as a result of their lack of the needed capacity to drive community development programmes and its sustainability. Consequently, the problem of this study is to empirically fill this knowledge gap by ascertaining the extent to which community leaders' capacity building in awareness creation, financial management, conflict management can engender sustainable community development programmes in South-East States of Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East States of Nigeria. Specifically, the study aimed to:

1. ascertained the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.
2. determined the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria
3. ascertained the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?

2. To what extent do community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management practices promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?
3. To what extent do community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management practices promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses guided the study and was tested at 0.05 level of significance:

- H₀₁:** There are no significant differences in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent capacity building practices of community leaders on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.
- H₀₂:** There are no significant differences in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent capacity building practices of community leaders on financial management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.
- H₀₃:** There are no significant differences in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent capacity building practices of community leaders on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study utilized a descriptive survey research design, as described by Nworgu (2015), to systematically collect and described data to investigate the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East States of Nigeria. The area includes Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo States, which are known for their cultural heritage, communal orientation, and commercial and industrial activities. Despite their strong leadership structures, these areas often struggle with the sustainability of community development efforts, prompting this study. The population comprised 11,836 community leaders (1,300 traditional rulers & 10,536 town union executives) across the 95 local government areas of the five states. A sample size of 1,186 respondents (310 traditional rulers & 876 town union executives) was selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Anambra and Ebonyi states were randomly chosen, and a proportional stratified sampling technique was applied to arrive at the sampled participants. Data were collected using a researcher-designed questionnaire, "Community Leaders Capacity Building for Sustainable Community Development Questionnaire" (CLCBSCDQ), which included demographic information and items related to capacity building practices. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in the Department of Continuing Education and Development Studies and one in the Department of Science Education (Research, Measurement & Evaluation Unit), all in the University of Nigeria, Nsukka; and trial-tested for reliability, yielding a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.77. The questionnaire was administered and retrieved directly by the researcher and six assistants, resulting in a 94.0 percent return rate (1,115 completed questionnaires). Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (t-test) to answer the research questions and hypotheses.

Results

Research Question One: To what extent does community leaders' capacity building practice on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Awareness Creation Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

SN	Item statement	Traditional Rulers		Town Union Executives		Overall		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1	Giving them strong voice for galvanizing community development programmes in their communities	3.07	.99	3.06	.94	3.06	.95	HE
2	Empowering them on how to carryout proper consultations on integrating every community sector in community development activities	3.16	.85	3.22	.90	3.20	.89	HE
3	Enhancing their skills to utilize various media channels when soliciting support for community development programmes	3.12	.94	3.07	.96	3.08	.95	HE
4	Helping them to promote inclusive development agenda for their community welfare	2.92	.95	3.00	.91	2.98	.92	HE
5	Raising their consciousness on various pressing needs of their community	3.10	.97	3.12	.94	3.12	.95	HE
6	Enhancing their decision-making competencies towards sustainable community development practices	3.15	.90	2.95	.91	3.00	.91	HE
7	Improving their capacity to organize Community Based Organizations (CBOs) towards achieving the objectives of community development programmes	3.10	.98	3.14	.93	3.13	.94	HE
8	Raising their knowledge on how to attract NGOs using indigenous communication techniques	2.89	.95	2.97	.95	2.95	.95	HE
9	Helping them to secure broad-based participation through locally driven development agenda	3.08	.95	3.04	.94	3.05	.94	HE
10	Raising their competencies on ICT utilization for community development programmes in their areas.	3.22	.79	3.16	.94	3.17	.91	HE
	Cluster Mean	3.08	.36	3.07	.36	3.07	.36	HE

Result in Table 1 revealed the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria. The Table showed that items 1-10 including the cluster mean had their mean values ranges from 2.95-3.20. These values were within the real limit of 2.50-3.49; indicating that the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria is high. The Table also revealed that the standard deviations of the 10 items ranged from 0.91-0.95; indicating that respondents were not far from the mean and response of one another.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 2: An Independent t-Test Analysis of Traditional Rulers and Town Union Executives on the Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Awareness Creation Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Traditional Rulers	301	3.08	.36	1111	.432	.666
Town Union Executives	812	3.07	.35			

Result in Table 2 shows the t-test for independent samples assuming equal variance. The results from the test shows $t(1111) = .432$, $P > 0.05$. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted since the p-value (.666) is greater than 0.05 level of significant. The researcher therefore, concludes that, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Question Two: To what extent does community leaders' capacity building practice on financial management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on the Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Financial Management Practices Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

