



Involvement of corps members in community development programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study investigated the extent of involvement of corps members in community development programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria. Four research questions guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised all the Corps members for the 2023 Batch A service year within the 21 Local Government Area in Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised of 550 corps members selected through proportionate random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled "Involvement of Corps Members in Community Development Questionnaire (ICMCDQ)" which was subjected to face and content validity by two experts, one from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation option), all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria. The reliability of the instrument was computed using cronbach alpha and 0.81, 0.78, 0.76, and 0.75 were obtained from the four clusters of the instrument and considered adequate for the study. Mean was used to analyze the data collected. The findings of the study revealed that corps members involved in health service to their host communities to a low extent. Corps members involved to a high extent in provision of infrastructural facilities to their host communities through their community development services, among others. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: Government should increase the allowance of corps members as a way of motivating them to be committed in rendering services to people at the grass-root. The government through her agencies should monitor and supervise the way and manner corps members render educational services to their host communities. This will make them more effective in their work, among others.

Keywords: Involvement, corps members, community, community development, development programmes

Introduction

A key component of Nigeria's national service program has been the participation of corps members in community development initiatives. The involvement of corps members in community development has become crucial in Anambra State, a lively and populous State in Southeast, Nigeria. In order to shed light on their influence and the difficulties they encounter, this article examines the roles and contributions made by corps members to community development initiatives in the state of Anambra.

Community development is therefore a grassroots process by which communities become more responsible, organize and plan together, develop healthy lifestyle options, empower themselves, reduce poverty and suffering, create employment and economic opportunities, achieve social economic, cultural and environmental goals. However, Nwobodo (2015) [12] affirmed that community wellbeing (economic, social, environmental, and cultural) often evolves from this type of collective action being taken at grassroots level of any given country which implies that community development programme is relevant in Nigeria. Community development programme (CDP) can be defined as process of establishing an effective and sustainable instrument to improve the living conditions and the economic status of disadvantaged communities (Nzeri, 2016) [13]. Akachukwu (2015) [4] stated that Corp members in different communities in Nigeria are effectively involved in community development programmes by ensuring that most of the developmental needs of the community are met which ordinarily may be delayed or abandoned if left only in the hands of the government.

The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was established in 1973 by the government of General Yakubu Gowon with the aim of encouraging and fostering national development, unity, and the development of common ties (Abhuere, 2014) [1]. This initiative was formalized through decree No. 24 of 22nd May 1973. Following the Nigerian Civil War, the NYSC was created as a means to reconstruct, reconcile, and rebuild the country (Margaret, 2016) [9].

The primary objective of the NYSC scheme is to instill in Nigerian youths the values of unity and brotherhood, regardless of their cultural or social backgrounds (NYSC, 2015). The history of Nigeria since its independence underscores the importance of unity among its people, particularly among the future professionals who play a pivotal role in this initiative. These young professionals, hailing from various fields, are known as Corps members and are called upon to serve the nation upon graduating from higher institutions of learning (Agumagu, Adesope, & Njoku, cited in Okonkwo, 2015) [3, 18].

The contributions of the young men and women who serve their country through the NYSC scheme can be quantified specifically in the areas of health, education, agriculture, and infrastructure. They also play a vital role in bridging the disconnection in the accessibility of basic needs within their immediate host communities through their developmental projects, which have a lasting impact across the country. During their one-year service period, Corp members are expected to make significant contributions to their host communities through their community development services. These services encompass enduring legacies in the fields of health, education, and agriculture.

In the area of health services, Corp members engage in providing free healthcare to their host communities. They work in clinics located within their service communities. According to Lyamah in Okon (2014) ^[17], Corp members have brought hope to communities that previously lacked access to healthcare facilities. These communities now benefit from functional clinics and a range of health services, thanks to the presence of Corp medical doctors and other healthcare professionals. The NYSC scheme has empowered young individuals to make a positive impact in their communities, promoting the welfare of the people through the provision of healthcare, education, and agricultural services. Their contributions have left a lasting imprint, transforming communities across the country.

Corps members are actively involved in providing educational services. It is undeniable that a large percentage of corps members are assigned to primary, secondary, and other educational institutions as part of their primary assignment. Odotowokan (2016) ^[15] emphasized the commendable impact of corps members on students' academic performance. They engage in tutorial classes, particularly for exam classes such as J.S.S 3 and S.S 3. Additionally, according to NYSC (2015), corps members participate in adult literacy campaigns, conduct extramural classes for students, and contribute to the construction of classroom blocks.

Corps members also contribute to agricultural services. Each year, around 120,000 prospective corps members are mobilized and deployed to states based on their specific needs and absorptive capacity. In numerous rural communities, there is evidence of corps members bringing development to the agricultural sector through their community development services. They impart knowledge on new farming techniques to farmers, thereby enhancing agricultural production (Adeb, 2016) ^[2].

