Community Engagements and Public Projects Success and Effectiveness in Benin City, Nigeria

Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI
PG/SPE1104590

DEPARTMENT OF PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT,
FACULTY OF SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL STANDARDS ENHANCEMENT (SPESSE),
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN,
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BEING A RESEARCH THESIS WRITTEN IN THE DEPARTMENT OF PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT, FACULTY OF SUSTAINABLE PROCUREMENT, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND SOCIAL STANDARDS ENHANCEMENT (SPESSE), AND SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF MASTERS OF SCIENCE (M.Sc.) DEGREE IN PROCUREMENT MANAGEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY,

AUGUST, 2025

DECLARATION

I, **Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI,** a Master of Science (M.Sc.) candidate of the Department of Procurement Management, Faculty of Sustainable Procurement, Environmental, and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE), University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria, hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is a genuine work done originally by me and has not been submitted elsewhere for the award of any degree. All sources of information referred to in this work are acknowledged with reference to the respective authors.

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Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI **Date**

(M.Sc. Student/Researcher)

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this thesis titled **"Community Engagements and Public Projects Success and Effectiveness in Benin City, Nigeria"** was carried out by **Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI** in the Department of Procurement Management, Faculty of Sustainable Procurement, Environmental, and Social Standards Enhancement (SPESSE), University of Benin, Benin City.

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Prof. A. O. Oladipupo **Date**

(Supervisor)

_____ _____

Prof. Dickson Oriakhi **Date**

(Ag. Head of Department/Deputy Centre Leader)

_____ _____

Prof Sylvester Osuji **Date**

(Centre Leader)

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, who in His infinite mercy and love have seen me through the course of this study, his grace and favour has brought me this far.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of community engagement on public project effectiveness in three selected Local Government Areas in Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, it examined the direct effects of three core dimensions of community engagement: information transparency, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment/monitoring, on public project effectiveness. The study further tested the mediating role of perceived government accountability in the engagement-effectiveness relationship, the moderating role of community capacity, and whether the engagement-effectiveness relationship varied across LGAs and project types. Employing a cross-sectional survey design, primary data were collected through structured questionnaires from 333 respondents comprising residents/users, community leaders, project committee members, business owners, and other stakeholders involved in public projects. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, ordinary least squares (OLS) regression, Baron and Kenny mediation steps with Sobel test, moderated regression, and subgroup analysis. The results revealed that neither overall community engagement nor its individual dimensions (information transparency, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment/monitoring) had a statistically significant positive effect on public project effectiveness ($p > 0.05$). Perceived government accountability did not mediate the relationship between community engagement and project effectiveness, while community capacity did not moderate the relationship. Subgroup analyses by LGA and project type similarly showed no significant heterogeneity in the engagement-effectiveness link. These findings indicate that, in the context of Benin City, current community engagement practices are largely superficial and have not translated into measurable improvements in project outcomes. The non-significant relationships may reflect inadequate depth of participation, weak institutional accountability mechanisms, and limited community capacity to influence project processes. The study therefore recommended a deliberate shift from tokenistic to genuine, power-sharing engagement models; institutionalisation of transparent and responsive accountability mechanisms; sustained capacity-building programmes for community structures; and the adoption of clear, measurable indicators for monitoring both engagement processes and project effectiveness. Implementing these recommendations will help unlock the potential of community engagement as a driver of successful and sustainable public projects in Edo State and similar contexts.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Preamble

In recent years, community engagement has gained recognition as a critical determinant of public project success, especially in developing urban contexts (Arkorful et al., 2023; Abubakar et al., 2025). Public projects play a pivotal role in driving socio-economic development; however, their effectiveness often hinges on how well local communities are involved in shaping and sustaining them (Mela & Bello, 2023; Dossou et al., 2021). Amid increasing calls for inclusive governance and participatory planning, the extent, depth, and structure of community engagement have emerged as central concerns in development discourse (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016; Arkorful et al., 2022).

Rather than being treated as a token gesture, community engagement is now widely understood as a multidimensional process, encompassing information sharing, consultation, collaboration, empowerment, monitoring, and feedback, that ensures development initiatives are contextually relevant and socially sustainable (Mela & Bello, 2023; Dossou et al., 2021). Each of these elements contributes uniquely to building trust, enhancing transparency, and promoting ownership among stakeholders (Abubakar et al., 2025; Arkorful et al., 2022). Nonetheless, the actual implementation of these dimensions in public project cycles often varies significantly, leading to mixed project outcomes and inconsistent levels of community satisfaction (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016).

In the context of Benin City, where public projects are designed to address pressing infrastructural and socio-economic challenges, there remains a noticeable gap in empirical literature regarding the depth and quality of community participation (Abubakar et al., 2025). While some studies have acknowledged the importance of engaging local stakeholders (Mela & Bello, 2023), limited scholarly attention has been paid to

systematically assessing how different dimensions of engagement affect project implementation and sustainability in this setting (Dossou et al., 2021; Arkorful et al., 2022).

Against this backdrop, this study seeks to examine the nature and effectiveness of community engagements in public projects within Benin City. By exploring the roles of information dissemination, consultation, collaboration, empowerment, monitoring, and feedback, the research aims to provide context-specific insights that can inform both theory and practice. Ultimately, the study aspires to contribute to a more participatory and inclusive approach to public project delivery in urban Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

Community engagement has emerged as an essential pillar in the planning and implementation of public projects, particularly in developing countries where governance challenges and project sustainability issues abound. Numerous studies have affirmed that meaningful community involvement fosters ownership, enhances the alignment of projects with local needs, and increases long-term sustainability (Acero et al., 2024; Arkorful et al., 2022; Sahani et al., 2024). Despite this recognition, practical integration of communities into public project cycles in sub-Saharan Africa remains inconsistent and often tokenistic. In Nigeria, public infrastructure and social service projects are frequently designed and executed through top-down approaches, excluding community voices in critical decision-making stages. This disconnect has contributed to high incidences of abandoned projects, inefficient resource use, and low levels of public trust in government-led interventions (Abubakar et al., 2025; Mela & Bello, 2023).

While literature has explored community engagement broadly, significant conceptual and empirical gaps remain, particularly within the Nigerian context. Much of the existing research focuses on either theoretical frameworks or isolated case studies, without offering comprehensive, multi-dimensional assessments of how different components of engagement,

such as information sharing, consultation, collaboration, empowerment, monitoring, and feedback, collectively shape project outcomes (Simon et al., 2025; Khodyakov et al., 2011). Furthermore, although participatory planning has been widely advocated, few studies critically examine the interplay between these engagement dimensions and their cumulative effect on project sustainability. This fragmented understanding leaves policymakers and practitioners without concrete, context-specific strategies to institutionalise community participation in project governance.

Geographically, there is a notable scarcity of empirical studies in medium-sized urban centres like Benin City, which are grappling with rapid urbanisation, informal settlements, and weak planning frameworks. Most community engagement literature in Nigeria tends to concentrate on larger metropolitan areas such as Lagos or Abuja or on rural development contexts, leaving a location-specific gap in urban centres with unique demographic, socio-political, and cultural dynamics (Abubakar et al., 2025). Additionally, population-based gaps exist, as several studies have failed to disaggregate data along relevant social dimensions such as gender, age, or socio-economic status, thereby ignoring the heterogeneous nature of communities and their differentiated experiences and expectations in public project participation (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016; Sahani et al., 2024).

Methodologically, prior research has often relied heavily on qualitative narratives, leaving out robust quantitative evaluations of engagement effectiveness. Moreover, existing studies seldom utilise comprehensive data triangulation or integrate participatory evaluation methods to assess feedback mechanisms or the long-term impact of community input on project quality and performance (Khodyakov et al., 2011; Turin et al., 2020). There is also limited evidence on the causal pathways through which elements like empowerment, collaboration, and monitoring contribute to project success. These limitations warrant a more comprehensive and integrative approach that links engagement practices to observable

project outcomes, thereby informing more effective public sector practices in urban governance.

This study therefore seeks to fill these critical gaps by focusing on Benin City, a rapidly evolving urban centre with pressing infrastructural and service delivery needs. Each of the specific objectives has been carefully formulated to address identified deficiencies in the literature. First, assessing the extent of information sharing responds to widespread concerns about asymmetry in communication between authorities and citizens (Sahani et al., 2024). Second, exploring consultation and participation is vital, given the lack of studies that evaluate these dimensions in tandem with project planning and implementation. Third, the examination of collaboration between stakeholders and institutions acknowledges that cooperative governance models remain under-studied in Nigeria's public project ecosystem (Arkorful et al., 2022). Focusing on empowerment and capacity building, aims to address the theoretical neglect of these concepts in existing engagement frameworks. Fifth, community involvement in monitoring and accountability is prioritised due to the absence of studies linking such practices to project transparency and success (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016). Lastly, feedback and evaluation mechanisms seeks to illuminate how post-implementation learning processes can inform the design of future projects, a dimension critically lacking in both practice and scholarship (Turin et al., 2020).

Community engagement is often lauded in policy discourse but one can see that empirical and context-specific studies that unravel its operational realities in cities like Benin are scarce. The present study addresses these gaps by offering a multi-dimensional, evidence-based inquiry that not only evaluates the depth and breadth of engagement but also seeks to inform participatory governance reforms in Nigeria's public project landscape.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the current level and pattern of community engagement in public projects in Benin City?
2. How effective are public projects in Benin City?
3. How does higher community engagement impact on the success and effectiveness of public projects in Benin City?
4. Does perceived government accountability mediate the effect of community engagement on public project success and effectiveness?
5. Does community capacity moderate the effect of community engagement on public project success and effectiveness?
6. Does the effect of community engagement on public project effectiveness differ across local government areas in Benin City?
7. Does the effect of community engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects vary with the local government (Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, Oredo) and project type?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to assess how community engagement influences the effectiveness of public projects in Benin City, and the roles of accountability and community capacity. Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. examine the level and pattern of community engagement in public projects in Benin City.
2. evaluate the effectiveness of public projects in Benin City.
3. examine the impact of community engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects in Benin City.

4. test whether perceived government accountability mediates the impact of community engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects in Benin City.
5. test whether community capacity moderates the effect of capacity engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects in Benin City.
6. examine the variations in effect of community engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects in the local governments and project types in Benin City.

1.4 Hypotheses of the Study

The following hypotheses are proposed for testing in this study:

H1: Community engagement positively predicts public projects' effectiveness.

H1a: Information transparency (CE-Info) → higher PPE.

H1b: Participatory decision-making (CE-Partic) → higher PPE.

H1c: Community empowerment/monitoring (CE-Emp) → higher PPE.

H2 (Mediation): Perceived government accountability mediates the relationship between community engagement and project effectiveness (CE → ACC → PPE).

H3 (Moderation): Community capacity strengthens the positive effect of community engagement on project effectiveness (interaction CE × CAP > 0).

H4 (Heterogeneity): The CE → PPE effect varies by LGA and project type.

Nulls: H0 counterparts (no relationships; no mediation; no moderation; no heterogeneity).

1.5 Scope of the Study

The study focuses on assessing the impact of community engagement in public projects, specifically examining six key variables: information sharing, consultation and participation, collaboration and partnership, empowerment and capacity building, monitoring and

accountability, and feedback and evaluation. It aims to explore how these dimensions influence the planning, execution, and outcomes of public projects. The study adopts a quantitative research approach using survey data collected from community members, local leaders, and officials involved in public projects. The data will be analysed using statistical techniques to test the stated hypotheses. The study is restricted to Benin City, the capital of Edo State in southern Nigeria. The city is chosen due to its historical significance, active urban development, and ongoing public infrastructure projects that necessitate community engagement. The study covers public projects implemented or ongoing between 2019 and 2024, allowing for a relevant examination of recent engagement practices and their outcomes.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study on community engagements in public projects in Benin City, Nigeria, is significant for several reasons:

Theoretical Contribution: The study contributes to the body of knowledge on participatory governance, development studies, and public administration by examining how community engagement, through dimensions such as information sharing, consultation, empowerment, and accountability, impacts the success and sustainability of public projects. It offers empirical validation of participatory development theories in a Nigerian urban context.

Policy Relevance: Findings from the study will provide evidence-based insights for policy-makers at local and state levels on how to improve citizen inclusion in public project design and implementation. This is particularly vital for ensuring that development initiatives are reflective of community needs, socially equitable, and culturally relevant.

Practical Application: The study will be useful to public project managers, non-governmental organisations, and community-based organisations in designing frameworks

and engagement models that foster meaningful participation and ownership among residents. This can improve project efficiency, reduce conflicts, and enhance long-term outcomes.

Localised Insight: By focusing on Benin City, the study offers a contextual analysis of engagement practices within a historically and politically important Nigerian city, thus providing a reference model for similar urban centres in sub-Saharan Africa.

Foundation for Further Research: The study's findings and identified gaps will serve as a basis for future academic research, particularly in exploring comparative studies across different geopolitical zones, project types, or governance structures within Nigeria and beyond.

1.7 Limitations of the Study

Despite its relevance and potential contributions, this study is subject to certain limitations that should be acknowledged:

Geographical Limitation: The study is confined to Benin City, which may limit the generalisability of the findings to other cities or rural areas in Nigeria with different socio-political, cultural, or economic dynamics.

Data Availability and Access: Access to comprehensive and up-to-date information on public projects and community engagement practices may be constrained due to bureaucratic bottlenecks, confidentiality concerns, or poor documentation, which could affect the completeness of secondary data.

Respondent Bias: The study relies on self-reported data from community members and project stakeholders, which may be subject to recall bias, social desirability bias, or lack of full disclosure, potentially influencing the objectivity of the findings.

Time Constraint: The study focuses on public projects implemented between 2019 and 2024, which may not capture long-term impacts or changes in engagement patterns before or after this period.

