

**EVALUATION OF THE LEVEL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS
PARTICIPATION IN AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION
PROGRAMMES IN KEBBI STATE.**

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the roles of rural community leadership in promoting agricultural extension programmes in Kebbi State. A Multi stage sampling technique was employed to draw a sample of 352 respondents from Kebbi State comprising eight LGAs. A set of structured questionnaires were used to obtain information from the respondents. Descriptive statistics, and Logit regression analysis were used for data analysis. The result of the study showed that majority (95.5%) were male while (4.5%) were females respectively. The research study found out that 33.2% had access to extension services while 66.8% does not have access to extension services. Similarly, the research study unveiled that 43.4% respondents had leadership experience of between 10-19 years while the lowest category of leaders of 0-9 year's leadership experience constituted 4.5%. The survey further identified that 93.8% of respondents were involved in decision making process regarding programmes and projects of community interest, 93.5% and 89.0% respectively showed the percentage of respondents who were into community mobilization and project legitimization while the least 3.1% of the level of involvement of community leaders in agricultural extension service delivery. The study further revealed that 8.82% mean rank of the respondents determined feasible agricultural extension programmes, 8.73 were into consulting community members prior to project implementation, 8.70 and another 8.70 mean rank of the respondents performed roles of monitoring and evaluation of agricultural extension programmes and making decisions on different issues relating to agricultural extension programmes. Logit regression analysis showed that the coefficient of coordinating all agricultural extension programmes (0.18) positively and significantly influenced leadership role performance at

5% level of significance. Similarly, the estimated coefficient of t-value of ensuring cordial relationship among farmers (109) and ensuring all assistance from government and non-governmental organizations reaches farmers (303) significantly influenced leadership role performance in the study area. The study also unveiled that 7.1%, 9.7 and 8.5% representing farmer training, provision of credit facility and provision of agro-input respectively were some of the extension roles performed by leaders in the study area while the extension approaches adopted were training and visit 9.7%, community specialized extension 9.9%, farm research extension 9.7% and participatory extension 9.1%. It is concluded that community leaders in the study area performed significant roles of decision making process, coordinating all agricultural extension programmes, project legitimization and monitoring and evaluation of programmes which impacted positively on the livelihood of the farmers. It is recommended that rural community leaders should be given enough reward in order to sustain their interest and perception of their ascribed roles in agricultural extension programmes, more female should be encouraged to perform leadership roles in agricultural extension activities, provision of extension services to farmers in groups should be encouraged by the local leaders due to scarcity of AEAS, provision of extension services through non-visits such as radio and television programmes should be intensified by community leaders, organizing refresher courses and in-service training for community.

Keywords: Evaluation, Level of community leader's participation, Extension programmes, Kebbi State.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of leadership is very crucial to the survival of any society. Even where there are established norms, leaders are still needed to ensure compliance with such norms for societal orderliness and healthy being. Van den Ban and Hawkins (1996) defined leadership as the "directing, influencing and controlling of others in pursuit of a group goal". This implies that the function of making decisions lies on the leaders. Ekong (2003) sees leadership as being synonymous with decision-making and therefore regards decision makers as community leaders. He further posits that an effective means of identifying leaders should include a systematic observation of which decision-makers are for various community issues.

Leadership is a very critical factor in the formulation, pursuance, attainment and sustenance of collective endeavor. The success or failure of formal organizations, nations and other social units has been largely attributed to the nature of their leadership style (Oladipo, *et al* 2013). The leadership role is a necessity in any organization, in order to co-ordinate the activities and aspirations of a given group, the head plays the role of a leader in any organization, leadership cannot be separated from a group and there cannot be a group without a leader (Oladipo, *et al*

2013). This is as a result of interdependence of both concepts for organizational effectiveness. The term leadership connotes a different meaning to different people. Many have attempted several definitions of the term leadership, no one definition has been universally accepted as an authoritative explanation of leadership. The exercise of influence in a social situation can be defined as leadership. A leader may be defined as an individual with an ability to induce subordinates to work towards the group goal with confidence. A special type of influence activity that affects and enhances individual in an organization is being seen in all kinds of social situation, which is especially apparent demand that makes people work together towards the attainment of common aims, goals and objectives, is called leadership, (Oladipo *et al.*, 2013).