SN	Item statement	Traditional Rulers		Town Union Executives		Overall		Remark
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
11	Enhancing their competencies on how to source fund from local donors for implementation of community development programmes	3.17	.97	3.06	.95	3.09	.96	HE
12	Equipping them with useful knowledge to source fund from international development organizations	2.91	.93	3.04	.87	3.00	.89	HE
13	Raising their competencies on the judicious management of community resources	3.16	.96	3.16	.96	3.16	.96	HE
14	Helping them create a potent action plan for implementing community development programmes	3.11	.90	2.94	.89	2.99	.90	HE
15	Enhancing their probity level for accountability in community development programmes	3.20	.96	3.17	.92	3.18	.93	HE
16	Strengthening their initiative in exploring various financial partnerships for their community welfare	2.82	.87	2.93	.94	2.90	.92	HE
17	Empowering them to make beneficial financial decisions as regards community development programmes	3.03	1.03	3.08	.98	3.06	.99	HE
18	Training community leaders on various financial partnership promotion practices for community development programmes	3.13	.88	3.01	.91	3.04	.90	HE
	Cluster Mean	3.07	.37	3.05	.37	3.05	.37	HE

Result in Table 3 revealed the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria. The Table revealed that items 11-18 as well as the cluster mean had their mean values ranges from 2.90-3.18. These values were within the

real limit of 2.50-3.49; indicating that the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria is high. The Table also revealed that the standard deviations of the 8 items ranged from 0.89-0.99; indicating that respondents were not far from the mean and response of one another.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 4: An Independent t-Test Analysis of Traditional Rulers and Town Union Executives on the Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Financial Management Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Traditional Rulers	301	3.07	.37	1111	.762	.446
Town Union Executives	812	3.05	.36			

Result in Table 4 shows the t-test for independent samples assuming equal variance. The results from the test shows $t(1111) = .432$, $P = 0.446$. Thus, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted since the p-value of .446 is greater than 0.05 level of significant. The researcher therefore, concludes that, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on financial management can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Research Question Three: To what extent does community leaders' capacity building practice on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria?

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents on Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Conflict Management Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

SN		Traditional Rulers		Town Executives		Union	Overall	Overall	Remark
	Item statement	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	
19	Helping them in handling intra-communal politics effectively	3.10	1.03	3.10	.96		3.10	.98	HE
20	Helping them to tackle inter-communal clashes	2.98	.89	2.91	.89		2.93	.89	HE
21	Enabling them to adopt compromise process in dealing with communal unrest situations	3.12	.99	2.97	1.02		3.01	1.02	HE
22	Enhancing their competencies on using consensus practices so as to prevent communal conflicts	2.95	.87	3.06	.90		3.03	.90	HE
23	Equipping them with various accommodative strategies for strengthening strong relationship in the interest of community development.	3.10	.95	3.09	.96		3.09	.96	HE
24	Enabling them to tactically adopt confrontation strategies in engendering communal peaceful co-existence.	3.18	.89	3.09	.90		3.11	.89	HE
25	Empowering them to positively use force in promoting community development goals.	3.08	1.01	3.11	.95		3.10	.97	HE
26	Promoting their knowledge on how to technically integrate differing ideas for	3.15	.89	3.08	.89		3.10	.89	HE

27	community development. Enhancing their community cooperative decision-making competencies	3.23	.97	3.19	.95	3.20	.95	HE
Cluster Mean		3.10	.33	3.07	.33	3.07	.33	HE

Result in Table 5 revealed the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria. The result revealed that items 19-27 with the cluster mean had their mean values ranges from 2.93-3.20. These values were within the real limit of 2.50-3.49; indicating that the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria is high. The result also revealed that the standard deviations of the 9 items ranged from 0.89-1.02; indicating that respondents were not far from the mean and response of one another.