Exclusion of Qualitative Insights: While the study adopts a quantitative methodology for empirical precision, it may not fully capture the depth of lived experiences, perceptions, and power dynamics that qualitative approaches would uncover.

Despite these limitations, conscious efforts will be made to mitigate their impact through robust sampling techniques, triangulation of data sources, and clear operational definitions of key variables.

1.8 Structure of the Study

This research is organised into six chapters, each serving a distinct purpose in the development and presentation of the study. Chapter One presents the background to the study, identifies the research problem, and outlines the research questions, objectives, hypotheses, scope, significance, limitations, and structure of the study. Chapter Two provides contextual information on Benin City, the nature of public projects undertaken, the institutional and socio-political landscape, and stylised facts that underpin the relevance of community engagement in the study area. Chapter Three reviews relevant conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature on community engagement in public projects. It also identifies key gaps in the literature and presents the conceptual framework guiding the study. Chapter Four outlines the theoretical foundation of the study and presents the model specification, estimation techniques, variables, data sources, and methodological approach adopted for empirical analysis. Chapter Five presents and discusses the results of the data analysis. It includes pre-estimation diagnostics, main regression outputs, evaluation of hypotheses, and policy implications of the findings. Chapter Six summarises the key findings, offers practical and policy-related recommendations, and concludes the study with reflections on its contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

1.9 Constructs and Operational Definitions

Community Engagement (CE): extent and quality of citizen involvement across information, consultation, participation, and empowerment (meetings, co-design, monitoring).

Public Projects' Effectiveness (PPE): perceived and observed outcomes of projects: timeliness, budget adherence, quality, utilization, user satisfaction, and sustainability/maintenance.

Perceived Government Accountability (ACC): transparency, responsiveness, grievance redress.

Community Capacity (CAP): skills, organization strength, and resources to engage.

Context/Controls: project type (road, water, health, education, market, drainage), project size, LGA, ward, socioeconomic status (SES).

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

Public project implementation in Nigeria, particularly in cities like Benin City, often suffers from poor community inclusion, leading to failed or unsustainable outcomes. Growing advocacy for participatory governance highlights the need for robust community engagement to ensure alignment with local priorities. This study investigates key dimensions of engagement: information sharing, consultation, collaboration, empowerment, monitoring, and feedback, as essential components for successful public projects. By exploring these elements in the context of Benin City, the research addresses gaps in practice and literature, offering insights into how inclusive engagement can enhance project relevance, ownership, and sustainability in Nigeria's public development efforts.

2.1 Study Environment

This study is situated in Benin City, the capital of Edo State in southern Nigeria. Benin City serves as a strategic urban hub known for its rich cultural heritage, evolving socio-political structures, and dynamic urban development. With an estimated population of over 1.3 million (Arabomen et al., 2020), the city has witnessed rapid urbanisation, particularly across the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Egor, Ikpoba-Okha, and Oredo (Ekhaese et al., 2021).

Benin City's urban morphology is deeply rooted in traditional governance structures. The socio-political fabric is anchored in the monarchy, led by the Oba, and sustained through a network of chieftaincy and guild systems. These institutions influence spatial planning and communal life, especially in core residential zones (Ekhaese et al., 2021). Cultural resilience remains high, with residents preserving traditional housing patterns and engaging

in practices such as ancestral burials within family homes for spiritual continuity (Ekhaese et al., 2021).

Climatically, Benin City features a dry season from November to February and supports moist deciduous vegetation, contributing to diverse urban green spaces. Arabomen et al. (2020) note a strong public appreciation for ecosystem services provided by trees, including shade, temperature regulation, and flood control, with many residents expressing willingness to participate in conservation initiatives when aware of their benefits.

Despite these strengths, the city faces developmental challenges. Urban expansion has largely outpaced conventional planning tools such as the Master Plan, which critics describe as rigid, outdated, and exclusionary (Abubakar et al., 2025). Consequently, there have been calls for participatory frameworks that better reflect the city's socio-cultural realities and development needs.

Benin City has historically hosted community-based projects, including World Bank-assisted urban upgrading programmes aimed at improving basic infrastructure such as roads, healthcare, and water supply (Edo State Government, 2001). However, these efforts often faltered due to limited community involvement, political interference, poor communication, and resource constraints (Arkorful et al., 2022; Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016).

Benin City thus presents a compelling environment for exploring the dynamics of community engagement in public projects. Its blend of traditional structures, developmental pressures, and active citizenry provides a fertile ground for investigating how participatory processes can enhance project outcomes in rapidly urbanising African contexts.

2.2 Evolution of Public Projects

Public projects have historically reflected prevailing governance ideologies, technological capabilities, and societal expectations. In their early conception, most public infrastructure and development projects in postcolonial African states, Nigeria inclusive, were largely

state-centric, hierarchical, and bureaucratic in design, with minimal input from affected communities (Khodyakov et al., 2011). These top-down approaches often prioritised technocratic efficiency over participatory equity, resulting in projects that, while structurally sound, lacked local ownership and failed to meet the nuanced needs of their beneficiaries (Mela & Bello, 2023).

However, the last few decades have witnessed a paradigmatic shift in development thinking, with increasing emphasis on inclusive governance, participatory planning, and stakeholder empowerment. This evolution has been driven by various factors. Firstly, the global discourse on development has increasingly highlighted the principles of social justice, equity, and sustainability, particularly in response to the marginalisation of vulnerable populations in decision-making processes (Acero et al., 2024; Simon et al., 2025). Community engagement is now recognised as a means of redressing historic power imbalances, enabling grassroots participation in shaping development outcomes (Bukiwe, 2024).

Secondly, the growing recognition of the value of indigenous and experiential knowledge has played a critical role in the reconfiguration of public projects. Communities often hold intimate understandings of local geographies, livelihoods, and socio-cultural dynamics, which are crucial to the success and sustainability of projects (Sharma et al., 2022). Consequently, the involvement of community actors in needs assessments, design conceptualisation, and monitoring processes has become increasingly institutionalised in development practice (Chipangamate et al., 2023).

Technological advancements have further catalysed the transformation of public projects. The advent of social media and digital platforms has created new avenues for citizen participation, government accountability, and real-time feedback (Olori & Okide, 2014). For example, e-governance innovations in Asia and Africa, including the use of Telegram

and mobile platforms, have demonstrated the potential of digital tools to foster transparency, citizen voice, and responsiveness in project implementation (Olori & Okide, 2014).

In parallel, the decentralisation of governance across many African states has amplified the role of sub-national actors and community-based institutions in project delivery (Ly & Ly, 2023). This localisation of development administration has enabled greater contextualisation of projects and enhanced the legitimacy of state interventions (Dossou et al., 2021). Community-led initiatives, participatory budgeting, and inclusive monitoring frameworks now typify many donor-funded and government-initiated projects, reflecting the maturation of participatory paradigms.

The conceptual tool of *Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation* has been influential in interpreting this evolution. According to Johnson et al. (2016), citizen engagement spans a spectrum, from non-participation and tokenism to genuine citizen power. This model has guided both scholarly evaluations and policy reforms aimed at elevating public participation from perfunctory consultation to meaningful empowerment. In many contexts, including urban centres like Benin City, there is a discernible shift towards higher rungs of Arnstein's ladder, where partnership, delegated power, and community control are increasingly being pursued (Eyisi et al., 2020).

Despite this progress, challenges remain. Persistent institutional inertia, elite capture, limited community capacity, and the politicisation of participatory mechanisms continue to hinder the full realisation of inclusive development (Mela & Bello, 2023; Abubakar et al., 2025). Nonetheless, the broad trajectory of public project implementation has shifted from exclusivity to inclusivity, from paternalism to partnership, and from central control to co-governance. This evolution provides a critical backdrop to the current study's interest in understanding how community engagement is operationalised in the context of public projects in Benin City, Nigeria.

2.3 Governance and Participation Framework

A coherent governance and participation framework is indispensable to the successful execution of public projects, particularly within urban and peri-urban contexts like Benin City. Governance, in this sense, transcends the administrative machinery of the state; it encapsulates the structures, institutions, and processes that ensure public accountability, policy coherence, stakeholder alignment, and equitable distribution of project benefits (Bukiwe, 2024; Arkorful et al., 2022). Participation, on the other hand, refers to the inclusive involvement of communities, especially intended beneficiaries, across the project lifecycle, from conception to implementation, monitoring, and evaluation (Simon et al., 2025; Tembo et al., 2021).

Governance in public projects demands clearly defined institutional roles, vertical and horizontal coordination mechanisms, and enforceable accountability structures. In Nigeria, weak institutional frameworks have often led to overlapping mandates, policy reversals, and suboptimal project outcomes (Eyisi et al., 2020). Public projects, especially those funded by international agencies or implemented under federal-state frameworks, often suffer from disjointed governance systems where community priorities are subordinated to bureaucratic or political interests (Sahani et al., 2024). Effective governance must thus provide legal and operational clarity, enable multi-actor cooperation, and create channels for transparency and redress (Arkorful et al., 2022).

Participation frameworks, while frequently referenced in development rhetoric, remain inconsistently applied in practice. Arnstein's (1969) Ladder of Citizen Participation provides a useful typology for assessing the depth of participation, from tokenistic consultation to actual citizen control. In Benin City and similar Nigerian settings,

community engagement in public projects often hovers between informing and consultation, rarely advancing to genuine collaboration or empowerment (Acero et al., 2024). This limited involvement not only marginalises local knowledge but also fosters distrust and resistance, particularly in historically underserved or culturally distinct communities (Bukiwe, 2024; Dossou et al., 2021).

Accountability mechanisms are the linchpin that binds governance and participation. These include project charters, citizen charters, performance scorecards, social audits, and community-based monitoring systems (Simon et al., 2025; Tembo et al., 2021). Unfortunately, many projects in Nigeria lack built-in frameworks for citizen feedback or grievance redress, especially in subnational settings where state institutions are weak or underfunded (Arkorful et al., 2022). Community members often have limited recourse when projects underdeliver, are captured by elite interests, or fail to materialise altogether.

Empowerment strategies are also a core component of participatory governance. Effective frameworks should invest in building local capacity through training, information access, and inclusion in decision-making bodies (Sahani et al., 2024). Projects such as the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP) in Nigeria and the Participatory Urban Development Programme (PAURAD) in Benin Republic demonstrate the utility of embedding community structures, such as Project Implementation Committees and Ward Development Committees, into governance models (Eyisi et al., 2020; Dossou et al., 2021). These structures facilitate not only compliance and ownership but also ensure that development interventions align with local values and aspirations.

Finally, an effective governance and participation framework must be both normative and adaptive. Normative in the sense that it rests on principles of inclusion, transparency, equity, and accountability; and adaptive in recognising the complexity and variability of local political economies (Bukiwe, 2024; Tembo et al., 2021). This requires a blend of top-down

coordination and bottom-up responsiveness, supported by enabling legislation, decentralised authority, and sustained political will. Without such a framework, public projects risk becoming extractive, technocratic impositions rather than genuine vehicles for community transformation.

2.4 Stakeholder Landscape

The stakeholder landscape in public projects, especially within African urban contexts like Benin City, is multifaceted and dynamic. It includes a wide range of actors whose levels of interest, influence, and engagement significantly determine the success, sustainability, and legitimacy of development interventions (Chipangamate et al., 2023; Joos et al., 2020). Understanding the roles, motivations, and interactions among these stakeholders is crucial for ensuring inclusive, participatory, and equitable project outcomes (Mwesigwa et al., 2024).

At the heart of the stakeholder matrix are community members, the intended beneficiaries and, increasingly, key participants in development processes. They possess local knowledge, contextual insights, and cultural awareness that are often absent from top-down project designs (Sharma et al., 2022). When actively involved, community members contribute to improved project targeting, foster a sense of ownership, and enhance project maintenance post-implementation (Bukiwe, 2024). However, empirical evidence from Nigeria and neighbouring countries suggests that participation often remains tokenistic, confined to elite or influential groups such as traditional rulers, local politicians, or vocal community representatives, thereby marginalising vulnerable segments such as women, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities (Eyisi et al., 2020; Chipangamate et al., 2023).

Government bodies, both central and local, are principal actors in policy formulation, legal regulation, and financial provisioning. Ministries, departments, and agencies such as the Ministry of Environment and urban planning authorities are responsible for overseeing

project planning, execution, and monitoring (Arkorful et al., 2022). Despite constitutional and policy commitments to decentralisation and participatory governance, practical realities often reflect a top-down approach characterised by political interference, inadequate funding, weak accountability structures, and the exclusion of local voices (Tembo et al., 2021; Sahani et al., 2024). Consequently, many government-led projects suffer from misalignment with community priorities and are vulnerable to abandonment, conflict, or elite capture.

The private sector has emerged as a strategic stakeholder, particularly through mechanisms such as corporate social responsibility (CSR) and public-private partnerships (PPPs). Compared to state-driven efforts, private entities have been observed to adopt more community-centred approaches, involving beneficiaries from project identification to evaluation (Mwesigwa et al., 2024). Practices such as the appointment of community liaison officers, use of CSR committees, and support for local entrepreneurship have enhanced trust, mitigated conflict, and fostered long-term impact. Nevertheless, the profit motive and lack of regulatory oversight can sometimes lead to superficial or exploitative engagements, particularly in resource-extractive industries (Chipangamate et al., 2023).

International financial institutions (IFIs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a vital supporting role in stakeholder engagement. They bring financial resources, technical expertise, and a commitment to participatory principles. Institutions like the World Bank and the African Development Bank have developed mechanisms, such as the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM) and environmental and social safeguard frameworks, to ensure that communities are not only consulted but can also seek redress when adversely affected (Joos et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2024). NGOs, on their part, often serve as intermediaries between communities and government actors, facilitating advocacy, capacity building, and participatory monitoring and evaluation (Eyisi et al., 2020).

