

**COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGISTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
PRACTICES IN IFEDORE LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF
ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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Abstract

This study was designed to examine the role of Community psychologists in Community Development practices in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria. Five (5) research questions were raised to guide the study. The descriptive survey research design was employed for the study and a total of two hundred and ten (210) respondents constituted the sample size for the study. The sample was selected through purposive sampling techniques. The questionnaire and a checklist designed by the researcher was the major instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire and checklist were validated by the experts from the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperative Services, Akure Ondo State, Nigeria, and Department of Adult and Non-formal Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. The reliability index was determined through the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient which produced a reliability index of 0.75. Data collected were analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages for all the research questions examined. The study found out that those community psychologists were available in the Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. It was also revealed that community psychologists work hand-in-hand with the community, give adequate information on the roles of the people in the community development activities, are involved in conflict resolution, and help ensure that community development programmes are carried out in accordance with the psychological needs of the community members. In view of the findings and conclusions from the study, it was recommended that more awareness needs to be created to inform people about the activities of community psychologists in community development practices, the communities should also create the enabling environment needed for community psychologists to strive and perform their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

Keywords: Community Psychologist, Psychologists, Conflict Resolution, Community Development

Introduction

Development is a multi-dimensional process involving changes in structure, attitudes, and institutions, as well as the acceleration of economic growth, the reduction of inequality, and the eradication of absolute poverty. In essence, the development represents the entire gamut of changes by which the entire social system, turned to the diverse basic needs and desires of individuals and social groups

within the system. It involves the reorganization and reorientation of the entire economic and social system of the people. According to Mabogunje cited in Ojogwu and Diwe (2016) rural development is concerned with the self-sustaining improvement of rural areas and implies a broad-based re-organization and mobilization of the rural masses to enhance their capacity to cope effectively with the daily task of their lives and with the changes consequent upon this.

In community development practice, it is rudimentary that the solution to community problems is sought first within the community relying on its resources and capabilities. Thus, when people are adequately informed about opportunities that abound within and outside their locality, they will be further persuaded to take practical steps towards harnessing such opportunities to better their lot. The notion of grassroots mobilization, therefore, operates on the premise that those living at the periphery where poverty, hunger, disease, and other socio-economic vices are more pronounced need to be sensitized, energized, and motivated to participate in development programmes and projects intending to improve the quality of their lives (Nwodu, 2005).

In a bid to actualize the developmental programme for its people, the Ondo state government over the years has continued to embark on transformative community development activities. One way by which the government has done this is to enter into different communities in the State to ask the people what they would want Government to do for them and how they want the planned development process in their communities to be carried out beginning with the need assessment process. This has been the predominant rural transformation strategy of the Government towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially to address poverty and drive sustainable development within the communities.

In the recent drive by the Ondo State Government to put in place quick-win projects in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State, the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperative Services experimented with the use of community psychologists who were regarded as change agents in various communities in seeking to actualize the planned process of development in communities such as Olorunda, Ikota, Ibule, and Aaye all in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. These change agents/community psychologists who were trained to perform in various communities mentioned above have functions of creating and evaluating programmes and policies which help people control the stressful aspects of the community and organizational environment, development of the competence to assess the needs of a community and teach its members how to

recognize an incipient problem and deal with it before it becomes intractable (Levin, Perkins & Perkins, 2005).

The attributes of a community psychologist include the following: pro-activeness, high integrity, being industrious. One other attribute is empathy, i.e. putting oneself in the shoes of other persons. A community psychologist must be disciplined and as a counsellor, he must be punctual and must dress corporately as well as have an interest in community affairs.

As part of the process of community development, community psychologists counsel and sensitize people whenever the need arises especially in the instance of the outbreak of epidemic e.g. ebola, lassa fever, Coronavirus among others. It is to be noted that the psychologists are pre-medical personnel whose duties go beyond that of traditional medicine. Community psychologists do not assume that somebody who has challenges cannot overcome them, but rather ensures that such person is not alienated or stigmatized, and caters for such person.

In Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria, community psychologists have tried in various ways to reduce the problems affecting the rapid developments of the various communities where they are engaged. Some of the teething problems include conflicts, deviance, lack of government access, lack of sensitization on health issues and political matters. A cursory examination of the situation revealed that some of the problems persist. One, therefore, begins to wonder what the engagement of community psychologists has been able to achieve in terms of actually promoting development in the area. Hence, this study, therefore, seeks to appraise the roles of community psychologists in community development practice in the Ifedore Local Government.

The people of Ifedore local government area have, for some time, witnessed certain antisocial behaviors among community members. These behaviours range from lack of participation in community programmes, unwillingness to acquire education, drug use and abuse, teenage pregnancy, robbery, and other social vices. These antisocial behaviours have prevented the community to achieve its developmental potentials in terms of upholding community programmes and projects, security of lives and property and interpersonal development among youths.

A recent outcry by community members made government to mobilise community psychologists to various communities in the area in order to help proffer lasting solution to the problems. Although, these community psychologists claim to be very active in carrying out their assignment, there appears to be doubt about their true involvement in these community's affairs especially since the situation in the communities are not abating.