The contributions of these young men and women, who serve their fatherland through the NYSC scheme, in the provision of infrastructure are invaluable. The extent of their involvement in infrastructure provision is multifaceted and immeasurable. They contribute through financing necessary infrastructure, participating in decision-making processes regarding the type of infrastructure required, planning for the provision of needed facilities, ensuring the effective implementation of infrastructure projects, monitoring or supervising infrastructural facilities, and evaluating the impact of the infrastructure."

Corps members play an active role in providing educational services, with a significant percentage of them being assigned to primary, secondary, and other educational institutions as part of their primary assignment. Odotowokan (2016) ^[15] highlighted the commendable impact of corps members on students' academic performance, as they engage in tutorial classes, particularly for exam classes such as J.S.S 3 and S.S 3. Furthermore, according to NYSC (2015), corps members actively participate in adult literacy campaigns, conduct extradural classes for students, and contribute to the construction of classroom blocks.

In addition to their educational contributions, corps members also make valuable contributions to the agricultural sector. Each year, approximately 120,000 prospective corps members are mobilized and deployed to states based on their specific needs and absorptive capacity. In many rural communities, there is evidence of corps

members bringing development to the agricultural sector through their community development services. They share their knowledge of new farming techniques with farmers, thereby enhancing agricultural production (Adeb, 2016) ^[2].

The involvement of these dedicated young men and women, who serve their country through the NYSC scheme, in the provision of infrastructure is immeasurable and multifaceted. Their contributions extend to various aspects of infrastructure provision, including financing necessary infrastructure, participating in decision-making processes regarding the type of infrastructure required, planning for the provision of needed facilities, ensuring the effective implementation of infrastructure projects, monitoring or supervising infrastructural facilities, and evaluating the impact of the infrastructure. Their efforts in this regard are invaluable.

The host communities, which are supposed to be the primary beneficiaries of community development projects, have not been supporting Corps members. Many of these communities fail to provide the necessary logistics and financial support for Corps members to effectively execute their projects. Given this issue, one might question whether Corps members should continue to engage in community development projects in such areas. It is against this backdrop that the researchers embarked on a study to investigate the level of Corps members' involvement in community development programs in Anambra State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The study focused mainly on the extent of involvement of corps members in community development programmes in Anambra State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study determined the extent of involvement of corps members in:

1. Health service to their host communities through their community development service
2. Education services to their host communities through their community development service.
3. Agricultural services to their host communities through their community development services.
4. Provision of infrastructural facilities to their host communities through their community development services.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent do corps members engage in providing health services to their host communities through their community development service?
2. To what extent do corps members participate in delivering education services to their host communities through their community development service?
3. To what extent do corps members involve themselves in providing agricultural services to their host communities through their community development service?
4. To what extent do corps members contribute to the provision of infrastructural facilities in their host communities through their community development service?

Materials and Methods

The design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey design. The population of the study comprised all the Corps members for the 2023 Batch 'A' service year within the 21

Local Government Area in Anambra State. The sample of the study comprised of 550 corps members selected through proportionate random sampling technique. The instrument used for data collection was questionnaire titled “Involvement of Corps Members in Community Development Questionnaire (ICMCDQ)” which was subjected to face and content validity by two experts, one from the Department of Adult and Continuing Education and the other from the Department of Educational Foundations (Measurement and Evaluation option), all from Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria, Comments and recommendations of the experts were effected in the final construction of the instrument by the researchers. The reliability of the instrument was computed using cronbach alpha and 0.81, 0.78, 0.76, and 0.75 were obtained from the four clusters of

the instrument and considered adequate for the study. Mean was used to analyze the data collected. Decision rule was based on 4-point numerical values on the response modes assigned: Very High Extent (VHE)-4 points, High Extent (HE)-3 points, Low Extent (LE)-2 points, and Very Low Extent (VLE)-1 point. A criterion mean of 2.5 was adopted. This means that any mean score that was up to 2.5 and above was regarded as high extent while mean scores below 2.5 were regarded as low extent.

Results

Research Question 1

To what extent do corps members involve in health service to their host communities through their community development services?

Table 1: Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent of their involvement in health service to their host communities through their community development services

S/N	Questionnaire Items	Mean	Remark
1.	Conducting seminars for the community on drug abuse	2.54	High Extent
2.	Free medical check-ups for patients	2.23	Low Extent
3.	Organizing the community for waste disposal	2.31	Low Extent
4.	Giving orientation to the community on Covid-19 protocols	3.01	High Extent
5.	Organizing orientation on transmitted diseases	2.71	High Extent
6.	Distribution of free drugs	2.01	Low Extent
7.	Distribution of free mosquito nets	2.06	Low Extent
	Grand Mean	2.41	Low Extent

The data in table 1 shows that three items, 2, 3, 6, and 7) had mean scores below the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating low extent while three items, 1, 4, and 5 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating high extent. Generally, the grand mean of 2.41 showed that

corps members involved in health service to their host communities to a low extent.

