

## **Mediating Role of Community Participation on the Relationship between Common Passion and Sustainable development**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of common passion on community participation. It further demonstrates the relationship between common passion, community participation and sustainable development. A combination of quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. A sample of 284 respondents from six communities were used while 24 interviewees were interviewed amongst 24 key community leaders in three selected oil producing states in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria. The research findings indicate that community participation plays crucial role in community development sustainability. Further results from both analysis shows the common passion has a positive influence on community participation and sustainable development. More so, community participation was found as a mediator on the relationship between common passion and sustainable community development. This study is limited in scope, coverage and of course generalisation. It is limited to the Niger Delta region of Nigeria which is believed to be the richest among other regions in Nigeria. Thus, other regions in Nigeria were not put into consideration. The present study has created awareness and knowledge about the current state of development in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Secondly, it offers a framework to guide policy formulation, implementation and evaluation for sustainable development in the Niger delta region of Nigeria. It has also increased an understanding on the key factors that influence sustainable development of the Niger Delta people. The study offered an insightful result for the policy makers in government, non-governmental agencies and researchers in this field of study. The study contributes to community development practices and sustainability by identifying the relevance of group cohesion, interaction and common purpose as crucial element in facilitating community participation. The research opens up avenue for future study in examining those factors*

*that stimulates community solidarity and group cohesion as catalyst for community driven development sustainability.*

**Keywords:** Community development; Community participation; Sustainable development; Common passion; Niger Delta region; Nigeria.

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, the quest for sustainable development has begun to find its root in almost every aspect of human endeavours and national development. This was necessitated after the 1992 Rio conference that advocates the need for sustainability. The idea of this concept was to spur both government and non-governmental agencies in addressing development challenges in their respective countries by adopting the policies and regulatory rules that emphasised on fundamental values and principles such as human right and social justice, environmental sustainability and collaborative efforts in the implementation of developmental programs (Jackson & Morpeth, 1999; Liou & Yu 2004). As a result, most countries of the world including Nigeria have come to see the need to imbibe the culture of sustainability in developmental initiatives for national growth and development (Aly, 2014).

The global advocacy for sustainability has publicised the relevance of community members in development sustainability because they are seen as both the means and end to developmental agenda. This assumption is based on the evidence that community members are the most affected of developmental initiatives positively or negatively (Mutanga, Vengesayi, Muboko, & Gandiwa, 2015). This approach creates opportunity for community members to fully utilize existing development tools and indigenous decision making in developmental process (Dodman, & Mitlin, 2013). Although community driven development is not exclusively community affair, however, it is a platform for integrating community based action for policy reforms and implementation (Kubisch, Auspos, Brown, Buck, & Dewar, 2011). Based on Balaiah, (2015), community driven development involves the identification and assessment of community goals, developing strategic plans and implantation techniques for achieving the set goals. Likewise, Seyfang, & Haxeltine, (2012) asserted that adaptability of community process in developmental activities is an effective tool for sustainable community development. Community development projects therefore, allow community members to play significant role in formulation and implementation of policies and program that positively affects their lives. Recognising the role of community members in developmental initiatives, extant studies explore how community development initiatives can be enhanced (Mathie & Cunningham, 2003; Mansuri, & Rao, 2004; Wu,

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& Pearce, 2014). Similarly, the idea of community participation in development sustainability has gained more prominence in global and national concern as a vital tool in achieving sustainable developmental goals across the globe (Baker, Wilkerson, & Brennan, 2012; Razzaq, Mustafa, Suradin, Hassan, Hamzah & Khalifah, 2012). Critical analysis of literature indicates that while much focus is on community participation as catalyst for sustainable development, less attention has been given to factors that influences the level of community participation for community development sustainability. Several studies have shown how community participation facilities sustainable development. For instance, Agwu (2013) maintained that sustainable development is achievable when community members are given the opportunity to fully engage in developmental initiatives. Likewise, Winston, (2014). noted that community development sustainable is attainable when community members are co-opted into pre and post stages of developmental initiatives. In a similar way, Zeldin, Camino and Calvert (2012), stressed that when community members are given the opportunity to make decisions on issues that affect their lives, it enhances their level of participation). Bushe (2013) therefore developed a strategy for investigating community challenges by engaging community members on by meaningful engaging them in the design and implementation process to achieve the desire developmental changes in their community. Interestingly, there are few empirical studies that investigates how community participation can be facilitated by community common interest to in achieving sustainable developmental initiatives.