Based on Ngambi *et al.* (2010) and Ngambi (2011), reported in Jeremy *et al.* (2011), leadership is really a procedure for impacting on others commitment towards recognizing their full potential in achieving value-added, shared vision, with passion and integrity. The nature of the influence is that the people from the team cooperate under their own accord with one another to be able to attain the objectives of the leader as well as another group of the organization. The associations between leader and worker, gives additional to the standard of employees' satisfaction, which are considerably affected through the leadership style adopted by the leader (Jeremy *et al.*, 2011).

Community leaders are those that can influence and direct the activities of a group of people towards the achievement of their target goal. They constitute a part of the people structure in the community and may also belong to one higher economic class or the other. Community leaders are those that ensure that progress is made in line with group needs. Jeremy *et al.* (2011) regards the local leaders as the people who have some amount of influence in the community even though they may not be holding any formal position. Other villages look up to them for advice, consultation and others tends to imitate them. They are sociable, generally interested in the community problem and have wills to solve the problems. They are people with integrity and repute. These groups of people are also sincere and trustworthy and their people like and trust them. Asabiaka (2002) posited that the attitude of local leaders would influence the success or failure of the rural development. With their position in their community, they are expected to help the community solve some pressing rural problems such as traditional farming and thus increase both food and standard of living of farmers especially as it concerns youth in the rural community.

According to Ipaye (1995) and Oladosu (2000) Agricultural leadership programs have been implemented through different strategies in Nigeria. There is a need for leadership programs that teach citizens how to cope with the barrage of change in the rural environment. In particular, citizens must be educated and prepared with essential knowledge and skills abilities in order to assume leadership positions that concentrate on the concerns of rural dwellers. Agricultural Development Programmes are especially critical in the Northwest as the region faces problems

symptomatic of a declining economy and a lack of leadership capacity to solve them. Community leadership should also act as a continuity factor in the execution of agricultural development projects between incumbent agricultural development interventionists and their successors. Generally, the key elements of successful community-driven agricultural development projects have been identified to be participation, sustainability, social inclusion and enabling policy environment (Dahl-Ostergaard *et al.*, 2003).

In the past few years, it has become obvious that the demand for food in Nigeria has out stripped the supply. It is important therefore, that we explore measures that will enhance agricultural production and increase the achievement level of the technology/innovation to spread in our respective region of operation. This can be achieved through agricultural extension service. The introduction of agricultural extension services in Nigeria has tremendously improved the nation's agricultural practices and production. Mgbada (2010) defined agricultural extension as an informal educational system which assists rural people in improving farming methods and techniques and other agro-based occupation, increasing production and service efficiency, income and improving the socio-economic and educational levels of the rural dwellers. Agricultural extension service achieves its goal of information dissemination through use of print and electronic media regarded as mass media. Mass media which is a means of information dissemination are spreading agricultural technologies to the farmers at a faster rate than personal contact (Khusuk and Memon, 2004). They opined that production and distribution of printed material helps farmers in the transfer of new information and technologies. The involvement of information dissemination to agricultural extension services enhances even development and brings wider coverage of new agricultural research findings meant to reach farmers. Similarly, local leaders are very important means of information dissemination.

A leader is one who goes first or have the authority to direct others. Leaders assume responsibilities for certain activities in extension agents' absence; help to organize local extension groups, assist directly in the spread of new ideas and practice by demonstrating them in their fields; and generally serve as a point of contact between the agent and the farmer. The principle of use of these local leaders is that they serve as loud speakers for extension for without their use, most of the planned programmes will not be achieved (Adereti and Ajayi, 2011). For agriculture to improve in our country there is a need to select local leaders, train, equip and use them in the different agricultural extension works. Local Leaders are those whose interest centres in the community and whose leadership rest on elaborate network of personal relationships (Ekong, 2003). The local leaders join voluntary organizations in order to make contacts, tend to hold political offices and if they are educated, tend to read the local newspapers and other printed materials which assist them in information gathering and dissemination (Williams, 1984). The study achieved the following specific objectives. To:

1. Describe the socio economic characteristics of the local leaders.
2. Examine the level of community leaders' involvement in leadership activities in the study area
3. Assess the leadership styles adopted by local leaders in promoting agricultural extension programmes in the study area

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in Kebbi State. Kebbi State was created out of the then Sokoto State in 1991. It lies in the Northwestern region of Nigeria with its capital in Birnin Kebbi. Kebbi State is bordered by Sokoto to the north and east, Niger to the south, Dosso region in the Republic of Niger to the Northwest and Republic of Benin to the west. Kebbi State has a total land area of about 37,698,685 square kilometers. Based on projections from 2006 census figures, Kebbi State is estimated to have a population of 4,629,880 (NPC, 2006: projected to 2018). Kebbi State is made up of 21 Local Government Areas (LGAs). It has four emirate councils (Gwandu, Argungu, Yauri and Zuru) and has four Agricultural Zones namely Argungu, Bunza, Yauri and Zuru zones respectively, for ease of administration. Kebbi State falls between latitude 12^o46'N and 12^o.27'N and longitude 4^o19'E and 4^o11'E. Agriculture is the main occupation of the people of the state especially in rural areas. Crops produced are mainly grains like Rice, Millet, Sorghum etc; animal rearing and fishing are also common agricultural activities that feature prominently in the State. The weather of the State is often dry with lots of sunshine. The wet season lasts from May to October while the dry season lasts for the remaining period of the year. Mean annual rainfall is about 800mm- 1000mm. Temperature is generally high with mean annual temperature of about 26^oC and above in all locations of the state. This climatic peculiarity allows for meaningful investment in agriculture.

Sampling and sampling Procedures

A multi stage sampling technique was used to select respondents. The first stage involved a random selection of eight local governments, two (2) each out of the four Agricultural zones (Emirate councils) in the state. From each of the 8 Local Government Areas, 2 Districts were purposively selected. A total of 312 randomly selected community leaders and 40 extension workers were drawn which together gave a sample size of 352 respondents for the study.

Method of Data Collection

Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were collected with the aid of a structured interview that were scheduled with open and close ended questions. The secondary data was obtained through journals, literature review and some text books. Primary

data was obtained through field survey with the use of structured questionnaire designed in line with the objectives of the study. The copies of which were administered to the respondents selected for the study. Data collected included information on the socioeconomic characteristics of the Extension workers and community leaders of the study area.

Method of Data Analysis

Frequency counts and percentage were used to analyze the demographic and non-demographic characteristics of the respondents, Binomial Logit Analysis test was used as inferential statistics.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics such as frequency, tables, mean and percentages were used to analyze objectives 1 and 2 while objective 3 was analyzed using Logit Regression Analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Socio-Economic Characteristics of community leaders (n=352)

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
20 – 29	50	13.5
30 – 39	55	15.0
40 – 49	79	25.8
50 – 59	69	20.6
60 – 69	58	15.7
70 – 79	41	9.4
Total	352	100
Gender		
Male	340	95.5%
Female	12	4.5%
Total	352	100
Marital Status		
Married	333	93.5%
Separated	4	1.2%

Widow	13	3.7%
Single	1	0.8%
Divorced	1	0.8%
Total	352	100
Level of Education		
Non formal	323	90.7%
Secondary	5	1.4%
Post-Secondary	24	7.9%
Total	352	100
Membership with Association		
Member	340	95.5%
Non Member	12	4.5%
Total	352	100
Household Size		
2 – 11	265	81.2%
12 – 21	79	16.8%
22 – 31	8	2.0%
Total	352	100
Access to Extension		
Access	117	33.2%
No Access	235	66.8%
Total	352	100
Access to Credit		
Access	95	26.2%
No Access	257	73.8%
Total	352	100

Source: Field Survey, 2018

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents based on level of involvement of community leaders in various Agricultural Programmes (n=352)

Involvement Activities	Frequency *	Percentage	Ranking
Decision making	334	94.8%	1 st
Community mobilization	333	94.6%	2 nd
Project legitimization	317	90.1%	3 rd
Rising funds for projects	294	83.5%	4 th
Providing information to farmers	73	20.7%	5 th
Financial contribution	39	11.1%	6 th
Monitoring & Evaluation of projects	19	5.4%	7 th
Planning of members	12	3.4%	8 th
Organized Skilled & unskilled labour	11	3.1%	9 th

*Multiple responses were recorded
Source: Field Survey, 2018.

