Original Article

GROUP DYNAMICS AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

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Abstract Group dynamics is primarily concerned with group behaviour as well as ways to influence group activities towards developmental objectives. Groups are organized to provide mutual assistance and benefits to members and to foster the growth and development of their communities. Group dynamics plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria. The study examines group dynamics in sustainable community development. It focuses on how groups can work together to achieve common goals and improve the quality of life for community members. The study examined the factors that influence group dynamics, such as leadership, communication and conflict resolution, and how these factors can impact the success of community development initiatives. It also explored how group dynamics can be leveraged to promote social inclusion, gender equality and environmental sustainability in Nigeria. Some suggestions were made to buttress the study.

Keywords: Group, dynamics, Sustainable, community and development.

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Introduction

Community development is a multifaceted process that involves the collaboration of diverse groups to achieve common goals and improve the quality of life for community members. Sustainable community development is the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The role of group dynamics in promoting sustainable community development is increasingly recognized, particularly in developing countries such as Nigeria where communities face a range of social, economic and environmental challenges.

Abia State is located in the South eastern part of Nigeria and is home to a diverse array of communities with unique cultures, traditions and challenges. The State has a population of over 2.8 million people and is known for its agricultural productivity, with crops such as oil palm, cassava and yam being major contributors to the local economy. However, the state also faces a range of challenges, including poverty,

unemployment, environmental degradation and inadequate social infrastructure.

The study of group dynamics in the context of sustainable community development in Abia state is important for several reasons. First, it can provide insights into the factors that influence the effectiveness of groups in achieving common goals. Secondly, it can help identify best practices for promoting sustainable community development in the state. Thirdly, it can inform policy and practice aimed at improving the quality of life for community members in Abia State. Sustainable community development is a complex process that involves the collaboration of diverse groups to achieve common goals. According to Onuoha (2018), community development is a process of planned change that involves the active participation of community members, organizations and institutions in identifying and addressing local problems and needs. Sustainable community development, on the other hand, is the ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, Brundtland (1987).

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics is the study of how groups operate, interact and achieve common goals. According to Forbes (2020), group dynamics involves the study of group formation, communication, decision-making and conflict resolution. Group dynamics is influenced by a range of factors, including leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills, as well as the cultural and social context in which groups operate.

Group dynamics also deals with the attitude and behavioural patterns of a group. It focuses on how groups are formed, what their structure and processes are in functioning. Therefore, group dynamics is concerned with the interactions and forces operating between groups. Group dynamics is relevant to groups of all kinds – both formal and informal.

Group dynamics is defined as individuals connected with each other with social relations network, and members are in social interaction. Members work together to reach a common goal and are aware of other individuals belonging to the group. A group is coordinating its functions to reach the common goals.

➢ Group dynamics is also known as a branch of social psychology which studies problems involving the structure of a group.

➢ The interactions that influence the attitudes and behaviour of people when they are grouped with others through either choice or accidental circumstances.

Group dynamics plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable community development. Mclean and Schexnayder (2017), opined that, groups can work together to achieve common goals that benefit the community as a whole. By leveraging the unique strengths and resources of different groups, sustainable community development can be achieved through a collaborative approach that involves the active participation of community members, organizations and institutions.

Factors Affecting Group Dynamics

Effective leadership is critical factor in group dynamics. Leaders can influence the direction and goals of a group, as well as the behaviour of individual members. According to Northouse (2018), effective leaders are able to provide a clear vision for the group, establish clear goals and objectives, motivate group members and facilitate effective communication and decision-making.

Effective communication is crucial for group dynamics. It enables group members to share information, articulate their needs and concerns and work together to achieve common goals. According to DeVito (2015), effective communication involves

the ability to listen actively, express oneself clearly and provide feedback that is both constructive and supportive.

Group cohesion refers t the degree to which group members feel a sense of connectedness and belonging to the group. Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer (2002), opined that group cohesion can affect group dynamics by influencing the level of cooperation and collaboration among group members, as well as their motivation and commitment to achieving common goals.

Group diversity refers to the differences in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age and other characteristics among group members. Diversity can affect group dynamics by influencing the level of conflict and disagreement among group members, as well as the level of creativity and innovation in problem-solving. According to Cox (2014), effective management of diversity involves creating an inclusive environment that values and respects the differences among group members.

Power dynamics refer to the distribution of power and authority among group members. French, Raven and Cartwright (2008), opined that power dynamics can affect group dynamics by influencing the level of cooperation and collaboration among group members, as well as the level of conflict and completion. Effective management of power dynamics involves ensuring that power is distributed fairly and equitably among group members. These factors can have a significant impact on group dynamics and should be carefully considered when working with groups to achieve common goals.

The Role of Leadership in Group Dynamics

Leaders play a critical role in providing direction to a group. They are responsible for setting clear goals and objectives, establishing a shared vision for the group and developing a plan of action to achieve these goals. According to Northouse, (2018), effective leaders are able to provide a clear sense of direction for the group, which can help to guide the behaviour of individual members.