This paper addresses the mediating role of community participation on the relationship between community common passion and sustainable development. The need for this study was necessitated for regions such as the Niger Delta despite its enormous contribution to the Nigerian economy poverty and underdevelopment. Although, the Nigerian government has made concerted efforts through the establishment of various developmental boards and huge financial investment, nevertheless, not much impact has been made in both the living condition and environment in the Niger Delta region, Nigeria. We investigate to what extent has community common passion facilitated the level of community participation. By applying the mixed method approach, we were able to analyse the opinions and responses of the respondents on how community participation can be enhanced. The analysis is unique in the sense that information was derived through a robust method of data collection as complementary sources of data. The next section is literature review, followed by the methodology used in conduct of the study as the third section. The fourth section is the analysis and findings and lastly conclusion where the variables were discussed.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**  
**THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION ON**  
**COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY.**

Community participation has gained global recognition as an essential segment of community development that mirrors a grassroots or base up way to sustainable development. It alludes to the dynamic intentional engagement of people and gatherings to change risky conditions and to impact strategies and programs that influence the nature of their within their immediate environment (Shani & Pizam, 2012). Studies such as (Nour, 2011; Thomas, et al 2012; Adesida & Okunlola 2015; Oni 2015) have indicated the relationship between community participation and sustainable development. Specifically, Ofuoku (2011); Aghalino, (2012) and Okolo, (2014) established a clear relationship between community participation and sustainable development. In this regard, community participation facilitates sustainable community development. Therefore, the hypothesis to be tested in this study is:

H1: There is a significant relationship between community participation and community development sustainability.

**THE INFLUENCE OF COMMON PASSION ON COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION**

This term was first introduced by Jarrett, Sullivan and Watkins (2005) where it was observed that common passion can foster community youth participation and involvement in achieving community sustainable development. Community passion defines degree of seriousness and share vision that community members have on community developmental issues. This term is normally used interchangeably with community interest whereas both might not have the same meaning. Community interest according to Robinson (1994) occurs when community members spare their time on community developmental initiatives or issues while Goldstein (2002) explained community passion as the fundamental values put on community initiatives and issues by community members. Typical findings from empirical studies depicts that there are there are various factors that influences community participation such as sense of community, social bonding and common goals (Yoo, Suh, & Lee, 2002; Jones, & Hill, 2003; Jarrett, Sullivan & Watkins, 2005). However, few empirical study have demonstrated the influence of common passion on community participation engaging mixed method approach. Although, studies such as Ren and Kiesler, (2007); Stern; Adams, and Boase (2011); Nuttavuthisit, Jindahra and Prasarnphanich (2014) maintained that community bond and identity influences community decision and participation in developmental activities. Therefore, it can be seen that when community members share a common passion, and there are available

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resources to achieve their plan then such development will be sustainable. However, Hamdi (2010) argued that it is not in all cases that community members share common passion and interest before achieving development. Sometimes, diversity might lead to sense of belonging in community and social identity. However, this study takes a different approach as it argues community participation as independent factor which does not only directly impact on the development sustainability but also as a mediating variable. Thus, the hypotheses to be tested in this study are:

H2: There is a significant relationship between common passion and community participation;

H3: There is a significant relationship between common passion and community development sustainability.