Research Question 2

To what extent do corps member involve in education service to their host communities through their community development service?

Table 2: Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent of their involvement in educational service to their host communities through their community development services

S/N	Items	Mean	Remark
1.	Provision of free books to students.	2.20	Low Extent
2.	Buying of library resources in schools	2.26	Low Extent
3.	Organizing inter-class debates	2.64	High Extent
4.	Organizing inter-house sports	2.32	Low Extent
5.	Rehabilitation of dilapidated classrooms	1.12	Low Extent
6.	Provision of free instructional materials	2.67	High Extent
7.	Participating in teaching and learning	3.74	High Extent
8.	Grand Mean	2.42	Low Extent

Table 2 shows that three items, 10, 13, and 14 had mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating high extent while four items, 8,9,11, and 12 had mean scores below the criterion mean, indicating low extent. The grand mean was 2.42 which means that corps members involved

Them-selves in educational service in their host communities to a low extent.

Research Question 3

To what extent do corps members involve in Agricultural service to their host communities through their community development services?

Table 3: Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent of their involvement in Agricultural services to their host communities through their community development services.

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Organizing seminar on how to access agricultural loans.	2.73	High Extent
2.	Having seminar on storage of farm produce.	2.60	High Extent
3.	Establishment of agricultural club.	2.51	High Extent
4.	Educating farmers on current farming techniques/ mechanize farming.	3.10	High Extent
5.	Educating the community on fish farming.	3.18	High Extent
6.	Educating the people how to start poultry farming.	2.80	High Extent
7.	Giving the farmers training on methods of fertilizer production and application	2.52	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.78	High Extent

Table 3 shows that all the items' mean scores, including the grand mean were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating high extent. This shows that corps members involved in Agricultural services to their host communities to a high extent.

Research Question 4

To what extent do corps members involve in provision of infrastructure projects for their host communities through their community development services?

Table 4: Mean ratings of the respondents on the extent of their involvement in the provision of infrastructural facilities to their host communities through their community development services

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1.	Organizing people that will be assigned responsibilities for the provision of infrastructure.	2.50	High Extent
2.	Providing community members with reliable information regarding the state and the need for development projects.	2.56	High Extent
3.	Organizing people that will keep records regarding the state of infrastructural facilities in the community	2.53	High Extent
4.	Making suggestions on how to get the needed materials for the execution of infrastructural projects	2.51	High Extent
5.	Providing ideas on how abandoned infrastructural projects can be completed.	2.57	High Extent
6.	Advising the community on the maintenance culture of the infrastructural projects.	2.64	High Extent
7.	Advising the community members to participate in community development infrastructural projects.	2.53	High Extent
	Grand Mean	2.55	High Extent

In table 4, all the items' mean scores, including the grand mean were above the criterion mean of 2.50 indicating high extent. This means that corps members involved to a high extent in provision of infrastructural facilities to their host communities through their community development services.

Discussion

The findings of this study were discussed based on the following sub-themes:

The findings on research question one revealed that corps members in Anambra State were involved in health services to their host communities to a low extent. They conducted activities such as free medical check-ups for patients, organizing community waste disposal, distributing free mosquito nets, and providing orientation on Covid-19 protocols, among others, but these efforts were not extensive. This aligns with the observations made by Lyamah in Onunkwo (2013)^[20], who emphasized that corps members, through their service, have brought hope to communities that previously lacked access to health facilities. As a result, these communities now have functional clinics and health services due to the presence of corps medical doctors and other healthcare professionals. Furthermore, corps members actively participate in the campaign against HIV/AIDS. In the same vein, Arigho, Onvakwusi, Ikoro, and Adeogun (2019) noted that in 2018, corps members accounted for 69.4% of the campaign against HIV/AIDS in rural communities. They attributed this success to the peer Education Training programs sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which train corps members posted to secondary schools to serve as anti-HIV/AIDS advocates. The findings also support the assertions made by Anumudu, Umar, and Madu (2014)^[5] regarding the healthcare services provided by corps members. These services include the provision of mobile health clinics, construction of maternity centers, free medical counseling, and other feats. Additionally, Godpower, Grema, Ibrahim, and Salihu (2014)^[7] emphasized that corps members have been offering first-aid services through NYSC Doctors to their fellow corps members in the NYSC camp clinic. The camp clinic is by corps members who are medical doctors and other

healthcare professionals. The study's findings highlight the modest extent of corps members' involvement in health services within their host communities. However, they also demonstrate the positive impact these efforts have had, such as increased access to healthcare facilities and the successful campaign against HIV/AIDS.