There is therefore need to provide empirical evidence as to the true situation of things in terms of the role and activity of community psychologists in the development of their host communities. The problem of this study therefore is to ascertain the role of community psychologists in the Ifedore local government area of Ondo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the study.

1. How available are community psychologists in Ifedore Local Government?
2. What are the duties/roles of community psychologist in community development practice?
3. How effective are community psychologist in carrying out their roles?
4. Has the performance of community psychologists affected the level of development in your community?
5. What are the challenges faced by community psychologists in the performance of their duties?

Methodology

The research design used for this study is a descriptive survey. The population of the study consists of the members or inhabitants of four named communities in Ifedore Local Government of Ondo State, namely Olorunda, Ikota, Ibule, and Aaye where community development activities are taking place and very prominence. The sample for the study consisted of a total of two hundred and ten (210) respondents made of ten (10) community psychologists and two hundred community members, fifty (50) respondents were selected from each Community. Simple random technique was used to select the respondents for study. It is most appropriate because it is best fit to get samples for the study. Data for the study was collected through the use of the questionnaire which was designed based on the research questions raised. The questionnaire is divided into two sections, A and B. Section A focused on the demographic or personal data of the respondents such as age, sex and marital status, etc. while section B contained information that borders on the issue under study. The face and construct validity of the instrument was ascertained by two experts in the Ministry of Community Development and Cooperative Services, Akure Ondo State, Nigeria, as well as experts in the Department of Adult and Non-formal Education, Faculty of Education, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria. The test-retest technique was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The two sets of scores obtained were correlated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation

Coefficient (PPMCC) and it yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.75 which means the instrument was reliable. The researcher administers the instrument personally together with four other research assistants. This helped to ensure easy and accurate distribution and collection of the instrument from the respondents. In analyzing the data, frequency count and simple percentages were adopted.

Results

Results of data analyses are presented below:

Research Question One: *How Available are community psychologist in Ifedore Local Government*

Table 1: Distribution of responses on the availability of community psychologists in Ifedore Local Government.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Agree	180	90
Disagree	20	10
Total	200	100

The data in Table 1 above shows that 180 respondents, representing 90% of the respondents agreed that community psychologists are available in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. Whereas, 20 of the respondents, representing 10% disagreed on this issue under consideration. Based on the above results, it can be concluded that community psychologists are available in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State.

Research Question Two: *What are the duties/roles of Community Psychologist in Community Development practice?*

Table 2: Distribution of responses on the duties/roles of community psychologists in community development practices.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
The community psychologists work hand-in-hand with the community.	150 (75)	50 (25)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
The community psychologist gives adequate information on the roles of the people in community development activities.	60 (30)	120 (60)	20 (16)	Nil (0)
Community psychologists are involved in conflict resolution to ensure effective community development or advancement.	80 (40)	120 (60)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
Community psychologist helps ensure that community development programmes are carried out in accordance with psychological needs of the members.	90 (45)	110 (55)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)

Footnote: SA- Strongly Agreed, A- Agreed, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

Data in Table 2 above reveals that 150 (75%) and 50(25%) of the respondents agreed respectively that, community psychologists work hand-in-hand with the community. None of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed on this issue.

Again, on research question two, the researcher probed further to know if community psychologist gives adequate information on the roles of the people in community development activities and it was found that 60(30%) and 120(60%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed on this issue respectively. While 20(10%) of the respondents disagreed on this issue. However, no respondent strongly disagreed on the variable under consideration. Similarly, it was revealed that 80(40%) and 120(60%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that community psychologists are involved in conflict resolution to ensure effective community development or advancement. However, none of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed on this issue under consideration.

The last issue on research question two was meant to find out whether community psychologists help ensure that community development programmes are carried out in accordance with the psychological needs of the community members. The results from the analysis revealed that

90(45%) and 110(55%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed on this issue. However, none of the respondents responded otherwise on this issue under consideration.

Research Question Three: *Are the available community psychologists adequately trained to carry out their duties?*

Table 3: Distribution of responses on whether the available community psychologists are adequately trained to carry out their duties.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Agree	170	85
Disagree	30	15
Total	200	100

Data in table 3 above shows that 170 respondents, representing 85% of the respondents agreed that the available community psychologists are adequately trained to carry out their duties. Whereas, 30 of the respondents, representing 15% disagreed on this issue under consideration. Based on the above results, it can be concluded that the available community psychologists in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State, Nigeria are adequately trained to carry out their duties.

Research Question Four: *Has the performance of Community Psychologists affects the level of development in your area?*

Table 4: Distribution of responses on whether the performance of Community Psychologist affects the level of development in your area.

Variables	Frequencies	Percentages (%)
Agree	160	80
Disagree	40	20
Total	200	100

Data in table 4 above shows that 160 respondents, representing 80% of the respondents agreed that the performance of community psychologists has affected the level of development in the area. Whereas, 40 of the respondents, representing 20% disagreed on this issue under

consideration. Based on the above results, it can be concluded that the performance of community psychologists affects the level of development in the area.