Table 3: Regression result according to the kind of leadership styles adopted by community leaders in the study area.

Leadership style	Est. variable	Coefficients	Standard error	t-value
Constant	X ₀	0.000	661	-335
Democratic leadership	X ₁	-018	227	(2.126)**
Autocratic leadership	X ₂	109	218	-096
Lesser fair leadership	X ₃	-005	208	1.438
Transactional leadership	X ₄	077	155	1.358
Transformational leadership	X ₅	089	612	(533)**

F-cal = 5.510, R² = 0.208 standard error of the measurement = 64.082, adjusted R = 0.456.

*** = significant at 1% ** = significant at 5% * = significant at 10%.

Source: Field Data, 2018

DISCUSSION

Table 1 showed the socio-economic characteristics of the respondent. In the table it is revealed that 13.5% respondents fell within the age bracket of 20 – 29, 15.0% were within age grade of 30 – 39 years old while 25.8% were between the age group of 40 – 49 years. Similarly, 20.6%, 15.7% and 9.4% respondents fall under age group of 50 – 59 years, 60 – 69 years and 70 – 79 year respectively.

It is clear from the table that greater percentage of the respondents constituting 13.5% fell within active farming and leadership age. While the age group constituting the lowest percentage were those under the ages of 50 – 59 years. However, this group of respondent may have gathered a lot of experiences in farming and leadership considering their maturity.

The table showed that 95.5% of the respondents were male while only 4.5% of the respondents were female. This is a clear indication that male dominate leadership position in the study area. This would be because of the norms and values of the communities that do not regard women in leadership of communities.

Table 1 also showed that 93.5% of the respondents were married, separated 1.2%, widow 3.7% single 0.8% and divorced 0.8%. From the table it can be seen that greater percentage of the respondents were married and thus posed with the responsibility of catering for their family needs of education, health, nutrition, clothing and shelter. The lowest percentage were those category of the respondents who separated from their families due to perhaps differences in opinion, extra marital misbehaviors, mistrust, poverty or hunger.

Table 1 also indicated that 90.7% respondents obtained non-formal education, 1.4% obtained secondary education, 7.9% schooled up to post – secondary school. It can be seen from the table that most of the respondents obtained non-formal education and thus may not possess the requisite knowledge and skills needed for effective leadership in the communities, as only very small percentage the respondents schooled up to secondary and tertiary levels respectively.

Based on membership with cooperative association, it is shown 95.5% belonged to one cooperative association or the other, only 4.5% of the respondents does not belong to any membership association. 81.2% of the respondents had household members of 2 – 11 members, 16.8% had household member of 12 – 21 members, 2.0% possessed household members of 22 – 31 members. Based on results, it can be deduced that greater percentage of household member (2 – 11) fall within percentage of 81.2%. This large numbers of household members contributes significantly to provision of family labour which will in turn lead to improved agricultural productivity and higher standard of living.

Table 1 showed further that 33.2% respondents had access to extension services, 66.8% do not have any access to extension services considering the percentage of the respondents who does not have any access extension services, it is obvious that access to modern, farming technologies/innovations may be affected. Therefore increased agricultural productivity may not be guaranteed.

In the table it is also showed that 26.2% respondents had access to credit facility, 73.8%, does not have access to credit. This might be attributed to the fact that most respondent's lacks collateral security and the requirements for obtaining bank loans may be cumbersome. Some of these respondents might have limited source of income and this might hinder the bank or cooperate individuals from grant of loans and credits to the respondents.