Finally, academics, consultants, planners, and development experts contribute critical knowledge, policy advice, and technical support. Researchers help identify gaps in participation, propose inclusive frameworks, and evaluate project impacts, while planners and consultants facilitate feasibility assessments, environmental and social impact studies, and participatory planning processes (Brooks et al., 2024). However, there remains a need for more context-sensitive training in participatory methodologies among these professionals to avoid technocratic detachment and ensure deeper community engagement (Sharma et al., 2022).

A comprehensive stakeholder framework thus requires strategic coordination among diverse actors, recognition of power asymmetries, and mechanisms for inclusive decision-making. Collaborative engagement across sectors, governmental, civil society, private, and local, enhances legitimacy, reduces conflict, and ensures that public projects are responsive to the nuanced and evolving needs of the people they are meant to serve (Chipangamate et al., 2023; Mwesigwa et al., 2024).

2.5 Appraisal of Stylized Facts

Stylised facts refer to empirically observed regularities that are widely accepted within a scholarly domain, even when they are not universally applicable (Kaldor, 1961). In the realm of public projects and community engagement, several stylised facts have emerged, especially in developing economies such as Nigeria. These stylised narratives, while useful, often obscure the complex realities on the ground. This section critically appraises those commonly held assumptions, contrasting them with empirical evidence from Benin City and comparable African contexts.

Community participation is always beneficial

While participation is widely championed as a catalyst for improved project outcomes, evidence from Nigeria shows that the *quality* and *depth* of participation matter more than

mere presence (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016; Arkorful et al., 2022). Tokenistic involvement, often limited to attendance at public hearings or consultation meetings, fails to empower communities or influence project design substantively (Eyisi et al., 2020). In Edo State, for instance, several urban infrastructure projects have suffered from poor uptake or outright resistance due to lack of genuine engagement, despite official claims of participatory planning.

Traditional leaders represent community voices

Customary authority figures, such as village heads and chiefs, are frequently treated as the de facto voice of the community in project negotiations. However, empirical studies reveal that traditional elites may prioritise their own interests or those of politically connected groups (Dossou et al., 2021; Mela & Bello, 2023). This is particularly evident in land acquisition and resettlement processes in Benin City, where chiefs have occasionally been accused of colluding with developers to the detriment of vulnerable populations, including women and youth (Ekhaese et al., 2021).

Communities lack the technical expertise to contribute meaningfully

This assumption often underpins the exclusion of community members from the design and evaluation phases of projects. However, participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques and community-driven development (CDD) models have demonstrated that local knowledge is not only relevant but crucial to project sustainability (Tembo et al., 2021; Sahani et al., 2024). In the case of the Edo State Urban Renewal Project, inputs from market women and transport unions improved the design of road networks and traffic flow, contradicting the notion that communities are technically passive.

Donor-funded projects are more inclusive than state-led ones

It is often assumed that international donor agencies promote higher standards of participation and accountability. While this holds true in terms of framework design (e.g.

the World Bank's Environmental and Social Framework), local implementation is frequently hindered by institutional weaknesses and socio-political interference (Joos et al., 2020; Brooks et al., 2024). For example, despite the participatory ethos of the Community and Social Development Project (CSDP), field reports show that elite capture and project hijack remain prevalent in Edo State.

Monitoring and feedback mechanisms are in place and functional

Official project documentation often lists feedback loops, complaints mechanisms, and citizen monitoring platforms. However, the functionality of these mechanisms is rarely evaluated. Studies indicate that grievance redress mechanisms are either unknown to beneficiaries or structurally weak, especially in semi-urban and peri-urban areas (Simon et al., 2025; Bukiwe, 2024). In Benin City, although platforms such as town hall meetings exist, they are seldom used to inform corrective action or reshape ongoing projects.

These stylised facts, though often cited in policy discourse, risk perpetuating incomplete understandings of stakeholder dynamics and participation efficacy. A more grounded, evidence-based approach is essential, one that acknowledges both the potential and limitations of community engagement in public projects. The implication is clear: effective project governance in Nigeria must go beyond surface-level participation and engage with the realities of power asymmetries, institutional weaknesses, and socio-cultural heterogeneity (Chipangamate et al., 2023; Mwesigwa et al., 2024).

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on community engagements in public projects. By examining existing scholarly and policy-oriented works, this chapter clarifies key concepts, explores relevant theoretical perspectives, and synthesises empirical evidence on how community engagement influences the planning, execution, and evaluation of public projects. The review not only situates the present study within the broader academic discourse but also identifies specific gaps in knowledge and practice that the research aims to address.

3.1 Conceptual Clarification

3.1.1 Concept of Public Project Effectiveness

Public project effectiveness refers to the extent to which a public initiative attains its intended outcomes efficiently, sustainably, and in alignment with local priorities and this remains a cornerstone of development and governance. Globally and locally, the relevance of this concept has become increasingly pronounced, as evidence suggests that effectiveness is closely tied to the depth, quality, and inclusivity of community engagement. Such engagement shapes not only project acceptance but also its long-term impact (Barakatu & Abbas, 2023; Joo et al., 2025).

At its core, public project effectiveness refers to the capacity of a project to deliver on its objectives within set timelines, remain within budget, and generate lasting benefits for its intended beneficiaries. Scholars generally agree that this effectiveness rests on several interrelated components: relevance, or the degree to which the project aligns with local needs; efficiency, denoting the optimal use of resources; sustainability, which ensures long-

term viability; and ownership, reflecting community commitment to maintaining and advancing the project's outcomes (Onusi, 2022; Yuliani & Nasrudin, 2023).

Barakatu and Abbas (2023) for instance emphasise that public health interventions in Nigeria achieve better results when effective community entry strategies are employed to foster participation. Similarly, Sekhar and Thapa (2023) contend that urban regeneration initiatives thrive when stakeholder engagement is equitable and deeply collaborative. In a different context, Sahani et al. (2024) highlight the adaptive dimension of effectiveness during crises, noting the importance of culturally attuned engagement mechanisms and community empowerment. These findings contrast with the critiques of Morshedi et al. (2022), who observe that stakeholder participation in many projects remains tokenistic, thereby limiting the achievement of meaningful outcomes.

The importance of public project effectiveness extends beyond project performance metrics; it directly influences public trust, resource stewardship, and the legitimacy of development interventions. Effective projects enhance community well-being, minimise waste, and strengthen the credibility of implementing institutions. Uche et al. (2023), for example, illustrate how local leadership and effective resource mobilisation contribute to the successful maintenance and continued use of public infrastructure.

Conversely, neglecting effectiveness, whether through poor community involvement, weak alignment with local priorities, or inadequate accountability, can yield severe consequences. Such lapses often lead to the wastage of scarce resources, abandonment of projects, social disaffection, and diminished institutional credibility (Adekola et al., 2021). Ultimately, without a sustained and deliberate focus on effectiveness, even the most well-intentioned public initiatives risk failure or premature obsolescence.

3.1.2 Concept of Community Engagements

Community engagement has emerged as a pivotal determinant of the success, sustainability, and legitimacy of public projects, especially in diverse socio-cultural environments such as Benin City, Nigeria. It encompasses deliberate strategies and mechanisms aimed at fostering inclusive participation, building mutual trust, and aligning project objectives with community values and priorities (Omobowale et al., 2024; Sahani et al., 2024). The process is not merely consultative; rather, it entails active involvement of stakeholders from project conception to evaluation, thereby ensuring that outcomes are both locally relevant and socially accepted. In development and governance discourse, community engagement is increasingly regarded as a driver of resilience, equity, and participatory democracy (Bick, 2024).

In definitional terms, community engagement refers to the systematic involvement of individuals, groups, and institutions in decision-making, implementation, and oversight of initiatives that affect their lives and environments. Core components include information sharing (clear communication of objectives and expectations), consultation (seeking community perspectives), collaboration (joint planning and execution), empowerment (enhancing skills and capacities), accountability (transparent processes and monitoring), and feedback mechanisms (evaluating and adapting interventions) (Omobowale et al., 2024; Joo et al., 2025). These components interact dynamically, producing varying outcomes depending on the socio-political context, resource availability, and institutional commitment. Scholarly perspectives on community engagement are diverse. Omobowale et al. (2024) emphasise the role of structured community entry processes in ensuring acceptance of public health interventions, while Sahani et al. (2024) highlight its context-specific nature in crisis situations, where trust-building and empowerment are indispensable. Bick (2024) observes an evolution from ad-hoc participation models to more formalised and incentivised

frameworks in urban governance, noting that such systems improve both policy design and citizen satisfaction. Furthermore, Joo et al. (2025) underline that urban regeneration initiatives benefit significantly from equitable collaboration and sustained stakeholder participation, reinforcing the view that engagement is not a one-off event but a continuous process.

The importance of community engagement lies in its capacity to enhance project relevance, increase sustainability, and strengthen institutional legitimacy. By mobilising local knowledge, resources, and leadership, engagement strategies foster a sense of ownership that translates into better project maintenance, improved service uptake, and long-term socio-economic benefits (Gerber et al., 2023). In the specific context of Benin City, such engagement can bridge governance gaps, reduce implementation conflicts, and foster civic trust, thereby contributing to broader developmental objectives under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Conversely, neglecting community engagement can have detrimental consequences. Projects may suffer from low participation rates, misalignment with local priorities, and eventual abandonment. Institutional credibility can be eroded, and scarce resources wasted on interventions that fail to gain public acceptance (Adekola et al., 2021). Moreover, the exclusion of key demographics, particularly women and youth, exacerbates inequality and undermines inclusive development. Without context-specific, sustained, and transparent engagement, public projects risk becoming transient or ineffective, failing to deliver on their developmental promises.

3.1.2.1 Information Sharing

Information sharing constitutes a foundational pillar of effective community engagement, serving as the conduit through which trust, collaboration, and participatory decision-making are cultivated (Omobowale et al., 2024). At its core, information sharing ensures that

stakeholders, ranging from community members to policymakers, are adequately informed about project objectives, milestones, and potential challenges, thereby enhancing ownership and commitment to project outcomes (Sahani et al., 2024). In the context of public projects, particularly in culturally diverse settings such as Benin City, transparent communication is not merely a procedural formality but a strategic necessity for fostering inclusivity and legitimacy.

In times of crisis, the role of information sharing becomes even more pronounced. Public health emergencies, for example, depend on timely and accurate dissemination of preventive measures, updates, and coordinated response efforts to ensure community compliance and cooperation (Omobowale et al., 2024). Gaps in this process, whether due to misinformation, communication breakdowns, or inadequate outreach, an result in mistrust, resistance, and reduced participation (Richardson et al., 2020). Consequently, effective communication channels must be deliberately designed to be clear, culturally sensitive, and contextually relevant, enabling community members to make informed decisions.

A robust information-sharing framework often leverages multiple communication channels to account for the heterogeneous nature of communities. These may include traditional platforms such as town hall meetings, community radio, and local newspapers, as well as modern avenues like social media and instant messaging (Omobowale et al., 2024). The choice of medium must reflect the socio-cultural realities and literacy levels of the target population to ensure accessibility and inclusivity (Sahani et al., 2024). For instance, agricultural development initiatives have demonstrated that proactive and early-stage information dissemination can build consensus, pre-empt conflicts, and strengthen community ownership (Chow & Leiringer, 2020).

Equally significant is the use of material artefacts, maps, models, visual aids, and prototypes, that act as “boundary objects” to facilitate understanding across diverse knowledge domains

in urban development contexts (Janke et al., 2021). These tangible tools not only clarify technical details but also democratise complex information, enabling more meaningful participation. In community-academic partnerships, such artefacts, alongside collaborative platforms, bridge the gap between theory and practice, making research findings more actionable (Onusi, 2022).

Nonetheless, the practice of information sharing is not without its challenges. Issues surrounding data privacy, intellectual property rights, and ethical sensitivity often arise, necessitating the establishment of clear guidelines and protocols to safeguard stakeholders' interests (Omobowale et al., 2024). In settings where cultural norms strongly influence communication patterns, an awareness of local customs and ethical obligations is paramount to avoid unintended alienation (Sahani et al., 2024). Ultimately, information sharing, when implemented as a deliberate, inclusive, and ethically sound process, has the capacity to transform public projects from externally imposed initiatives into genuinely co-owned and sustainable ventures.

3.1.2.2 Consultation and Participation

Consultation and participation remain pivotal pillars of community engagement, serving as catalysts for project success and sustainability (Omobowale et al., 2024; Joo et al., 2025). Consultation entails seeking input and feedback from stakeholders regarding proposed plans, policies, or projects, while participation advances this process by actively involving community members in decision-making and empowering them to influence outcomes (Badiora et al., 2020; Sahani et al., 2024). Together, these processes ensure that public projects reflect the needs, values, and priorities of their intended beneficiaries, fostering trust, ownership, and social cohesion (Omobowale et al., 2024; Tor et al., 2025).

Effective consultation and participation enhance project relevance by integrating local knowledge and lived experiences into planning and implementation (Sahani et al., 2024).

This approach strengthens relationships between implementers and communities, promotes inclusivity by amplifying marginalised voices, and addresses social equity concerns (Teresa et al., 2025). However, the success of these processes depends on transparent communication, opportunities for genuine dialogue, capacity building, and deliberate inclusivity measures, such as providing language support, childcare, or transportation to facilitate involvement (Sahani et al., 2024; Teresa et al., 2025).

The practice is not without challenges. Limited resources, conflicting interests, entrenched power imbalances, and cultural barriers can all impede meaningful participation (Barakatu & Abbas, 2023; Tor et al., 2025). Addressing these obstacles requires adequate resourcing, skilled facilitation to mediate disputes, empowerment of underrepresented groups, and culturally sensitive communication strategies (Omobowale et al., 2024). These measures ensure that engagement transcends tokenism, moving towards authentic collaboration.