They motivate group members to achieve the group's goals. Bandura, (1997), opined that effective leaders are able to provide positive reinforcement and feedback to group members, which can help to increase their motivation and commitment to the group. Leaders also facilitate effective communication which is very crucial for group dynamics among group members. According to DeVito, (2015), effective leaders are able to listen actively, express themselves clearly and provide feedback that is both constructive and supportive. Leaders are responsible for making decisions on behalf of the group. Effective leaders are able to make decisions that are well-informed, timely and based on a thorough analysis of the available information.

Managing conflict: Conflict is an inevitable part of group dynamics and effective leaders are able to manage conflict in a way that promotes positive outcomes for the group. According to Johnson and Johnson (2014), effective conflict management involves identifying the sources of conflict, developing a plan of action to address these sources and facilitate communication and negotiation among group members.

These roles of leadership are critical for promoting effective group dynamics and should be carefully considered when working with groups to achieve common goals.

Communication

Communication is a critical factor in group dynamics. Effective communication enables group members to share information, articulate their needs and concerns and work together to achieve common goals. According to Tuckman and Jensen (1977), effective communication is crucial during the storming stage of group development when conflict and disagreements

are likely to arise. DeVito (2015), emphasizes the importance of effective interpersonal communication in group dynamics, which includes verbal and nonverbal communication, listening skills and feedback.

- Bales (1950), identified two types of communication behaviours in small groups: task-oriented behaviours and socio-emotional behaviours, Task-oriented behaviours focus on achieving the group's objectives, while socio-emotional behaviours focus on maintaining social relationships within the group. Effective communication in group dynamics involves being aware of these different types of communication behaviours and working to promote understanding and collaboration among group members.

- Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson (2011), emphasize the importance of context and underlying assumptions in communication. Effective communication in group dynamics involves being aware of these underlying assumption and beliefs and working to promote understanding and collaboration among group members. Effective leaders are able to facilitate effective communication by listening actively, expressing themselves clearly and providing feedback that is both constructive and supportive DeVito (2015).

Conflict Resolution

Conflict resolution is an important aspect of group dynamics, as it helps to promote effective communication, build trust and foster cooperation among group members. Conflict can arise in any group setting, and effective conflict resolution strategies are essential for maintaining positive relationships and achieving group goals.

- According to Robbins and Judge (2021), effective conflict resolution strategies involves identifying the source of the conflict, understanding the perspectives of all parties involved and developing solutions that meet the needs of all parties. Effective communication is also critical for resolving conflicts in group settings, as it helps to ensure that all parties are heard and that misunderstandings are minimized.

- Other scholars have emphasized the importance of trust and cooperation in conflict resolution. To De Deu and Gelfand (2008), trust is a key component of effective conflict resolution, as it helps to build positive relationships among group members and promote cooperation. Similarly, Tjosvold (2012), emphasizes the importance of cooperation in conflict resolution, as it helps to create win-win solutions that meet the needs of all parties.

Conflict resolution is essential aspect of group dynamics and effective conflict resolution strategies are critical for maintaining positive relationships and achieving group goals. Effective conflict resolution involves identifying the source of the conflict, understanding the perspective of all parties and develop solutions that meet the needs of all parties. Trust and cooperation are also critical components of effective conflict resolution.

Conclusion

Group dynamics plays a crucial role in promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria. By leveraging the unique strengths and resources of different groups, sustainable community development can be achieved through a collaborative approach that involves the active participation of community members, organizations and institutions. Effective group leadership, communication and conflict resolution skills are crucial for promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria. The study of group dynamics in the context of sustainable community development can provide insights into the

factors that influence the effectiveness of groups in achieving common goals, identify best practice for promoting sustainable community development and inform policy and practice aimed at improving the quality of life for community members in Nigeria.

Suggestions

Promoting sustainable community development in Nigeria requires addressing multiple challenges, including fostering collaboration among stakeholders, empowering community members through education, promoting conflict resolution and effective communication, and addressing gender inequality and promoting women's participation. The following suggestions can were made;

- Foster collaboration and partnership among stakeholders: Community development requires the participation and collaboration of multiple stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations and community members themselves. Therefore, it is essential to foster collaboration, partnership and coordination among stakeholders to promote sustainable community development.

- Empower community members through education: Empowering community members through education is critical for sustainable community development. Education can help community members acquire the skills, knowledge and resources they need to participate in community development initiatives and improve their quality of life.
- Promote conflict resolution and effective communication: Conflict can arise in any group setting and can hinder community development initiatives. It is essential to promote conflict resolution and effective communication among stakeholders to promote sustainable community development.

- Address gender inequality and promote women's participation: Gender inequality is a significant challenge to sustainable community development in Nigeria. Community education is critical for promoting women's participation in community development initiatives in Nigeria.

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