Hypothesis Three: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Table 6: An Independent t-Test Analysis of Traditional Rulers and Town Union Executives on the Extent Community Leaders' Capacity Building Practices on Conflict Management Promote Sustainable Community Development Programmes in South-East, Nigeria

Status	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	P-value
Traditional Rulers	301	3.10	.33	1111	1.493	.136
Town Union Executives	812	3.07	.33			

Result in Table 6 shows the t-test for independent samples assuming equal variance. The results from the test shows $t(1111) = 1.493$, $P = .136$. Hence, the null hypothesis of no significant difference was accepted since the p-value (.136) is greater than 0.05 level of significant. The researcher therefore, concludes that, there was no significant difference in the mean ratings of traditional rulers and town union executives on the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on conflict management promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Discussion

The findings from research question one revealed that the extent to which community leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation promote sustainable community development programs in South-East Nigeria is high. Respondents indicated that empowering community leaders to utilize various media channels, promoting inclusive development agendas, enhancing decision-making competencies, and raising awareness of community needs significantly contribute to sustainable development. These findings align with Owolabi (2011), who emphasized that promoting awareness creation skills among community leaders enhances their leadership voice and media utilization competencies, facilitating community development efforts. Similarly, Ozor and Nwankwo (2008) found that local leaders are key sources of information for community development. Therefore, capacity building for community leaders in awareness creation is crucial for equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge for sustainable development in South-East Nigeria. Effective awareness creation practices foster positive social relationships and enhance community development efforts. Unfortunately, many community development efforts in Nigeria, including South-East states, have failed due to inadequate capacity in awareness creation among community leaders.

The findings from research question two revealed that community leaders' capacity building in financial management significantly promotes sustainable community development programmes in South-East Nigeria. Respondents indicated that enhancing their skills in sourcing funds from local and international donors, managing community resources judiciously, creating action plans, ensuring accountability, exploring financial partnerships, and promoting financial practices is crucial. These findings align with Kinyua, Mwangi, Riro, and Muchiri (2015), government, donors, NGOs, membership fees, user fees, and voluntary contributions as key funding sources. Transparency in financial management was also highlighted as essential. Similarly, Ugwu (2016) findings which indicated that sourcing funds from banks, NGOs, international organizations, and philanthropists. Mohammed (2003) noted that community leaders lacked knowledge in direct financing and recommended empowering communities to develop strategies to address weak legal systems. Ozor and Nwankwo (2008) reported that community leaders' roles include decision-making, liaising with government and NGOs, monitoring projects, and fundraising, underscoring the need for financial management training. The findings revealed a significant gap in financial management competencies among community leaders, hindering their ability to source and utilize resources effectively for sustainable development.

The findings from research question three revealed that community leaders' capacity building in conflict management significantly promotes sustainable community development programmes in South-East Nigeria. Respondents indicated that it helps in handling intra-communal politics, tackling inter-communal clashes, adopting compromise processes, using accommodative strategies, tactically employing confrontational strategies, and enhancing cooperative decision-making. These findings align with Akanji and Oyitso (2011), findings which highlighted the role of community-based institutions in peace-building and dispute resolution. More so, the findings of this study also agree with that Asogwa (2011) which revealed that leadership conflicts led to loss of lives, property, and abandoned development projects, emphasizing the need for conflict management training. Therefore, building capacity in conflict management is crucial for sustainable community development, as meaningful development cannot occur without peace.

Conclusion

This study reported that community leaders are the mouthpiece, custodian of culture and tradition of their communities and as such, are indispensable in any concerted effort directed towards its development and sustainability of such development efforts. They are well revered and looked upon on decision making bordering on the welfare of their communities and her development generally. This study therefore, buttressed that these leaders' capacity building practices on awareness creation, financial management and conflict management to a high extent can promote sustainable community development programmes in South-East, Nigeria.

Contribution to Knowledge

Examining community leaders' capacity building practices and their implications for sustainable development offers valuable insights into effective leadership, targeted capacity building interventions, and the imperative of sustainability. It highlights the critical role of leadership in mobilizing resources and guiding communities towards shared goals, while emphasizing the need for practical strategies to empower leaders in areas like conflict management and financial stewardship.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study and the discussions that followed and the following recommendations were proffered:

1. Community development experts should jointly work hand-in-hand with community leaders in creating awareness on the need for community members to support and to take active part in the developmental efforts of their community and its sustainability.
2. Capacity building of community leaders on financial management should be prioritized by community development experts, governmental agencies like National Orientation Agency, Local Government Community development and Welfare divisions.
3. Association of South East Town Unions and Traditional Rulers' Council should collaborate with other relevant stakeholders and governmental agencies in maintaining intra and inter communal peace, tranquility, equity and equality so as to engender sustainable community development programmes.

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