Evidence from diverse contexts underscores the transformative potential of consultation and participation. In urban regeneration, such processes improve stakeholder engagement and foster equitable collaboration (Joo et al., 2025). In Nigeria, robust stakeholder involvement has been shown to significantly influence construction project performance, particularly where public input is integrated into planning and resource mobilisation (Tor et al., 2025; Barakatu & Abbas, 2023). Similarly, sustainable community development initiatives in Southeast Nigeria are strengthened when local leadership, commitment, and resources are mobilised effectively (Uche et al., 2023).

The growing convergence of community engagement and technological innovation offers new opportunities for participatory governance and resilience building. For example, integrating digital platforms into consultation processes can create smarter, more responsive urban systems capable of addressing disaster management and sustainability challenges (Kangana et al., 2024). In both local and international contexts, from Nigeria's development

projects to Kuwait's circular construction efforts, consultation and participation emerge as indispensable tools for fostering trust, promoting inclusivity, and achieving durable public project outcomes (Al-Raqeb et al., 2023).

3.1.2.3 Collaboration and Partnership

Collaboration and partnerships are fundamental to effective community engagement, as they foster trust, enhance inclusivity, and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals (Omobowale et al., 2024; Sahani et al., 2024). Such partnerships typically involve a diverse range of actors, including community members, academic institutions, government agencies, non-governmental organisations, and private sector stakeholders. Each partner brings unique resources, expertise, and perspectives, enabling more holistic and context-specific approaches to addressing community needs (Janke et al., 2021; Tor1 et al., 2025).

The strength of collaborative partnerships lies in their ability to navigate complex socio-cultural, political, and economic challenges while ensuring that interventions remain culturally sensitive and aligned with local realities (Omobowale et al., 2024). For instance, in southwestern Nigeria, culturally appropriate community entry strategies have proven essential in sensitive research areas such as child marriage, significantly influencing both participation rates and community acceptance of public health interventions (Omobowale et al., 2024).

Partnerships are particularly critical in health crisis response, where community involvement can determine the effectiveness of interventions. A realist-informed scoping review by Sahani et al. (2024) underscores the need to understand the interplay of context, mechanisms, and outcomes (CMO) in such situations. Successful outcomes include the creation of sustainable structures, strengthened social resilience, and improved health indicators. Mechanisms such as community-structured dialogue, leveraging existing

community frameworks, participatory decision-making, and strong inter-organisational coordination are especially effective. These engagements are often motivated by moral obligation, self-interest, and shared ideological commitments (Sahani et al., 2024).

The complexity and diversity inherent in community engagement require careful evaluation of the mechanisms that foster long-term collaboration (Richardson et al., 2020). Community-academic partnerships, for example, play a pivotal role in bridging research and practice, and mapping such partnerships through scoping reviews has proven useful in identifying best practices and gaps (Janke et al., 2021). Evidence from Nigerian construction projects further highlights that strong stakeholder engagement directly correlates with improved project performance and sustainability outcomes (Tor1 et al., 2025).

Beyond health and infrastructure, collaborative partnerships extend into other critical development areas. Resource mobilisation and judicious utilisation are essential for community development projects, with institutional commitment and community acceptance serving as foundational requirements (Barakatu & Abbas, 2023). In agriculture, early-stage communication and engagement strategies enhance project success, particularly in Nigeria's vital agrarian sector (Onusi, 2022). Similarly, in urban development, integrating community engagement with technological innovation, such as in smart city initiatives, can produce resilient, adaptive urban systems (Kangana et al., 2024).

An inclusive partnership model also necessitates the integration of intersectional gender approaches. For instance, incorporating evidential, constituent-involving, sociocultural, linguistic, and peripheral strategies has been shown to improve access to maternal and child health services (Arrivillaga et al., 2024). In the energy sector, mainstreaming systematic climate action within infrastructure projects ensures alignment with sustainable development goals, combining climate mitigation and adaptation strategies throughout the

infrastructure lifecycle (Wernersson et al., 2024). Furthermore, advances in citizen science demonstrate the value of blending literature reviews, domain expertise, and participatory design to promote more impactful, co-created knowledge and solutions (Yfantidou et al., 2023).

3.1.2.4 Empowerment and Capacity Building

Empowerment and capacity building are pivotal pillars of effective community engagement, serving as catalysts for sustainable development and the long-term success of public projects. These interlinked concepts aim to enhance the skills, knowledge, and resources of community members, enabling them to participate actively in decision-making processes and to benefit meaningfully from development initiatives (Uche et al., 2023; Teresa et al., 2025). Empowerment involves fostering a sense of agency, ownership, and control among community stakeholders, while capacity building focuses on equipping individuals and institutions with the necessary tools, competencies, and structures to achieve development goals (Richardson et al., 2020).

Practical strategies for empowerment and capacity building include community-structured dialogue, participatory project design, and the utilisation of existing socio-cultural structures. Community-structured dialogue fosters continuous communication, encourages feedback, and ensures the incorporation of community perspectives into policy and planning, thereby promoting trust and collaboration (Uche et al., 2023). Leveraging established local networks, such as traditional leaders, religious institutions, and community-based organisations, further strengthens capacity building by anchoring initiatives within trusted and familiar frameworks (Uche et al., 2023). Participatory approaches, including co-design, co-production, and co-evaluation of projects, not only strengthen technical skills but also instil a sense of ownership that enhances sustainability (Uche et al., 2023).

Empowerment and capacity building are equally essential in addressing broader developmental challenges such as poverty alleviation, health equity, and environmental sustainability. Evidence from sustainable development practice suggests that local leadership, commitment, and mobilisation of indigenous resources are critical to the survival and continuity of projects (Teresa et al., 2025). Initiatives that employ citizen science methodologies, combining academic expertise with lived experiences, illustrate how diverse knowledge systems can inform and strengthen local capacity (Chow & Leiringer, 2020). Furthermore, the involvement of citizens in policymaking through advisory boards, surveys, and structured incentives enhances policy legitimacy and responsiveness (Bick, 2024).

In the Nigerian context, community-academic partnerships have proven effective in addressing local needs and building institutional capacity. By integrating academic research with community priorities, such partnerships generate contextually relevant solutions and strengthen the local knowledge base (Omobowale et al., 2024). Structured multi-phased participatory research processes, involving scoping reviews, surveys, focus groups, and collaborative symposiums, further illustrate how capacity building can be embedded into the project lifecycle (Zahari & Kaliannan, 2022).

Importantly, in public health and crisis response, empowerment and capacity building serve as mechanisms for resilience. Engaging communities as partners fosters sustainable structures, improves health outcomes, and strengthens social cohesion (Uche et al., 2023). The ability of a community to respond to challenges, whether in health emergencies or socio-economic transformations, depends not only on the resources available but also on the empowerment of its members to use these resources effectively. As such, embedding empowerment and capacity building in community engagement frameworks remains an indispensable condition for inclusive and sustainable development.

3.1.2.5 Monitoring and Accountability

Monitoring and accountability are foundational pillars of effective and sustainable community engagement in public projects. They ensure that planned interventions remain aligned with objectives, are implemented efficiently, and deliver equitable benefits to target populations (Sahani et al., 2024; Badiora et al., 2020). Monitoring refers to the systematic and continuous process of collecting, analysing, and using data to track project progress against set objectives, while accountability denotes the obligation of project implementers and stakeholders to justify their decisions, actions, and resource utilisation to the public (Sahani et al., 2024). Together, these concepts promote transparency, strengthen trust, and facilitate corrective measures during implementation (Badiora et al., 2020).

A robust monitoring and accountability framework involves establishing clear goals, measurable indicators, and reliable data collection methods that accurately capture the intended project outcomes (Sahani et al., 2024). Community participation in this process is vital, as it ensures that the data reflects the lived experiences, perspectives, and priorities of the people most affected by the project (Sahani et al., 2024). Approaches such as participatory evaluation, community-based monitoring systems, and accessible feedback channels empower residents to contribute meaningfully to performance tracking and decision-making (Yfantidou et al., 2023). This inclusive approach fosters local ownership and enhances the responsiveness of project interventions.

The literature highlights a persistent gap in context-specific analyses of monitoring and accountability mechanisms, particularly in developing countries (Sahani et al., 2024). Many studies adopt a generalised approach that overlooks the unique interplay between context, mechanisms, and outcomes (CMO configurations), thereby limiting the applicability of findings across different environments (Sahani et al., 2024). In health crisis responses, for example, the absence of standardised indicators for evaluating community involvement

often results in reliance on inconsistent or proxy measures that lack universal acceptability (Sahani et al., 2024). Addressing these gaps requires frameworks that are sensitive to local realities, adaptable across contexts, and informed by both quantitative and qualitative evidence (Yfantidou et al., 2023).

Practical mechanisms for strengthening monitoring and accountability include community-structured dialogue, ongoing communication through trusted local channels, and formalised feedback loops that allow communities to influence policy and action planning (Sahani et al., 2024). Partnership and coordination between government agencies, non-governmental organisations, donors, and grassroots actors are particularly important during crises to prevent duplication of efforts and ensure a unified response (Sahani et al., 2024). Tools such as community mapping help identify vulnerable groups, ensuring targeted outreach and equitable resource allocation (Sahani et al., 2024).

The consequences of weak monitoring and accountability are significant, ranging from resource mismanagement to diminished public trust and ineffective project outcomes (Badiora et al., 2020). Conversely, when these systems are well-designed and participatory, they not only improve project performance but also enhance civic engagement and social cohesion (Omobowale et al., 2024). The integration of citizen science methodologies, which combine knowledge from experts and community members through participatory design, represents a promising pathway to achieving context-sensitive and inclusive monitoring systems (Yfantidou et al., 2023). Ultimately, embedding monitoring and accountability within community engagement practices ensures that public projects remain responsive, equitable, and sustainable.

3.1.2.6 Feedback and Evaluation

Feedback and evaluation are integral to the effective management of public projects and community engagement initiatives. They represent systematic processes through which

project outcomes are assessed, stakeholder perspectives are gathered, and improvements are implemented to ensure alignment with community needs and development objectives (Badiora et al., 2020; Tor et al., 2025). At their core, these processes provide the means for learning, adaptation, and accountability within both short-term interventions and long-term programmes.

In definitional terms, feedback refers to the flow of information from stakeholders, beneficiaries, and partners back to decision-makers, highlighting perceptions, concerns, and suggestions about an ongoing or completed project. Evaluation, in contrast, involves the structured assessment of a project's design, implementation, and results against established objectives, performance indicators, and standards (Joo et al., 2025). Together, they comprise a cyclical system where input from the community informs project adjustment, and systematic review ensures that intended outcomes are achieved efficiently and sustainably. Core components include community-structured dialogue, participatory monitoring, use of measurable indicators, and mechanisms for timely communication and action (Badiora et al., 2020).

Scholarly discourse positions feedback and evaluation as essential for promoting transparency, building trust, and improving social resilience in community-based initiatives (Tor et al., 2025; Joo et al., 2025). Research shows that when communities are actively involved in these processes, through platforms such as participatory evaluation workshops, public forums, or citizen science approaches, project responsiveness improves, and service delivery becomes more relevant to local realities (Yfantidou et al., 2023). Effective methods range from structured communication via local leaders and trusted community facilities, to the incorporation of material artefacts and visual tools in urban planning dialogues. These mechanisms not only facilitate the exchange of information but also empower communities to influence project outcomes meaningfully.

The importance of robust feedback and evaluation frameworks lies in their capacity to strengthen project sustainability, reduce implementation risks, and foster inclusive decision-making (Badiora et al., 2020). They enable the early detection of challenges such as unequal stakeholder influence, inadequate coordination, or low participation rates, and they provide evidence-based pathways for corrective action. Furthermore, these processes enhance community resilience by preparing local systems for emergencies, ensuring equitable access to services, and embedding adaptive capacities into governance structures.

The consequences of neglecting feedback and evaluation are significant. Without these mechanisms, projects risk becoming disconnected from community priorities, resources may be misallocated, and opportunities for capacity building may be lost. As recent Nigerian case studies illustrate, inadequate stakeholder engagement has contributed to delays, cost overruns, and diminished public trust in both infrastructure and social programmes (Tor et al., 2025). Therefore, integrating context-specific, culturally sensitive, and participatory feedback and evaluation practices is not merely a procedural formality but a strategic imperative for public project effectiveness and legitimacy.

3.1.3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study is constructed to explicate the relationship between community engagement and the effectiveness of public projects in Benin City, Nigeria. It is anchored on six key dimensions that have emerged from contemporary literature as central to participatory governance and citizen involvement in public development: information sharing, consultation and participation, collaboration and partnership, empowerment and capacity building, monitoring and accountability, and feedback and evaluation (Arkorful et al., 2022; Eyisi et al., 2020; Bukiwe, 2024).

This framework proposes that community engagement is a multidimensional construct comprising both vertical (government–citizen) and horizontal (community–community)

interactions. Each of these six dimensions plays a distinct but interdependent role in shaping project outcomes, particularly in terms of transparency, community ownership, project sustainability, and service delivery efficiency (Dossou et al., 2021; Mela & Bello, 2023). The framework assumes that effective engagement across these six domains will positively influence public project success, while weaknesses in any of the dimensions may result in project delays, lack of ownership, or outright failure (Ofosu & Ntiamoah, 2016).

Information sharing is conceptualised as the availability, accessibility, and clarity of project-related information disseminated to communities. It forms the foundation of all subsequent engagement, enabling informed participation (Abubakar et al., 2025). Consultation and participation refer to the extent to which communities are actively involved in the decision-making process, planning, and execution of public projects. This fosters mutual trust and local legitimacy (Khodyakov et al., 2011; Acero et al., 2024).