Research Question five: What are the challenges faced by community psychologists in the performance of their duties?

Table 5: Distribution of responses on the challenges faced by community psychologists in the performance of their duties.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Community psychologists have not been positively supported by the community they are working in.	20 (10)	Nil (0)	80 (40)	100 (50)
The community psychologists have been duly supported by the local government authority in the performance of their duties.	80 (40)	120 (60)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
Community psychologists receive financial support from the government and its agencies.	50 (25)	150 (75)	Nil (0)	Nil (0)
Community psychologists are adequately equipped with the materials they need for the effective performance of their duties.	Nil (0)	Nil (0)	160 (80)	40 (20)

Footnote: SA- Strongly Agreed, A - Agree, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree

A cursory look at the data in Table 5 revealed that 80(40%) and 100(50%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed that community psychologists have not been positively supported by the community they are working while 20(10%) of the respondents strongly agreed on the issue, none of the respondents agreed on this variable under consideration. Similarly, it was also revealed that 80(40%) and 120(60%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that community psychologists have been duly supported by the local government authority in the performance of their duties. However, there were no respondents that disagreed and strongly disagreed on this issue.

Again, the researcher was also interested in finding out if the community psychologists receive financial support from the government and its agencies. And from the response gathered, it

was revealed that 50(5%) and 150(75%) of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed on this issue under consideration; while there were no respondents who responded otherwise.

The last issue on research question five was meant to find out whether Community Psychologists are adequately equipped with the materials they need for the effective performance of their duties. The results from the analysis revealed that 160(80%) and 40(20%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed on this issue. However, none of the respondents responded otherwise on this issue under consideration.

Based on the analysis, it can therefore be concluded that one of the major challenges facing community psychologists in the area is that, they are not adequately equipped with the materials they need for the effective performance of their duties.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from the study have been quite revealing. In the study, five (5) research questions were raised and examined. The first research question revealed that Community Psychologists are available in the Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State. This was made known because 180 of the respondents, representing 90% of the total respondents sampled agreed to this issue under consideration.

The second research question revealed that community psychologists were working hand-in-hand with the community to give adequate information on the roles of the people in the community development activities, are involved in conflict resolution, and help ensure that community development programmes are carried out in accordance with the psychological needs of the community members. This result is supported by another study conducted by Charity and Kofi (2001) on the history of community psychology in Ghana. Findings of the study revealed that community psychologists are shaped by the communal living practices of the Ghanaian people. And that, the extended training system and social networks serve as a cushion for individuals within the communities. This helps them to resolve conflict in the community. Generally, community-wide approaches to solving problems espoused by community psychologists had been of many benefits towards meeting development programmes enshrined by community psychologists.

The third research question revealed that the available community psychologists in Ifedore Local Government Area are adequately trained to carry out their duties. This agreed with the findings from the study of Bame, Francis and Melissa (2001) on the root of community psychology

in Cameroon. The findings of the study revealed that community psychologists in the country were a product of the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), in the Department of Services Psychology (HSP). The HPS produces academic and professional persons in community Psychology with a constructive critical but creative spirit who can guide the healthy development of individuals in their communities and offer solutions to problems in context. Also, the Ministry of community development and cooperative services trained the selected agents/Community psychologists by an expert (Pro Natural International (PNI) and they were adequately imparted with the wherewithal to access necessary information from various segments of Communities.

Research question four revealed that activities of community psychologists in the area have been able to positively enhance the development of the community. These findings corroborate the expected duties of community psychologist in empowering the people of Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State especially the leaders in the community by assisting them to create and evaluate an array of programmes and policies which help them control the stressful aspects of community and organizational environment.

Research question five of this study showed that the major challenge facing community psychologists in the area, is that, they are not adequately equipped with the materials they need for the effective performance of their duties. This finding is in agreement with the study carried out by Arvin, Inge and Tamsen (2001) on community psychology in South Africa. Findings of the study revealed that teething problems associated with or facing community psychologists in the country ranges from lack of equipment, language barrier, and absence of supervisory structures to inability to support trainees in the community service year.

Conclusion

Following the analysis of data collected and findings made, it was concluded that community psychologists are available in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State and that the community psychologists also work hand-in-hand with the community, gives adequate information on the roles of the people in the community development activities, are involved in conflict resolution, and help ensure that community development programmes are carried out in accordance with the psychological needs of the community members. The available community psychologists in Ifedore Local Government Area of Ondo State Nigeria are adequately trained to carry out their duties which have

positively enhance the development of the community. However, one of the major challenges facing community psychologists in the area is that they are not adequately equipped with the materials they need for the effective performance of their duties.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are hereby proffered:

- More awareness needs to be created on the people about the activities of community psychologists in community development practices.
- The government also needs to allocate resources and equipment/needed for the effective performance of their duties in the Community.
- The government should as a matter of urgency, make a policy that will make sure all tertiary institutions have a department of Community Psychologists where Students will be trained on the principles and practices of Community Psychology and study it as a profession.
- The Communities should also create the enabling environment needed for Community Psychologists to strive and perform their responsibilities effectively and efficiently.

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