### **THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION ON COMMON PASSION AND DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY**

There are documented evidences that community involvement, community participation, common passion, influence development whether at the community level or at the sustainable level. Accordingly, previous studies such as Hart (2013); Platteau and Abraham, (2002); Kelly, Sung and Farnham (2002); Shaw, (2008); Kim, Lee and Hiemstra, (2004); Wang and Fesenmaier, (2004); Wenger and Snyder, (2000); McMillan, (1996); Jewkes and Murcott, (1996) have earlier regarded community participation as having a direct relationship on community development within the context of their studies. Thus, the hypothesis to be tested in this study is:

H4: Community participation significantly mediates the relationship between common passion and community development sustainability.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

The study used a survey approach to collect data from six oil producing communities across three states (Bayelsa, Delta and Rivers) in the Niger Delta. The communities are Oloibiri, Akassa, Koko, Afiesere, Omoku and Bonny. The respondents comprise of community leaders, market women, traditional rulers, youths, opinion leaders and farmers, traders, fishermen and women. 300 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents. 284 were returned and accepted as valid for data analysis. Likewise, interview sessions were conducted among 24 key community leaders comprising of opinion leaders, community development committee chairmen (CDC), youth leaders and women leaders

## **ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE**

SPSS Software version 20 was used for the analysis. All the variables were measured on 5 point Likert scale. While for the qualitative analysis, data collected were thematically coded and analysed with the use of Nvivo 10 software. The study was carried out in April 2015 to October, 2015.

## **PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS**

Preliminary analysis was conducted to determine the response rate, non-response bias, missing data, assessment of outliers and test of multicollinearity. The response rate is 94.67% which is quite impressive and high. This high response rate was attained due to the strategy adopted by the researcher to administer and collect the questionnaires. Competent research assistants who were residents and members of the communities were engaged by the researcher to assist in the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. A non-response bias test was also conducted but there is no significant difference between the earlier and the later responses. Hence non-response bias is not a problem. The study used the Mahalanobis distance technique to check the outliers. The data set was not found with any case of outliers. Few cases of missing data were identified and were equally replaced using mean option approach.

## **DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS**

The descriptive statistics of this study was analysed with respect to gender, age, marital status, qualification, occupation and year of resident in the communities by the respondents from the six selected Niger Delta communities. The descriptive statistics of the variables was equally conducted with respect to mean, standard deviation and percentages. The results show an acceptable standard. However, the table has not been reflected for brevity.

## **MEASUREMENT GOODNESS OF MEASURES**

An instrument has been adjudged by many scholars to be a good instrument if it is both reliable and valid (Sekaran, 2003). Factor analysis and reliability test were conducted to assess the goodness of measures of this study. From the analysis as reflected in Table 2, various tests were carried out to access the goodness of fit of the model. This include correlation analysis, KMO and Bartlett's test, percentage of variance explained and factor analysis. From Table 2, it can be seen that the factor loadings for all the variables ranging

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from .610 to .819 met the minimum threshold of .6. The KMO as well as the Bartlett's Test are significant and attained the expected threshold. Likewise, the Cronbach's Alpha met the minimum requirement of .5. Pallant (2007) suggests a Cronbach' Alpha coefficient of more than 0.50 to be the accepted level especially if the scale of the study has less than 10. This study achieved a Cronbach alpha value of 0.5 and above, and this confirms that the items adopted in investigating the constructs are reliable and acceptable for the inferential analysis (Zikmund et al., 2009). Conclusively, the model has attained a good fit.