Collaboration and partnership emphasise the cooperative arrangements between stakeholders, including government agencies, private actors, and civil society, to jointly pursue project goals. When communities act as co-producers rather than passive beneficiaries, project success rates improve significantly (Tembo et al., 2021). Empowerment and capacity building involve equipping local actors with the knowledge, skills, and institutional support to influence and manage development processes. This reduces dependency and enhances local resilience (Simon et al., 2025; Sahani et al., 2024).

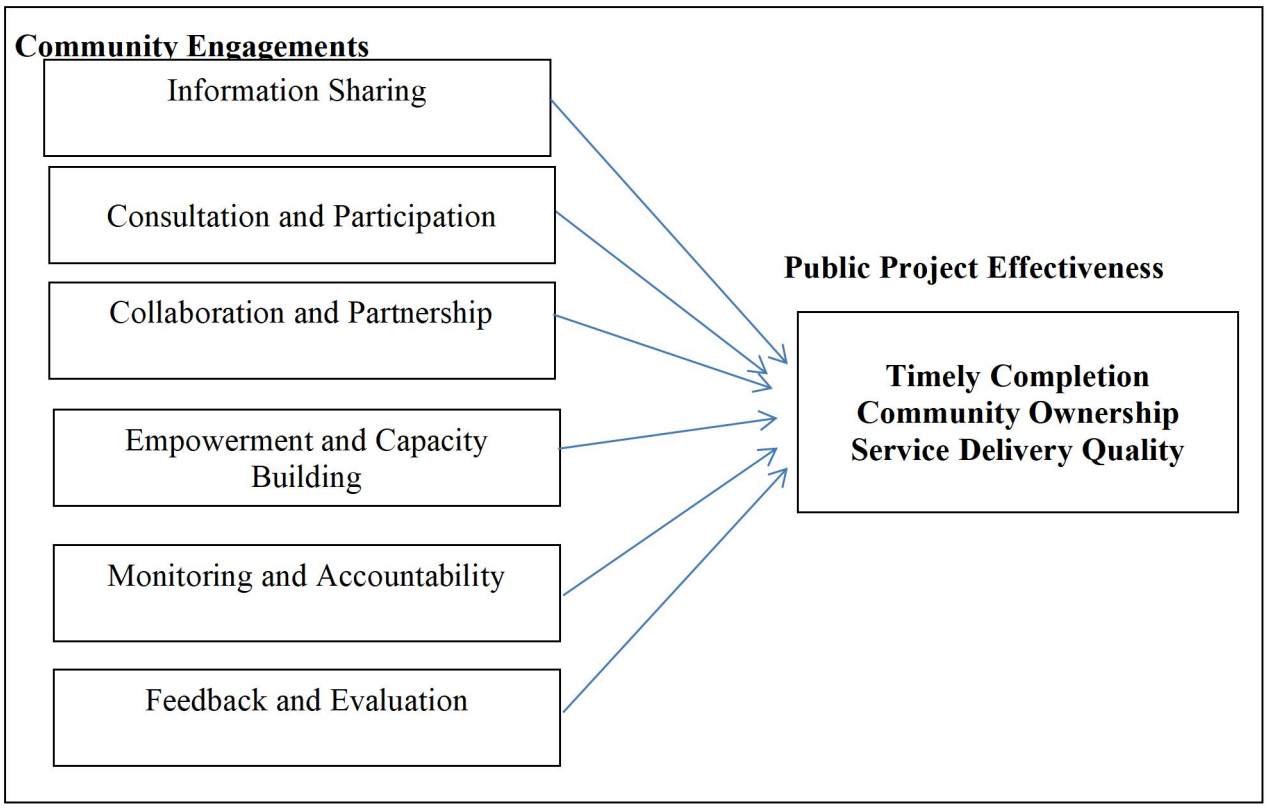
Monitoring and accountability capture the oversight functions by which communities track progress and hold implementers responsible. This includes both formal mechanisms (e.g. community scorecards) and informal ones (e.g. local surveillance), ensuring transparency and value for money (Arkorful et al., 2022). Finally, feedback and evaluation involve systematic processes for gathering community input and assessing satisfaction and impact.

Effective feedback loops close the participatory cycle and improve future interventions (Eyisi et al., 2020; Bukiwe, 2024).

The framework assumes that when these six dimensions are collectively operationalised, they foster mutual trust, enhance transparency, and promote inclusive development. Conversely, their absence or fragmentation leads to public distrust, elite capture, and policy failure (Mela & Bello, 2023; Dossou et al., 2021). The framework thus guides both the empirical investigation and the interpretation of findings in this study.

The figure below illustrates the conceptual framework adopted:

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Researcher's construction (2025)

3.2 Theoretical Literature Review

Theories for community engagement

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation was propounded by Sherry Arnstein in 1969 and it remains the seminal typology for thinking about citizen participation. Its core tenet is that participation occupies a spectrum from non-participation (manipulation, therapy), through tokenism (informing, consultation, placation), to citizen power (partnership, delegated power, citizen control). Strengths of the ladder include its conceptual clarity and diagnostic utility: it helps researchers and practitioners identify where an engagement process lies on the power continuum and whether it confers real influence to citizens. Its weaknesses are well documented: it is linear and normative (assuming "higher rungs" are always preferable), it underplays contextual constraints (culture, capacity, political economy), and it offers little guidance on how to move rungs in practice. Generally used in participatory planning, urban governance and development studies, Arnstein's Ladder is especially useful for evaluating the depth of engagement processes. Applied to Benin City, the ladder gives a straightforward yardstick for assessing whether public projects merely inform citizens or genuinely share decision-making power , critical where traditional authorities, bureaucratic practice and informal settlements shape civic voice.

Collaborative Governance Theory

Collaborative Governance Theory was propounded by John Ansell and Alison Gash in 2008 and postulates that complex public problems are best addressed through structured, sustained collaboration among public agencies, civil society and community actors. Its principal tenets include: joint decision-making in formally convened settings, trust building, facilitative leadership, and iterative face-to-face deliberation that produces shared rules and public value. Strengths lie in its realist account of the conditions that make collaboration work (initial incentives, institutional design, leadership), and its prescriptive orientation for process design. Weaknesses include potential exclusion of marginalised voices (collaboration can be captured by elites), high transaction costs, and dependence on

enabling political will. In practice, collaborative governance informs multi-stakeholder platforms, partnerships and co-management arrangements. For Benin City's public projects, this theory clarifies how to construct durable partnerships between local government, neighbourhood groups, private developers and traditional institutions , emphasising the necessity of facilitative structures and trust-building to translate consultation into co-production.

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory was propounded by James Coleman (1988) and popularised by Robert Putnam (1993) and asserts that networks, norms and social trust enable coordination and collective action for mutual benefit. Key tenets distinguish bonding (intra-group), bridging (inter-group) and linking (connections with authorities) social capital; high social capital lowers transaction costs, improves information flow, and fosters mutual monitoring. Strengths of the concept include its explanatory power in accounting for why some communities mobilise successfully and sustain collective goods; it also points to mechanisms (networks, norms) amenable to policy strengthening. Criticisms include measurement difficulties, possible exclusionary effects of strong bonding ties, and ambiguous causal direction (does social capital cause better outcomes or vice versa?). Empirically applied across governance, public health and development projects, social capital theory helps explain variation in community responsiveness and maintenance of infrastructure. In Benin City, social capital explains how neighbourhood associations, guilds and extended family networks can either facilitate or block meaningful engagement , and why capacity building should be attentive to existing networks rather than imposing external forms of participation.

Theories for Public Project Effectiveness

Results-Based Management (RBM) / Theory of Change (ToC)

RBM and Theory of Change are complementary: RBM prescribes planning and management focused on intended results (outputs, outcomes, impacts) with indicators, monitoring and reporting; ToC articulates causal pathways and assumptions linking activities to outcomes. Tenets include clarity of objectives, explicit logic models, indicator selection, periodic monitoring, and use of evaluation to inform adaptation. Strengths: RBM/ToC sharpen goals, enable accountability, and improve learning; they translate abstract objectives into measurable steps. Weaknesses involve reductionism (over-reliance on indicators that miss qualitative change), risk of gaming targets, and difficulties capturing complex socio-political change. RBM/ToC are standard in international development, donor programmes and public management reform. For Benin City projects, applying RBM/ToC ensures that engagement activities are linked to measurable project outcomes (e.g. utilisation rates, maintenance performance) and makes explicit the assumptions linking community engagement to effectiveness , a necessary tool to test causal claims in the study.

Principal–Agent Theory

Principal–Agent (P–A) theory analyses relationships where one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), with potential for information asymmetry, divergent objectives and moral hazard. Tenets: agents may shirk or pursue self-interest absent monitoring/incentives; alignment requires contract design, monitoring, incentives and credible sanctions. Strengths: provides a rigorous framework for analysing accountability problems, monitoring costs and incentive structures; it yields clear prescriptions (monitoring, incentive alignment). Weaknesses include its narrowness (economic rationality assumptions), limited attention to social norms, and difficulty capturing collective principals (multiple community principals). Applied widely in procurement, decentralisation and contract management, P–A theory highlights why public projects fail when implementers lack oversight or incentives. In Benin City, this theory helps explain how weak monitoring,

patronage politics or opaque contracts undermine project effectiveness despite nominal community engagement , pointing to the need for transparent accountability and well-designed local oversight mechanisms.

Institutional Theory / New Institutional Economics

Institutional theory emphasises that formal rules (laws, regulations) and informal norms (customs, conventions) shape actors' behaviour and performance. Tenets include the idea that institutions reduce uncertainty, shape incentives and are path-dependent; formal and informal institutions interact to enable or constrain collective action. Strengths: it brings political economy and cultural context into analyses of performance, explaining why identical policies yield different outcomes across locales. Weaknesses: it can be descriptive rather than prescriptive, and operationalising the study of informal norms is methodologically challenging. Institutional theory is widely used in governance, development and organisational studies. Applied to public project effectiveness in Benin City, institutional theory foregrounds how local governance arrangements (traditional authorities, municipal rules), bureaucratic practices, and informal patronage networks affect project delivery and the translation of engagement into sustainable outcomes. It therefore supports analyses that move beyond technical fixes to reform of norms, incentives and institutional architectures.

3.3 Empirical Literature Review

Behanzin et al. (2021) examine the concept and practice of citizen participation, which has become widely recognised globally and established as a fundamental element of effective democracies since the 19th century. Citizen engagement fosters constructive relationships between institutions and communities, leading to decisions that tend to be more sustainable, equitable, and supportive of improved local living standards. Their study focuses on the

Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD) in Benin, representing one of several urban development initiatives where dialogue between institutions and local populations contributes to creating both social and economic capital. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques to explore community involvement in the implementation of PAURAD. Data were gathered through document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires, utilising purposive and simple random sampling methods to select participants. Findings indicate that while participatory methods help nurture social demands and are incorporated within PAURAD, such engagement is largely limited to periodic consultation meetings throughout the project lifecycle. Furthermore, this approach has shown limited effectiveness in fostering community accountability for the upkeep of infrastructure established by the project. The authors highlight the necessity to broaden community participation in decision-making processes across all stages of the project.

Arkorful, Hilton, and Awaah (2023) investigated community engagement (CE) within development projects in Ghana, specifically comparing government-funded initiatives with those financed by private entities. The study was motivated by the frequent abandonment of government projects, either during or after completion, at public expense, which has been linked to inadequate community involvement. The main objective was to evaluate the extent and nature of CE in these two types of projects. Employing a qualitative methodology, the researchers used a multiple case study design. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in selected districts of Ghana's Central Region. The analysis was performed using thematic and comparative techniques. Findings showed that community engagement was notably weaker in government-funded projects compared to privately funded ones. The study identified three key levels of engagement: consultation, participation in decision-making, and consent. It also highlighted the critical roles of public

participation, such as facilitating knowledge sharing and fostering a collective sense of ownership. Key challenges affecting CE included resource limitations, conflicting stakeholder interests, poor information flow, public resistance to change, and political interference from central government authorities. The study contributes empirical evidence aimed at informing policy development on community engagement. It suggests that such policies should clearly define the role of CE, address existing challenges, and enforce adherence to the identified levels of engagement to improve project outcomes.

Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013) studied the Influence of community participation on successful implementation of constituency development fund projects in Kenya: case study of Mwea Constituency. This research seeks to determine the extent to which involvement of community on identifying, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of community-based projects affects the successful implementation of Constituency Development Fund projects. No doubt that the top-down approach in management of CDF funds has not been successful. Donors call for a people-centered approach in managing local developments in developing countries, as supported by related literature. The study was carried out in Kirinyaga county, Mwea constituency, Kenya. Kenya's Constituency Development Fund assists in developing local communities. Descriptive research was utilized to guide the study. Both primary and secondary data were used, and descriptive statistics guided data analysis. The Researcher revealed that, most of Mwea residents do not participate in management of Community Development Fund projects, leading to failure in implementation. In conclusion, community members, whether influential or not, should be involved in identification, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the CDF projects to boost success.

Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013) examined how community participation influences the successful execution of Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects in Kenya, focusing on Mwea Constituency. The study aimed to assess the degree to which involving

community members in the identification, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of these projects impacts their success. The researchers noted that the traditional top-down management approach to CDF funds has largely been ineffective. This aligns with donor calls and existing literature advocating for a more people-centred approach to local development in developing countries. The research was conducted in Mwea Constituency, located in Kirinyaga County, Kenya. Using a descriptive research design, the study incorporated both primary and secondary data, analysed through descriptive statistics. Findings revealed that many residents of Mwea had limited involvement in managing CDF projects, which contributed to their poor implementation. The study concluded that involving all community members, regardless of their social influence, in every stage of the CDF projects, from identification to evaluation, is crucial for enhancing their success.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted for this study. It presents the theoretical framework underpinning the research, specifies the analytical model used, and details the estimation techniques adopted. It also discusses the population and sampling procedures, describes the research instrument, explains the operationalisation and measurement of variables, and elaborates on issues of reliability and validity. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the *a priori* expectations, sources of data, and methods of data analysis.