This research work agrees with the studies of Baba (2016) who found out that 40% of local leaders are within the range of 41 – 50 years, while 60% of non-local leaders fell within the age bracket of 20 – 30 years. The results also showed that majority (75%) of local leaders are male, while 66% of non-local leaders are female. The result further indicated 36.7% of local leaders had tertiary education, while 33.3% of non-local leaders had primary education. The findings also revealed that the major role played by local leaders in community development projects are arrangement of funds in the form of levies, donations to finance projects (=4.35), determination of feasible projects based on available resources (=4.33) and determination of feasible projects based on community needs and priorities (=4.23). Similarly, Ipaye (1995) and Siyanbola (1996) agreed that respondents with many years of leadership experience will be more effective than those with lower years of experience.

Table 2 revealed 94.8% respondents involved in decision making regarding issues that used bring about community progress, 94.6% were found to engage in community mobilization toward extension of vital projects introduced to the community, 90.1% were those involved in project legitimization prior to execution projects usually need to be legitimized and/or approved by this group of respondents before it can be executed in the community, 83.5% were involved in raising funds for projects to be executed. Before projects can be executed, funds are indispensable, this category of respondents ensure that funds are harnessed for projects take off. 20.7% of the respondents were charged with the responsibility of providing information to farmers on latest issues in the communities. However, 11.1% were into financial contribution for projects to be carried out in the communities, 5.4% were engaged in monitoring and evaluation of projects introduced by government, and non-governmental organizations and philanthropic individuals, planning of members with 3.4%. Thus group of respondents ensure that projects meet up to the expected standards. Similarly, 3.1% were involved in harnessing organized skilled and unskilled labour towards participating in community activities.

It is clear in table 3 that democratic leadership style and transformational leadership style were positive and significant at 5% level of significance with t-value (2.126) and (533) respectively. Their coefficient (-018) and (089) revealed that majority of the community leaders adopted the two leadership styles. Democratic leadership style allows members of the community to express their views, ideas and feelings concerning issues that could bring about community development. Similarly, transformational leadership style ensures progressive transformation of the entire community through the provision of ample opportunity for both the leaders and followers to interact towards transforming their communities.

CONCLUSION

The study ascertained the roles of rural community leaders in promoting agricultural extension service delivery in Kebbi State, Nigeria. Results showed that among the prominent roles played by the rural community leaders include; making decisions on different issues affecting the community, acting as liaison between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the community for financial and technical assistance, legitimization of projects prior to implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects for proper implementation, and raising funds through levies, donations, launchings, etc to finance community development projects in the area among others. Further results showed that the main source of information on community development in the area was through the rural community leaders. It was found out that women were not actively involved in rural community leadership in the area. The respondents identified incompatibility of government policies with community programmes, insufficient sources of funds, poor implementation of programmes, and gender bias among others as the major constraints that limit rural leaders from achieving results in agricultural extension in the area. Extension policy must legitimately recognize the potentials of rural community leaders in agricultural extension programmes and partner with them in the overall efforts to provide innovative solutions to the hydra-headed nature of problems related to effective extension service delivery in the rural areas. There must be gender balance in leadership in order to give the often marginalized groups (women, youths, and children) opportunity to participate in rural community leadership and extension programmes. The identified constraints need integrated approach in providing solutions by all stakeholders in rural community programmes including extension workers, farmers, influential people in the community, government, non-governmental organizations, charity organizations, and the international donor agencies.

More females should be involved in carrying out similar leadership roles in agricultural extension activities at the local level so that women who are involved in agricultural production are better served by their peers. This will also engender the commitment of women.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Leaders should be used in the role specialty areas where they are better needed. This will help synchronize field activities.
2. Possession of high social status, length of leadership experience and age of local leaders should be used as input in planning, execution and sustainability of extension programmes and activities.
3. More females should be encouraged to perform leadership roles in agricultural extension activities. This is necessary since women are not allowed to interact freely with men in this community of the study.
4. Rural community leaders should be given enough reward in order to sustain their interest and perception of their ascribed roles in agricultural extension programmes. Such reward include free inputs from trials and demonstrations, regular training, commendations, verbal compliments and annual awards.
5. Selection of leaders for agricultural extension should cut across both local leaders and other influential farmers in the community in order for them to be effective in the performance of their expected roles.
6. Potential community leaders should be screened for the possession of good leadership characteristics like consideration, intelligence, competence, ability to share leadership roles and Surgency among others. This is necessary because it will improve their performance on the job.

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