Table 1

### *Goodness of Fit Measure*

S/No	Variables	Items	Factor Loading Values	KMO Values	BARTLEET'S TEST	CRONBACH'S ALPHA
1	Community Development Sustainability (CDS)	CDS5	0.668	0.608	.000	.615
		CDS6	0.667			
		CDS7	0.589			
		CDS8	0.610			
		CDS9	0.611			
2	Common Passion (CPA)	CDS10	0.435	0.761	.000	.778
		CPA1	0.74			
		CPA2	0.806			
		CPA3	0.819			
		CPA4	0.744			
3	Community Participation	CP2	0.82	0.5	000	.511
		CP4	0.82			

## **4.1 Testing of Hypotheses**

### **4.1.1 Hypothesis Testing for Direct Relationship**

**Table 2**

**Hypothesis Testing for Direct Relationship**

Hypotheses	Relationship	Effect	SE	T Value	P Value	Remarks
H <sub>1</sub>	CP => CDS	0.25	0.05	4.958	0.000	Supported
H <sub>2</sub>	CPA => CDS	0.35	0.08	4.370	0.000	Supported
H <sub>3</sub>	CPA => CP	0.22	0.09	-2.527	0.012	Supported

As shown in Table 2, the result from the alternate hypotheses are presented. Hypothesis 1 shows that community participation is significantly related to community development sustainability ( $r = .25, p < .05$ ). Likewise, common passion with a value of ( $r = .35, p < 0.5$ ) was supported. This suggests that an increase in common passion among residents will bring about sustainable development in the community. In addition, common passion was equally found to be positively related to community participation ( $r = .22, p > .05$ ).

**TESTING FOR MEDIATION**

As suggested by Preacher and Hayes (2008), the SPSS Macro for multiple mediation were used to analysed the data collected for this study in other to determine the mediating role of community participation on the relationship between common passion and community development sustainability. As suggested by Hayes (2009; 2013), the significance of the indirect effect should not be adjudged by the significance or non-significance for individual paths in the mediation model. Therefore, the researcher estimates the significance of all the indirect effect in this study using regression analysis through the SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013).

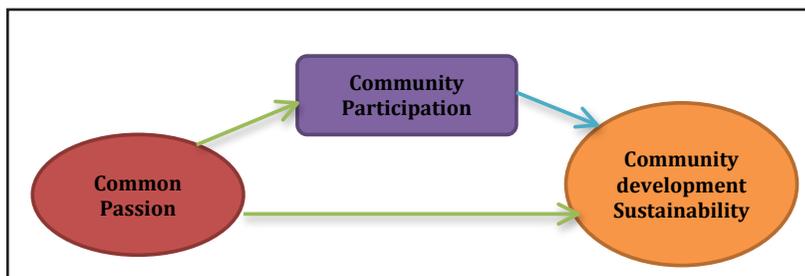
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This study therefore investigates the proposition that “community participation mediates the relationship between common passion and community development sustainability”. From the model presented in Figure 1 an indirect hypothesis was tested: community participation mediates the relationship between common passion and community sustainable development using the SPSS PROCESS macro for multiple mediators (Preacher and Hayes, 2008).

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Figure 1

Community Participation Mediate the Relationship Between Common Passion and Community Sustainable Development



The mediation analyses were tested using the bootstrapping method with bias-corrected confidence intervals (Preacher and Hayes, 2004; Devine-Wright, Price & Leviston, 2015). Following the recommendation of Preacher and Hayes (2004) in using a bootstrapping procedure to compute a confidence interval around the indirect effect and if zero falls outside this interval, mediation can be said to be present (Devine-Wright, Price & Leviston, 2015). The result of the mediation confirmed that community participation significantly mediates the relationship between common passion and community development and sustainability ( $B = -.05$ ;  $CI = -.11-.02$ ) (see Table 3).