4.1 Theoretical Framework

This study draws on a multi-theoretical framework to examine community engagement in public project implementation in Benin City, with Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (Arnstein, 1969) and the Theory of Collaborative Governance (Ansell & Gash, 2008) serving as primary anchors, complemented by operational insights from Results-Based Management (RBM) and the Theory of Change (ToC).

Arnstein's Ladder provides a diagnostic typology for gauging the extent of citizen influence in participatory processes. It classifies participation into three main levels: *non-participation* (manipulation, therapy), *degrees of tokenism* (informing, consultation, placation), and *degrees of citizen power* (partnership, delegated power, citizen control). By identifying where engagement falls on this continuum, the framework helps determine whether public participation in Benin City's projects is genuinely empowering or merely symbolic.

The Theory of Collaborative Governance complements this by focusing on the processes through which public agencies and diverse stakeholders work together in consensus-oriented and deliberative settings. It emphasises inclusivity, transparency, trust-building, and shared accountability as essential for joint problem-solving and sustainable outcomes.

This is especially relevant in the Nigerian context, where collaboration among government institutions, community groups, civil society, and private actors is often necessary to deliver and maintain public projects.

While Arnstein's model examines the *depth* of participation, Collaborative Governance addresses the *quality* of stakeholder interaction, outlining the institutional and relational conditions that can move engagement towards genuine citizen power. Together, they offer a dual perspective, one evaluative, the other prescriptive, that strengthens the analytical basis of the study.

RBM and ToC extend this framework to outcomes. RBM provides a systematic method for defining measurable objectives, tracking indicators, and linking activities to results, while ToC maps the causal pathways from engagement to project impacts, making explicit the assumptions and contextual factors that influence success. These tools enable the study to assess project effectiveness in terms of timeliness, utilisation, maintenance, and long-term benefits.

In practical terms, Arnstein's Ladder will be used to code the level of participation reflected in survey and interview data; Collaborative Governance will assess inclusivity, transparency, and trust; RBM and ToC will guide the development of outcome indicators; and contextual governance factors, such as monitoring mechanisms, political patronage, and customary authority, will help explain why engagement does or does not translate into effectiveness.

4.2 Model Specification

The model for this study aims to examine the relationship between dimensions of community engagement (independent variables) and public project effectiveness (dependent variable) in Benin City, Nigeria. The model draws on frameworks from participatory governance, social accountability, and public administration.

The model can be represented as:

$$PPE = f(IS, CP, CPAR, ECB, MA, FE)$$

And further expressed in a linear regression form:

$$PPE = \beta_0 + \beta_1 IS + \beta_2 CP + \beta_3 CPAR + \beta_4 ECB + \beta_5 MA + \beta_6 FE + \varepsilon$$

Where:

PPE = Public Project Effectiveness

CE = Community Engagements, consisting of:

IS = Information Sharing

CP = Consultation and Participation

CPAR = Collaboration and Partnership

ECB = Empowerment and Capacity Building

MA = Monitoring and Accountability

FE = Feedback and Evaluation

β_0 = Constant

β_1–β_6 = Coefficients of explanatory variables

ε = Error term

This model seeks to establish whether, and to what extent, community engagement dimensions influence the successful execution and impact of public projects in Benin City.

4.3 Estimation Techniques

The study employed Multiple Linear Regression Analysis (MLRA) as the primary estimation technique. This method allows for the evaluation of the effect of several independent variables (community engagement dimensions) on the dependent variable (project effectiveness). Prior to regression analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and diagnostic tests (e.g., multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and normality) was conducted to ensure the validity of results. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 25.

4.4 Apriori Expectations, Variables/ Data Descriptions and Data Sources

Apriori Expectations

Based on theoretical insights and empirical findings, all six independent variables (dimensions of community engagement) are expected to have a positive and significant relationship with public project effectiveness. This is expressed as:

$$\beta_1 > 0, \beta_2 > 0, \beta_3 > 0, \beta_4 > 0, \beta_5 > 0, \beta_6 > 0$$

This implies that:

Information Sharing (IS) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Consultation and Participation (CP) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Collaboration and Partnership (CPAR) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Empowerment and Capacity Building (ECB) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Monitoring and Accountability (MA) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Feedback and Evaluation (FE) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

Public Project Effectiveness (PPE) is expected to positively impact public project effectiveness.

4.5 Analytical/Statistical Model

Main Effects (OLS/GLS or SEM)

$PPE_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \cdot CE_i + \beta_2 \cdot Controls_i + \varepsilon_i$

Where CE can be an index or latent variable (Info, Participation, Empowerment).

Mediation (Baron & Kenny / SEM / Bootstrap)

$ACC_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \cdot CE_i + \alpha_2 \cdot Controls_i + u_i$

$PPE_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \cdot CE_i + \gamma_2 \cdot ACC_i + \gamma_3 \cdot Controls_i + v_i$

Indirect effect = $\alpha_1 \times \gamma_2$ (bootstrap CI).

Moderation

$PPE_i = \delta_0 + \delta_1 \cdot CE_i + \delta_2 \cdot CAP_i + \delta_3 \cdot (CE_i \times CAP_i) + \delta_4 \cdot Controls_i + e_i$

H3 supported if $\delta_3 > 0$ and significant.

Heterogeneity

Interact CE with LGA dummies and with project-type dummies; or estimate subgroup models.

Measurement & Scoring Summary

CE = mean(C1–C12) or three sub-indices (CE-Info, CE-Partic, CE-Emp).

ACC = mean(D1–D5).

CAP = mean(E1–E5).

PPE = mean(F1–F9) or sub-dimensions (Timeliness/Budget/Quality; Utilization/Satisfaction; Sustainability).

Higher scores = better on each construct.

4.6 Data Analysis Plan (concise)

1. Descriptives (means, SDs) by LGA and project type.

2. Reliability/Validity: Cronbach's α, Composite Reliability, AVE; CFA for latent structure.

3. Common Method Checks: Harman's single factor, marker variable, or time-lag/dual-source if feasible.

4. Hypothesis Tests:

H1: OLS/SEM path CE → PPE.

H2: Mediation (bootstrapped indirect effects CE → ACC → PPE).

H3: Moderation (CE×CAP → PPE; probe with simple slopes).

H4: Interactions with LGA/project type or multigroup SEM.

5. Robustness: Cluster SEs at project level; include controls.

Data Sources

Primary data was collected using copies of a structured questionnaire administered to residents, project beneficiaries, community leaders, and local government officials in Benin City. A stratified sampling technique will be employed to ensure representative coverage across LGAs and wards. Secondary data will be obtained from project reports, monitoring documents, and official publications from government agencies and donor partners.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.0 Introduction

Chapter Five presents the empirical results of the study on the influence of community engagement on the success and effectiveness of public projects in Benin City, Nigeria. This chapter provides a comprehensive analysis of the data collected from community members, project beneficiaries, community leaders, local government officials, and project staff. The analysis focuses on four dimensions of community engagement: information sharing, consultation and participation, empowerment, and monitoring.

The chapter begins with pre-estimation analyses to assess the suitability of the data for inferential testing, followed by the main estimation results that evaluate direct, mediated, moderated, and heterogeneous effects of community engagement on project effectiveness. It concludes with a discussion of the findings in relation to the research objectives and hypotheses.

The aim is to present descriptive and inferential analyses, determine the extent to which community engagement supports project success, and evaluate the mediating and moderating roles of perceived government accountability and community capacity. Statistical techniques were applied to ensure the reliability, validity, and robustness of the findings.

The results are interpreted within the context of the study's theoretical framework, including Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation, the Theory of Collaborative Governance, Results-Based Management, and the Theory of Change. The chapter ends with a discussion of the policy and practical implications of the findings.

5.1 Pre-Estimation Analysis

5.1.1 Retrieval Rate and Description of Respondents' Socio-Demographics

5.1.1.1 Retrieval Rate

A total of 333 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved out of the 360 copies distributed. The retrieval rate was computed using:

$$\text{Retrieval rate} = \left(\frac{\text{Number of questionnaires retrieved}}{\text{Number of questionnaires distributed}}\right) \times 100$$

Substituting the values:

$$\text{Retrieval rate} = \left(\frac{333}{360}\right) \times 100 = 92.5\%$$

Thus, the retrieval rate for the study was 92.5 percent.

5.1.1.2 Description of Respondents' Socio-Demographics

This section presents a descriptive analysis of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The variables examined include Local Government Area (LGA), project type, respondent role, age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, monthly income, and Local Government Area of residence.

Table 5.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

S/N	Categories	Frequency	Percent
1	**Local Government Area (LGA)**		
	Oredo	121	36.3
	Egor	116	34.8
	Ikpoba-Okha	96	28.8
	Total	333	100
2	**Project Type**		
	Health	64	19.2
	Water	60	18.0
	Market	55	16.5
	Road/Drainage	53	15.9
	Other	52	15.6
	Education	49	14.7
	Total	333	100
3	**Respondent Role**		
	Business Owner	73	21.9
	Project Committee	72	21.6
	Resident/User	68	20.4
	CDA/Community Leader	62	18.6

	Other	58	17.4
	Total	333	100
4	**Age**		
	45–54	76	22.8
	55+	71	21.3
	25–34	70	21.0
	35–44	58	17.4
	<25	58	17.4
	Total	333	100
5	**Gender**		
	Female	179	53.8
	Male	154	46.2
	Total	333	100
6	**Educational Qualification**		
	Postgraduate	80	24.0
	HND/Bachelor	65	19.5
	Secondary	64	19.2
	OND/NCE	63	18.9
	Primary	61	18.3
	Total	333	100
7	**Employment Status**		
	Self-employed	74	22.2
	Private Sector	67	20.1
	Other	67	20.1
	Public Sector	65	19.5
	Unemployed	60	18.0
	Total	333	100
8	**Monthly Income**		
	₦250–500k	87	26.1
	₦50–100k	75	22.5
	<₦50k	66	19.8
	>₦500k	60	18.0
	₦100–250k	45	13.5
	Total	333	100
9	**LGA of Residence**		
	Ovia North-East	99	29.7
	Egor	89	26.7
	Oredo	77	23.1
	Ikpoba-Okha	68	20.4
	Total	333	100

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Local Government Area

The data show that 36.3 percent of the respondents were from Oredo, 34.8 percent from Egor, and 28.8 percent from Ikpoba-Okha. This indicates a balanced distribution across the three LGAs.

Project Type

The majority of respondents (19.2 percent) were associated with health projects, followed by water (18.0 percent) and market projects (16.5 percent). Road and drainage, other, and education projects accounted for 15.9 percent, 15.6 percent, and 14.7 percent, respectively.

Respondent Role

Business owners constituted 21.9 percent of respondents, followed by project committee members at 21.6 percent and residents/users at 20.4 percent. CDA/community leaders represented 18.6 percent, while others accounted for 17.4 percent.

Age

Respondents aged 45–54 years formed the largest group at 22.8 percent. The 55+ and 25–34 categories accounted for 21.3 percent and 21.0 percent, respectively. The 35–44 and under-25 groups each represented 17.4 percent.

Gender

Females represented 53.8 percent of the sample, while males represented 46.2 percent.

Educational Qualification

The data show that 24.0 percent of respondents held postgraduate qualifications. Those with HND/Bachelor degrees represented 19.5 percent, while secondary education and OND/NCE holders accounted for 19.2 percent and 18.9 percent, respectively. Respondents with primary education constituted 18.3 percent.

Employment Status

Self-employed respondents accounted for 22.2 percent of the sample. Private sector employees and respondents in the other category each accounted for 20.1 percent, while public sector workers contributed 19.5 percent. Unemployed respondents constituted 18.0 percent.

Monthly Income

Respondents earning ₦250–500k represented 26.1 percent, followed by those earning ₦50–100k at 22.5 percent and those earning less than ₦50k at 19.8 percent. Respondents earning more than ₦500k and ₦100–250k accounted for 18.0 percent and 13.5 percent, respectively.

Local Government Area of Residence

A higher proportion of respondents (29.7 percent) resided in Ovia North-East, followed by Egor (26.7 percent), Oredo (23.1 percent), and Ikpoba-Okha (20.4 percent).

5.1.2 Description of Research Variables

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the research variables using simple percentages, means, and standard deviations. Community engagement serves as the independent variable and is measured through information transparency, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment and monitoring. Perceived government accountability is the mediating variable, community capacity is the moderating variable, and public project effectiveness is the dependent variable. Respondents rated each item on a five-point Likert scale where 1 corresponds to strong disagreement and 5 corresponds to strong agreement.

5.1.2.1 Description of Community Engagement

In realising this objective, first of all, the computed mean scores and standard deviation of responses to each factor of community engagement which are assessed on a five-point Likert scale in which one represents a strong level of disagreement and five represents a strong level of agreement are presented below.

Table 5.2 provides the descriptive analysis of community engagement among respondents in Benin City.