The findings on research question two revealed that corps members are highly involved in providing educational services to their host communities. They contribute to community development by offering free infrastructural materials, organizing inter-house sports, and facilitating inter-class debates, among other activities. These findings support the work of Arigbo, Onvekwusi, Ikoro, and Adeogun (2019)^[6], who said the effective role of corps members in rendering educational services before the Covid-19 pandemic.

Similarly, Wilson (2017)^[22] highlighted that many corps members, while assigned to classrooms, provide free instructional materials to enhance the teaching-learning process for students or pupils. The findings also align with Nwankwo's (2014)^[11] assertion that a significant percentage of corps members are posted to primary, secondary, and other educational institutions for their primary assignments. In agreement, Agbo in Ojo (2015) acknowledged that corps members posted to schools display selflessness and resourcefulness in their duties. The Corps members' community development programme aims to utilize their skills effectively for national development. As a result, in some secondary schools, where extra-curricular activities such as inter-house sports competitions, school debates, and drama clubs had diminished, corps members played a vital role in reviving them (Odotowokan (2011). Moreover, the study found that corps members engage in tutorial classes, especially for exam classes like J.S.S 3 and S.S, contributing significantly to the academic performance of students. Their contributions to educational services in their host communities are highly commendable."

Additionally, the findings on research question three highlight the active involvement of corps members in providing agricultural services to their host communities. The analysis of the data revealed a significant level of involvement by corps members in various agricultural activities. Specifically, they were observed to actively

conduct seminars on diverse topics such as accessing farm loans, enhancing farm produce, adopting modern farming techniques, promoting fish farming, and facilitating poultry farming, among other relevant areas. This high level of participation by corps members underscores their commitment to agricultural development within their host communities. This is in consonance with Kumar (2017) ^[8] who reported that some farmers have improved and increased their scale of production sequel to the influence of the teachings of corps members regarding agricultural services.

The findings also concur with the assertion of Mba (2012) ^[10] that every year, an average of 120, 000 prospective corps members are mobilized and deployed to states on the basis of need and absorptive capacity. In most rural communities, evidence abounds where corps members through the community development services brought development in the agricultural sector. Corps members teach farmers on new farming techniques for improved production. Equally, Wilson (2017) ^[22] notes that in most communities, corps members through their agricultural awareness campaigns have been: organizing a free workshop for rural farmers on current farming techniques, free workshop on the application of insecticides and pesticides, orientation on how to access farming loans, education on storage of farm produce, education on fish farming and poultry, and establishment of the agricultural club.

Finally, the findings on research question four also revealed that the involvement of corps members in providing infrastructure for their host communities through their community development services is to a high extent. This is attributed to their assistance in organizing individuals who are assigned responsibilities, providing reliable information to community members, and maintaining day-to-day records related to the utilization of infrastructure, among other activities. These findings are consistent with Ola's (2013) ^[19] report, which highlights the extensive role of corps members in supporting the government and community members in various community development tasks. Some examples of their contributions include offering ideas on the completion of abandoned projects and maintaining records of infrastructural development.

In addition, Ojoh (2015) ^[16] noted that ideas provided by corps members in enhancing infrastructural development go a long way in assisting the government to complete abandoned projects. The findings are in agreement with Uchendu (2015) ^[21] that the decentralization of planning among Corps members in the provision of infrastructure has opened the path to democracy. Interestingly, Corps members in local communities are actively involved in decision-making in the provision of infrastructure and therefore, facilitate the achievement of target objectives of accomplishment of educational development in any given community, particularly in Africa (Obiora, 2013) ^[14]. The involvement of Corps members in assisting the community monitor infrastructure has become very central to attaining sustainable educational development.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it was concluded that corps members are involved in educational services, agricultural services, and provision of infrastructure to a high extent while their involvement in health services is to a low extent. The involvement of Corps Members in

community development programs in Anambra State, Nigeria, has proven to be a valuable and impactful initiative, leading to tangible improvements in various sectors. By actively participating in projects and collaborating with local stakeholders, Corps Members have contributed to sustainable development, cultural integration, and national unity. To further enhance the effectiveness of these programs, it is crucial to provide adequate support and resources while fostering continued collaboration between the NYSC scheme, local communities, and relevant institutions.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made;

1. Government should increase the salaries of corps members as a way of motivating them to be committed in rendering different health services to people at the grass-root.
2. The government through her agencies should monitor and supervise the way and manner corps members render educational services to their host communities. This makes them more effective in providing instructional materials, organizing inter-house sports, class debates, among others.
3. Community leaders should pay some incentives to corps members to encourage them to render more educational, health, and agricultural services to people at the grassroots level.
4. Community leaders should give corps members opportunities to assign responsibilities in the provision of infrastructures. These will also create room for them to bring up ideas that could be useful in completing abandoned projects.

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