Table 3

Indirect effect of Common Passion on Community Development and Sustainability

Hypotheses	Relationship	Coeffi.	SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI	Remark
	Total	-0.07	0.03	-0.142	-0.0247	
H <sub>4</sub>	CPA=>CP=>CDS	-0.05	0.23	-0.110	-0.0154	Supported

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION, COMMON PASSION AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SUSTAINABILITY

This study discovers that the roles of community participation, common passion are vital and imperative in sustainable community developmental

initiatives in any communities either marginalized or under-developed. This inference was drawn from both the quantitative and qualitative findings. Based on the result from the quantitative findings as shown in Table 2, the direct relationship between community participation and sustainable development was supported, likewise, common passion with sustainable development. This implies that both community participation and common passion are facilitators for sustainable community development. This result was complemented and supported Based on the views and opinions of interviewees from the various communities. Common passion was found to be relevant to achieve sustainable development as expressed by the interviewees; that when community members unanimously agree on a particular project it will increase not only their level of commitment but also facilitate developmental process. However, they noted that this act of solidarity is possible when community members perceive that these projects will be able to satisfy their immediate needs and aspirations. From the responses of the interviewees, it was also established that when community members are passionate about their developmental initiatives and are given the right environment to actively partake in these initiatives, their level of participation will be very high. This suggests that community participation can be enhanced and improved by ensuring community members possess the right passion and they are adequately engaged with responsibilities. This finding is in line with previous studies such as (Apsan, Frediani, Boni and Gasper, 2014) that people will only be committed to something they perceive will benefit them. Therefore, community common passion plays significant role in sustainability of developmental projects, however, it has been found that the level of commitment and agreement amongst community members are influenced by certain factors as indicated in this study.

Similarly, the finding shows that there is mediating effect of community participation on the relationship between common passion and community development sustainability, hence, hypothesis 3 is supported. These findings corroborate the studies of Zahra and McGehee (2013), however, it is in contrast with the study of Hamdi (2010). This implies that it is not in all situations that community common passion can increase their level of participation in developmental activities; however, common passion which is also known as common agreement can motivate community members' interest through collective collaboration towards their targeted goals.

Most studies that reviewed community development strategy in the Niger Delta did not introduce community participation as mediating variable with common passion as independent variables is unique to the body of knowledge. Literatures reviewed in this study show that the various approaches adopted by the Nigerian government for community development

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sustainability have yielded some positive results, however, evidences show that the level of community participation leaves much to be desired This implies that there is need to adequately addressed strategies that can enhance the level of community participation in developmental activities.

### **CONCLUSION**

The main focus of this paper is to stimulate and inform on the relevance of community role in sustainable community development and also to broaden understanding on how to usurp opportunities within communities to enhance developmental activities. The findings of the study show that community participation and community development sustainability are positively significant. In the same vein, there is mediating effect of community participation on the relationship between common passion and community development sustainability. The study is limited in scope because only six communities were used for assessing the level of community development sustainability which is not adequate for generalization.

### **THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATION**

The study provides an understanding and knowledge on the effectiveness of community participation on community development sustainability. The study undoubtedly contributes on how government, development practitioners and community members on community development initiatives especially ways to approach and access community perspectives. Theoretically, the study contributes to the 6 IS theory of community development (Eckel,1994) and the constructionist principles (Bushe & Kassam,2005) to community based development initiatives. The 6 IS theory postulates that a community is said to be viable and vigorous when there is an interconnectivity of the social structure which is rooted in social interaction, unity of purpose, common interest and self-determination by members of community. Likewise, the constructionist approach which opines the social system and structure of community is dependent on their beliefs and actions which is reinforced by social interaction and cohesion. The depicts that collective interest and goals by members of community reinforces their level of participation in development activities. This implies that meaningful community development initiatives are achievable by exploring on community members' expectations based on their shared values and interest.

To this end, the study has policy implications for government and non-governmental agencies, development practitioners, academics, community members and stakeholders for policy formulation, implementation

and evaluation. More so, the study contributes to existing literature and poses challenges to the academics to carry out further research by identifying other factors that can enhance community participation for sustainable community.

### **LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTION**

It is noted that only two variables were used to predict the outcome variable. Therefore, more variables should be identified and used to examine community development sustainability. Secondly, future studies should direct their focus on factors that stimulates community interest and group solidarity as a catalyst for sustainable community development.

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