Table 5.2: Description of Community Engagement

Q/N	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Decision
	Information Transparency (CE-Info)								
15	We received timely information about the project's goals and timelines.	59	71	62	76	65	3.05	1.39	Accepted
16	Project budget and costs were openly shared with the community.	76	51	71	66	69	3.00	1.45	Accepted
17	We had access to updates on progress and changes.	66	71	58	72	66	3.00	1.42	Accepted
18	Meeting notices were widely publicised (for example posters, town criers, WhatsApp).	74	54	64	68	73	3.04	1.46	Accepted
	Average Total						3.02	0.73	Accepted
	Participatory Decision-Making (CE-Partic)								
19	Community members were consulted before key decisions.	56	72	67	66	72	3.08	1.40	Accepted
20	Our inputs influenced design or specifications.	61	65	79	57	71	3.04	1.40	Accepted
21	Community representatives sat on planning or monitoring committees.	71	65	69	61	67	2.96	1.43	Rejected
22	Women and youth voices were actively included.	69	66	71	63	64	2.96	1.41	Rejected
	Average Total						3.01	0.69	Accepted
	Community Empowerment or Monitoring (CE-Emp)								
23	The community had mechanisms to monitor implementation.	69	63	78	62	61	2.95	1.39	Rejected
24	We could report grievances and receive feedback.	61	47	82	83	60	3.10	1.36	Accepted
25	Community contributions (labour, funds or land) were recognised and used fairly.	57	88	53	74	61	2.98	1.38	Rejected
26	We feel ownership of the project outcomes.	89	61	53	66	64	2.86	1.49	Rejected
	Average Total						2.97	0.75	Rejected
	Overall Community Engagement Score						3.00	0.59	Accepted

Source: Field Survey, 2025

N.B: 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, undecided, agreed, and strongly agreed respectively.

Information Transparency

The responses in Table 5.2 show that perceptions of information transparency ranged from neutrality to slight agreement. A total of 141 respondents (76 agreed and 65 strongly agreed) affirmed that they received timely information on project goals and timelines, while 130 respondents expressed disagreement to varying degrees. The mean score of 3.05 and standard deviation of 1.39 indicate a generally neutral opinion, suggesting that information dissemination was inconsistent. Concerning project budgets and costs, 135 respondents (66 agreed and 69 strongly agreed) perceived some level of openness, while 127 respondents disagreed and 71 remained undecided. The mean score of 3.00 with a standard deviation of 1.45 reflects uncertainty regarding the completeness of financial disclosures. Access to project updates recorded a similar pattern, with a mean of 3.00 and standard deviation of 1.42, indicating moderate exposure to project progress information. Meeting notices were perceived as fairly well publicised, supported by a mean of 3.04 and standard deviation of 1.46. The overall average mean score for information transparency, 3.02 (SD 0.73), shows that respondents neither strongly agreed nor strongly disagreed but held generally neutral perceptions.

Participatory Decision-Making

Perceptions of participatory decision-making also reflected a mix of agreement and disagreement. Community consultation prior to key decisions was acknowledged by 138 respondents (66 agreed and 72 strongly agreed), while 128 respondents expressed various levels of disagreement or uncertainty. The mean of 3.08 with a standard deviation of 1.40 indicates slight agreement and suggests that some consultation processes were implemented. Input influence on project design had a mean of 3.04 (SD 1.40), signalling modest influence of community contributions. However, representation on planning and monitoring committees recorded a mean of 2.96 (SD 1.43), with more respondents disagreeing than agreeing, reflecting weak community involvement in structured decision-making bodies.

Similarly, inclusion of women and youth also recorded a mean of 2.96 (SD 1.41), showing that their voices were not consistently integrated. The average total mean of 3.01 (SD 0.69) indicates that participatory decision-making was generally neutral and not strongly affirmed.

Community Empowerment and Monitoring

Responses relating to empowerment and monitoring showed lower levels of agreement. Mechanisms for community monitoring had a mean of 2.95 (SD 1.39), reflecting prevalent disagreement about the availability of monitoring structures. Grievance reporting and feedback recorded the highest agreement within this dimension, with a mean of 3.10 (SD 1.36), as 143 respondents (83 agreed and 60 strongly agreed) affirmed that such channels existed. Recognition of community contributions had a mean of 2.98 (SD 1.38), pointing to inconsistencies in how communities perceived fairness in their contributions. Perceived ownership of project outcomes had the lowest mean of 2.86 (SD 1.49), suggesting limited empowerment and weak attachment to project results. The average total mean for this dimension, 2.97 (SD 0.75), indicates that respondents rejected the notion that empowerment mechanisms were sufficient.

The aggregated mean score for community engagement was 3.00 (SD 0.59). This suggests that respondents generally held neutral views about the extent and quality of engagement across the three dimensions.

5.1.2.2 Description of Perceived Government Accountability

Table 5.3 below presents the descriptive statistics for perceived government accountability among respondents in Benin City.

Table 5.3 Description of Perceived Government Accountability

Q/N	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Decision
27	Officials responded promptly to inquiries or complaints.	68	77	52	60	76	3.00	1.47	Accepted
28	Procurement and contractor selection was transparent.	74	74	59	75	51	2.86	1.39	Rejected
29	Progress reports were accurate and credible.	66	76	63	71	57	2.93	1.39	Rejected
30	Deviations such as delays or cost changes were explained with evidence.	61	81	74	57	60	2.92	1.37	Rejected
31	Sanctions or remedies occurred when problems were found.	77	75	60	53	68	2.88	1.46	Rejected
Total							2.92	0.64	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

N.B: **1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 denote strongly disagreed, disagreed, undecided, agreed, strongly agreed response rate respectively**

Perceived Government Accountability

Perceptions of government accountability were largely neutral to negative. Item 27 recorded a mean of 3.00 (SD 1.47), indicating neutral views on prompt responses to inquiries or complaints. Items 28 to 31 recorded mean scores below 3, ranging from 2.86 to 2.93, reflecting disagreement regarding transparency, credibility of reports, explanations for deviations, and enforcement of sanctions. The overall mean score of 2.92 (SD 0.64) indicates rejection and suggests low perceived accountability among respondents.

5.1.2.3 Description of Community Capacity

Table 5.4 below presents the descriptive statistics for community capacity among respondents in Benin City.

Table 5.4: Description of Community Capacity

Q/N	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Decision

32	Our community has organised groups able to engage with government.	58	62	76	64	73	3.10	1.40	Accepted
33	We have people with technical or administrative skills to track projects.	79	60	71	70	53	2.87	1.40	Rejected
34	We can mobilise resources when needed.	74	68	55	65	71	2.97	1.47	Rejected
35	We understand our rights and the processes required to influence projects.	61	69	54	77	72	3.09	1.43	Accepted
36	We have prior experience engaging in public projects.	77	66	67	58	65	2.90	1.44	Rejected
Total							2.99	0.61	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Community Capacity

Perceptions of community capacity were mixed. Respondents agreed that organised groups existed and that people understood their rights, as reflected in the mean scores of 3.10 and 3.09 for Items 32 and 35. However, Items 33, 34, and 36 recorded mean values between 2.87 and 2.97, indicating disagreement regarding technical skills, resource mobilisation, and prior project engagement. The total mean score of 2.99 (SD 0.61) falls below the acceptance threshold and reflects overall rejection.

5.1.2.4 Description of Public Project Effectiveness

Table 5.5 below presents the descriptive statistics for public project effectiveness among respondents in Benin City.

Table 5.5: Description of Public Project Effectiveness

Q/N	Item	1	2	3	4	5	Mean	SD	Decision
37	The project was delivered on schedule.	67	62	69	77	58	2.99	1.39	Rejected
38	The project stayed within budget.	56	77	64	66	70	3.05	1.40	Accepted
39	Construction quality meets acceptable standards.	64	63	66	63	77	3.08	1.44	Accepted
40	The project is used regularly by intended beneficiaries.	65	71	65	66	66	2.99	1.41	Rejected
41	The project improved service access such as water, health, education, or transport.	55	67	81	58	72	3.08	1.38	Accepted
42	Overall, I am satisfied with the	78	56	69	67	63	2.94	1.44	Rejected

	project.								
43	Maintenance arrangements are in place and functioning.	73	70	57	62	71	2.96	1.46	Rejected
44	The project continues to deliver benefits over time.	76	70	63	56	68	2.91	1.45	Rejected
45	Vandalism or misuse is minimal.	76	65	66	63	63	2.92	1.43	Rejected
46	Political interference undermined the project.	65	75	69	77	47	2.90	1.34	Rejected
47	Contractor competence was adequate.	67	66	75	62	63	2.96	1.40	Rejected
48	Corruption or rent seeking affected outcomes.	82	66	61	59	65	2.88	1.46	Rejected
49	Security issues disrupted work.	68	62	66	62	75	3.04	1.45	Accepted
50	Land or relocation conflicts occurred.	70	66	62	69	66	2.98	1.43	Rejected
Total							2.98	0.35	Rejected

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Public Project Effectiveness

Perceptions of project effectiveness were varied. Items 38, 39, 41, and 49 recorded mean scores above 3, indicating agreement on adherence to budget, construction quality, improved service access, and security-related disruptions. Most other indicators recorded mean values below 3, showing disagreement on project timeliness, utilisation, satisfaction, maintenance, long-term benefits, vandalism, political interference, contractor competence, corruption, and conflict. The overall mean score of 2.98 (SD 0.35) reflects rejection and suggests that respondents perceived project effectiveness to be moderate or low.

5.2 Main Estimation Results

5.2.1 Correlation Analysis

Bivariate Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to explore the relationships among the research variables. Table 5.6 presents the Pearson correlation coefficients for public project effectiveness (PPE), overall community engagement (CE_Overall), and its dimensions, information transparency (CE-Info), participatory decision-making (CE-Partic), community empowerment/monitoring (CE-Emp), as well as perceived government accountability (ACC) and community capacity (CAP).

Table 5.6: Pearson Correlation Coefficients among Research Variables

Variable	PPE	CE_Overall	CE-Info	CE-Partic	CE-Emp	ACC	CAP
PPE	1	0.003	0.047	0.008	-0.047	0.117	-0.133
CE_Overall	0.003	1	0.565	0.569	0.577	-0.065	-0.089
CE-Info	0.047	0.565	1	0.014	-0.053	-0.114	-0.065
CE-Partic	0.008	0.569	0.014	1	0.005	0.112	0.035
CE-Emp	-0.047	0.577	-0.053	0.005	1	-0.100	-0.116
ACC	0.117	-0.065	-0.114	0.112	-0.100	1	0.006
CAP	-0.133	-0.089	-0.065	0.035	-0.116	0.006	1

Interpretation: Public project effectiveness demonstrates weak correlations with all variables. Notably, PPE is positively correlated with ACC (0.117) but negatively with CAP (-0.133). Overall community engagement has negligible correlation with PPE (0.003). The CE sub-dimensions show moderate intercorrelations (0.565–0.577), indicating related constructs. Overall, correlations are weak, suggesting limited linear relationships in this sample.

5.2.2 Estimation and Interpretation of Relationships

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was employed to assess the relationships, including direct effects (H1), mediation (H2), moderation (H3), and heterogeneity (H4).

Direct Effects (H1: CE → PPE)

Table 5.7: OLS Regression of CE_Overall on PPE

Variable	Coef.	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf. Interval]
Constant	2.9685	0.144	20.664	0.000	2.686 3.251
CE_Overall	0.0030	0.047	0.063	0.950	–0.090 0.096

R-squared = 0.000; Adjusted R-squared = -0.003

Sub-dimensions of CE (H1a–c):

CE Dimension	Coefficient	P-value	Significance
CE-Info	0.0230	0.390	Not Significant
CE-Partic	0.0040	0.888	Not Significant
CE-Emp	-0.0225	0.388	Not Significant

Interpretation: None of the coefficients are statistically significant, indicating no evidence that community engagement (overall or sub-dimensions) directly affects public project effectiveness.

Mediation Analysis (H2: CE → ACC → PPE)

Path a: ACC regressed on CE_Overall: Coef=-0.1008, p=0.237 (non-significant)

Path c: PPE regressed on CE_Overall: As above, non-significant

Table 5.8: OLS Regression for CE_Overall and ACC on PPE

Variable	Coef.	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf. Interval]
Constant	2.7583	0.173	15.917	0.000	2.417 3.099
CE_Overall	0.0096	0.047	0.202	0.840	–0.083 0.103
Perceived Accountability (ACC)	0.0652	0.030	2.143	0.033	0.005 0.125

Sobel Test: Z = -1.037, p = 0.300 (non-significant indirect effect)

Interpretation: There is no evidence of mediation by perceived government accountability.

Moderation Analysis (H3: CE × CAP → PPE)

Table 5.9: OLS Regression for Moderation

Variable	Coef.	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	[95% Conf. Interval]
Constant	2.4421	0.669	3.648	0.000	1.125 3.759
CE_Overall (centred)	0.2526	0.218	1.158	0.248	–0.176 0.682

Community Capacity – CAP (centred)	0.1854	0.217	0.853	0.394	–0.242 0.613
Interaction (CE_Overall × CAP)	–0.0868	0.071	–1.221	0.223	–0.227 0.053

Interpretation: The interaction term is not significant (p=0.223), indicating no moderation by community capacity.

Heterogeneity Analysis (H4: Variation by LGA and Project Type)

By Local Government Area (LGA):

LGA	Coef	P-value	Significance
Oredo	-0.0067	0.936	Not Significant
Egor	-0.0171	0.842	Not Significant
Ikpoba-Okha	0.0366	0.650	Not Significant

By Project Type:

Project Type	Coef	P-value	Significance
Market	-0.0840	0.521	Not Significant
Health	0.1684	0.115	Not Significant
Water	-0.0577	0.649	Not Significant
Other	-0.2214	0.073	Not Significant
Education	0.1317	0.198	Not Significant
Road/Drainage	0.0589	0.610	Not Significant

Interpretation: No evidence of heterogeneity by LGA or project type; coefficients are non-significant, suggesting relationships are consistent across groups.

5.3 Discussion of Empirical Results

This study examined the impact of community engagement on public project effectiveness in Benin City, drawing upon empirical evidence from prior research to contextualise the findings.

The first hypothesis posited no significant relationship between community engagement and public project effectiveness. The results support the null hypothesis, as coefficients for overall community engagement and its sub-dimensions were non-significant. This finding contrasts with prior studies emphasising positive effects of participation. Behanzin et al. (2021) demonstrated that in Benin's Urban Development and Decentralization Support Project (PAURAD), community engagement fostered constructive relationships between institutions and local populations, enhancing social and economic capital. However, even in that study, engagement was largely limited to periodic consultations, which restricted community accountability and ownership. Similarly, Arkorful, Hilton, and Awaah (2023) reported that government-funded projects in Ghana experienced weaker engagement compared with privately funded initiatives, often leading to project abandonment or incomplete outcomes. Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013) also observed in Kenya that limited participation in Constituency Development Fund (CDF) projects undermined their successful implementation, reinforcing the importance of comprehensive involvement across all project stages. In the current study, neutral engagement levels (mean ≈3) suggest that community participation in Benin City was largely superficial, which may explain the non-significant influence on project effectiveness.

The second hypothesis examined the mediating role of perceived government accountability. Results indicate no mediation, with all paths non-significant. While collaborative governance theory underscores accountability as crucial for translating participation into tangible outcomes, the low perception of government accountability (mean 2.92) in this study likely constrained this effect. This aligns with Behanzin et al. (2021), who noted that

limited mechanisms for community oversight weakened accountability for infrastructure maintenance, and with Arkorful et al. (2023), who highlighted central government interference as a barrier to effective engagement.

The third hypothesis proposed that community capacity would moderate the relationship between engagement and project effectiveness. The interaction term was non-significant, supporting the null hypothesis. Literature indicates that stronger community capacity can enhance the impact of participation, particularly in megaproject contexts. However, the neutral capacity scores observed in this study (mean 2.99) imply limited ability to strengthen engagement effects. This echoes findings by Nyaguthii and Oyugi (2013), which emphasised that active involvement at all project stages is critical, and limited technical or organisational capacity diminishes the benefits of engagement.

The fourth hypothesis assessed heterogeneity by local government area (LGA) and project type. The effects were uniformly non-significant, supporting the null hypothesis. This contrasts with evidence from other contexts, where engagement outcomes vary by locality or project characteristics, suggesting that context-sensitive strategies may be necessary to optimise project effectiveness.

Overall, the empirical results reveal minimal influence of community engagement on project effectiveness in Benin City, highlighting potential gaps in implementation, superficial engagement practices, and low perceptions of accountability and capacity.

5.4 Policy Implications of Empirical Results

The findings indicate the need to strengthen community engagement practices beyond neutral levels. Policy interventions should consider the following:

- **Enhance information transparency:** Ensure timely dissemination of project goals, timelines, and budgets to foster trust and informed participation (Behanzin et al., 2021; Arkorful et al., 2023).

- **Promote inclusive participation:** Actively engage all community members, including marginalised groups such as women and youth, in decision-making and monitoring processes.
- **Strengthen accountability mechanisms:** Implement transparent procurement procedures, regular reporting, and accessible grievance systems to increase responsiveness and community oversight (Behanzin et al., 2021).
- **Develop community capacity:** Provide technical training, organisational support, and resource mobilisation strategies to enable communities to participate meaningfully in project implementation and monitoring (Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013).
- **Tailor strategies to project type:** Consider differentiated approaches for projects in health, education, and infrastructure, ensuring adequate monitoring and engagement where stakes are highest.

Adopting these measures can enhance both project effectiveness and sustainability, aligning local development initiatives with the principles of collaborative governance and people-centred planning.

5.5 Evaluation of Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	**Result**	**Decision**
H1: Community engagement does not positively predict public project effectiveness	Coefficients non-significant ($p>0.05$)	Fail to reject null
H1a: Information transparency → PPE	Non-significant ($p=0.390$)	Fail to reject null
H1b: Participatory decision-making → PPE	Non-significant ($p=0.888$)	Fail to reject null
H1c: Community empowerment/monitoring → PPE	Non-significant ($p=0.388$)	Fail to reject null

H2: Perceived government accountability does not mediate CE → PPE	Sobel test p=0.300; paths non-significant	Fail to reject null
H3: Community capacity does not strengthen CE → PPE	Interaction non-significant (p=0.223)	Fail to reject null
H4: CE → PPE effect does not vary by LGA and project type	Coefficients non-significant	Fail to reject null

Despite literature demonstrating the benefits of community engagement (Behanzin et al., 2021; Arkorful et al., 2023; Nyaguthii & Oyugi, 2013), the findings from Benin City indicate minimal influence on public project effectiveness. The results highlight the importance of not only engaging communities but ensuring substantive, continuous involvement supported by robust accountability and capacity-building mechanisms.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

Chapter Six concludes the study on the influence of community engagement on public project effectiveness in selected Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo State, Nigeria. This chapter synthesises the key findings from the empirical analysis, presents actionable recommendations informed by these findings, and offers a final conclusion that reflects the broader implications of the study for public sector project management, policy, and future research.

The chapter is structured into three main sections. First, it provides a summary of the empirical findings, linking the results directly to the study objectives and demonstrating how different dimensions of community engagement shape public project effectiveness. Second, it advances a set of recommendations that are grounded in the empirical evidence and targeted at policymakers, public sector managers, and development practitioners seeking to strengthen community involvement and improve project outcomes. Finally, the chapter concludes by reflecting on the broader contributions of the study to knowledge and practice, underscoring its relevance for improving participatory governance and sustainable public project delivery, and outlining potential areas for further research.

Each section provides a comprehensive overview of the study's objectives, the main empirical results, and their relevance to the improvement of community participation and project management in the public sector. The discussion emphasises practical implications for policy and project implementation, as well as areas for future research.

6.1 Summary of Empirical Findings

This section summarises the key findings from the analysis of survey data collected from 333 respondents across various LGAs and project types in Edo State. The study tested four

primary hypotheses using regression techniques, mediation and moderation analysis, and subgroup analysis. The main findings are as follows:

1. Community engagement, measured through overall engagement and its sub-dimensions of information transparency, participatory decision-making, and community empowerment, does not have a significant effect on public project effectiveness. The regression coefficients were either near zero or statistically non-significant across all dimensions, indicating no empirical support for the proposed positive relationship.
2. Perceived government accountability was hypothesised to mediate the relationship between community engagement and project effectiveness. However, the mediation analysis showed that community engagement did not significantly predict accountability, and the indirect effect tested via the Sobel method was non-significant. Therefore, there is no evidence to support the mediation hypothesis.
3. Community capacity was examined as a potential moderator of the relationship between community engagement and project effectiveness. The interaction term between engagement and capacity was negative and non-significant, suggesting that community capacity does not strengthen the effect of engagement on project outcomes.
4. Heterogeneity analyses were conducted to examine whether the effect of community engagement on project effectiveness varied across LGAs and project types. The subgroup regressions indicated small, non-significant coefficients in all LGAs and across project categories. No systematic variation in effect sizes was observed, indicating a uniform lack of impact across groups.

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance public project effectiveness through improved community engagement practices in Edo State:

1. Public sector agencies should review current approaches to community engagement to identify gaps in participation and information sharing. Innovative engagement strategies, including regular consultations, feedback mechanisms, and community monitoring tools, should be implemented to ensure meaningful involvement of local stakeholders.
2. While perceived government accountability was not found to mediate project outcomes, it remains an important principle in public administration. Agencies should strengthen transparency and reporting practices, ensuring that project information and decision-making processes are accessible and verifiable by community members.
3. Capacity-building initiatives for community stakeholders should be prioritised. Training and support programmes can equip communities with the knowledge and skills needed to participate effectively in project monitoring and decision-making, potentially enhancing future project outcomes.
4. Policymakers should consider complementary interventions that may amplify the impact of engagement, such as improved project management systems, institutional oversight, and clear communication channels between implementing agencies and local communities.
5. Future monitoring and evaluation frameworks should incorporate more robust indicators of engagement quality and project performance, allowing for improved

assessment of the relationship between community involvement and project effectiveness.

6.3 Conclusion

This study examined the influence of community engagement on public project effectiveness in selected LGAs in Edo State, Nigeria, with a focus on the roles of perceived government accountability and community capacity. The findings indicate that community engagement, whether measured as overall engagement or through its sub-dimensions, does not significantly influence project outcomes. Moreover, accountability does not mediate, and capacity does not moderate, this relationship, and no heterogeneity effects were observed across LGAs or project types.

The results suggest that the effectiveness of public projects in the studied LGAs is not currently driven by community engagement practices, at least as operationalised in this research. This highlights the need for a critical review of engagement strategies and the development of more effective mechanisms for citizen participation and oversight.

The study contributes to the understanding of community engagement in the Nigerian public sector, providing insights for policy, practice, and further research. Future studies could explore alternative measures of engagement, include additional contextual variables, or apply longitudinal designs to better capture the dynamics between community involvement and project effectiveness.

In conclusion, while community engagement is widely advocated as a mechanism for improving public project outcomes, this research underscores that its effectiveness is contingent upon proper implementation, adequate community capacity, and supportive institutional structures. Policymakers and project managers must therefore adopt more

strategic and evidence-based approaches to harness the potential benefits of community participation in public sector projects.

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Appendix
QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Procurement
Management,
Faculty of Sustainable Procurement,
Environmental, and Social Standards
Enhancement (SPESSE),
University of Benin,
Benin City.
4th July, 2025.

Dear Respondent,

REQUEST FOR QUESTIONNAIRE COMPLETION

My name is **Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI.** I am a Master degree student in the above-mentioned department. I kindly request your cooperation in filling out this questionnaire related to the topic: **Community Engagements and Public Projects Success and Effectiveness in Benin City, Nigeria.** Please answer the statements by marking the provided spaces.

Thank you for your time.

Oladipupo Gabriel OLUBIYI
Researcher

SECTION A: Personal Data

1. LGA: ☐ Egor ☐ Ikpoba-Okha ☐ Oredo
2. Ward/Community: _____
3. Project type: ☐ Road/Drainage ☐ Water ☐ Health ☐ Education ☐ Market ☐ Other: ____
4. Project size (approx. budget if known): ☐ <₦10m ☐ ₦10–50m ☐ ₦50–200m ☐ >₦200m ☐ Don't know

5. Project status: ☐ Completed ☐ Ongoing ☐ Abandoned/Stopped
6. Year started: ____ Year completed (if any): ____
7. Your role: ☐ Resident/User ☐ CDA/Community Leader ☐ Project Committee ☐ Business Owner ☐ Other: ___

SECTION B: DEMOGRAPHICS (FOR CONTROLS)

8. Age: ☐ <25 ☐ 25–34 ☐ 35–44 ☐ 45–54 ☐ 55+
9. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male ☐ Prefer not to say
10. Education: ☐ Primary ☐ Secondary ☐ OND/NCE ☐ HND/Bachelor ☐ Postgrad
11. Employment: ☐ Unemployed ☐ Self-employed ☐ Public sector ☐ Private sector ☐ Other
12. Monthly income (optional): ☐ <₦50k ☐ ₦50–100k ☐ ₦100–250k ☐ ₦250–500k ☐ >₦500k
13. Local Government Area of Residence: Oredo [ ] Egor [ ] Ikpobha Okha [ ] Ovia North-East [ ]

SECTION C: (RESEARCH QUESTION/STATEMENTS)

INSTRUCTION: Please indicate as frankly as possible the extent to which the following statements below describes your opinions using the following scale: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Undecided (U), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

S/N	STATEMENTS	SD	D	U	A	SA
	Community Engagement (CE)					
15.	We received timely information about the project's goals and timelines.					
16.	Project budget and costs were openly shared with the community.					
17.	We had access to updates on progress and changes.					

18.	Meeting notices were widely publicized (e.g., posters, town criers, WhatsApp).					
	Participation/Co-design (CE-Partic)	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
19.	Community members were consulted before key decisions.					
20.	Our inputs influenced design/specifications.					
21.	Community representatives sat on planning/monitoring committees.					
22.	Women and youth voices were actively included					
	Empowerment/Monitoring (CE-Emp)	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
23.	The community had mechanisms to monitor implementation.					
24.	We could report grievances and receive feedback.					
25.	Community contributions (labour/funds/land) were recognized and used fairly.					
26.	We feel ownership of the project outcomes.					
	Perceived Government Accountability (ACC)	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
27.	Officials responded promptly to inquiries/complaints.					
28	Procurement/contractor selection was transparent.					
29.	Progress reports were accurate and credible.					
30.	Deviations (delays/cost changes) were explained with evidence.					
31.	Sanctions/remedies occurred when problems were found.					
	Community Capacity (CAP)	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
32.	Our community has organized groups able to engage with government.					
33.	We have people with technical/administrative skills to track projects.					
34	We can mobilize resources when needed.					
35.	We understand our rights and processes to influence projects.					
36.	We have prior experience engaging on public projects.					

Section D: Public Projects' Effectiveness (PPE)

	Timeliness & Budget/Quality	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
37.	The project was delivered on schedule.					

38.	The project stayed within budget.					
39.	Construction quality meets acceptable standards.					
	Utilization & Satisfaction	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
40.	The project is used regularly by intended beneficiaries.					
41.	The project improved service access (e.g., water/ health/ education/transport).					
42.	Overall, I am satisfied with the project.					
	Sustainability/Maintenance	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
43.	Maintenance arrangements are in place and functioning.					
44.	The project continues to deliver benefits over time.					
45.	Vandalism or misuse is minimal.					
	Barriers & Enablers (optional diagnostics)	**SD**	**D**	**U**	**A**	**SA**
46.	Political interference undermined the project.					
47.	Contractor competence was adequate. (reverse if needed)					
48.	Corruption or rent-seeking affected outcomes.					
49.	Security issues disrupted work.					
50.	Land/relocation conflicts occurred.					

Section E: Open-Ended Items

What worked well in engaging the community? _____

What should be improved to make projects more effective? _____

Any specific examples in your community? _____

Section F: Enumerator Observations (if applicable)

Evidence of project use (tick): ☐ High ☐ Moderate ☐ Low

Physical condition (visual): ☐ Good ☐ Fair ☐ Poor

Photos taken? ☐ Yes ☐ No (ID/notes: _____)

Thank you very much for taking out time to fill this questionnaire.