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The Quest for Community Development in Nigerian: An Interrogation of Autonomous Community System's Contributions towards Rural Electrification in Ikeduru Local Government Area of IMO State

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Abstract

This study examined the contributions of autonomous community system towards rural electrification in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The study anchored on community development model. This study adopted mixed research design. Survey method of data gathering which involved Questionnaire and interview techniques were utilized for collection data. The researchers employed simple percentage, Kearl Pearson correlation, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and regression analysis for data presentation and analysis. The study discovered that autonomous community system in Ikeduru have made tremendous impact on rural electrification in the study area. Based on the findings of the study, the researchers recommended that autonomous community system should be empowered by the government to monitor the implementation of government projects sited in their localities, so as to ensure proper resource management, enhanced accountability and timely completion of projects and actualization of its goals.

Keywords: *Autonomous Community; Community Development; Electricity; Ikeduru; Rural Electrification.*

Introduction

The concept of community development efforts have been a matter of great theorization. It is as old as man, what is new in community development is not the notion but modern application of the term and the structures established to achualise it. (Ogunna, 2007). The relevance of a well-developed community cannot be overemphasized because, it facilitates infrastructural transformation, which creates enabling environment for businesses to thrive, thus engendering poverty reduction, and aids ease access to healthcare and sanitation, educational resources and social cohesion with its attendant's harmonious coexistence in the society.

The notion of autonomous community system is as old as Igbo society, which was fragmented, democratic and republican in nature. Before the colonial era, there were many village groups which could be regarded

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as autonomous communities. These communities were independent and sovereign in principles and in operation. They were not answerable to any higher authority. Presently, autonomous communities are under the local government authority. An autonomous community is made up of two or more villages. A village is made up of kindreds, while kindreds are constituted by extended families. All the autonomous communities in Imo state have the following institutions: Traditional Rulership which is made up of the traditional ruler ("Eze"), and his cabinet members. The Town Union is another vital institution of an autonomous community. It is an organ for social and economic transformation of the community. The women association ("Aladinma") is also a veritable institution of an autonomous community. It is the women wing of the town union. The youth wing is also an important organ of autonomous communities. In Imo state, before a group of villages or towns are recognized as an autonomous community, they must fulfill the following conditions, which include having common tradition, identity and be homogenous. Other requirements include market, an institution of leaning (school), and at least two thousand taxable male.

Over the years, those who are saddled with the responsibility of managing the affairs of grassroots have not done enough to ensure rural transformation. This is because our rural areas are characterized by poor feeder road network, lack of adequate basic healthcare, erratic electricity supply etcetera. In principle the government has well-articulated plans and programmes for the development of rural areas but in practice, the impact of the budgetary provisions for the rural areas have not been adequately felt, in terms of development of infrastructure (like, motorable roads, portable water, hospitals and electricity), executed to make life meaningful and improve the standard of living in the rural areas. The results of relatively inadequate management of local affairs are: poverty, unemployment, deprivation, low life expectancy, hunger and malnutrition and depression. Furthermore, the deplorable conditions of Nigerian grassroots call for a great concern. A greater number of Nigerian rural areas lack adequate modern basic health facilities, motorable feeder roads, portable water, electricity and schools with modern library facilities. The electric power supply in the rural areas is terrible and appalling. In some scenarios, rural villages and communities are routinely subjected to total blackouts for some weeks or months as the case may be, as a result of power outage/failure. Majority of our rural villages and communities are still responsible for the maintenance and repairs of electric installations, regardless of the fact that, most of the rural electrification projects were initiated and executed by these rural villages and communities. In the light of the foregoing, majority of autonomous communities have taken the responsibility of constructing markets, town halls, rural electrification, drainages, and drilling of boreholes et cetera. They are deeply involved in self-help projects that are geared towards improving the living conditions of the grassroots. Autonomous communities sometimes impose a compulsory general levy on all the residents, ban people from harvesting their palm fruits, organise launchings and free will donations in order to raise fund for development. Despite the efforts made by these autonomous communities in making life meaningful to their people, paucity of infrastructure and rural poverty are still unabated.

Recent studies on community development focused on people's perception on the contributions of Community Government Council towards the development of communities in Imo State (Nosiri & Nwachukwu, 2016), the effect of Community Government Council in improving the socioeconomic conditions of Ezi-Mgbidi in Oru West LGA of Imo State (Nkwocha, Achubie, & Izim, 2016), usefulness of Community Government Council to community transformation in Imo State (Mbah & Obiagu, 2019), relevance of Community Government Council model (as a sort of political interference) to community development and reasons for its perceived abysmal failure to engender rural transformation in Imo State (Mbah & Obiagu, 2020), Sources of fund for community development and difficulties involved in financing community projects in Obowo Local Government Area of Imo State (Ukpongson 2021), Historical evolution of community development in Nigeria and the contribution of social worker in community development. (Ramsey-Soroghaye, 2021), and Institutional frameworks and agencies that are involved in engendering community development in Nigeria (Egbe, 2024). Notwithstanding these studies, there is a cornucopia of evidence indicating a lack of clearly written work put forth in academic manner on the Contributions of autonomous community system towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria. This study is significant considering the fact that the need for electricity in modern societies cannot be overrated, this is because it is a vital component of contemporary life and

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performs a critical function in various facets of economic activities. It is crystal clear that no human society can make a meaningful progress without electricity. Some of its inexhaustible importance include powering of divergent household appliances, providing illumination both at home and in industries, so as to enhance safety and productivity. It powers Industrial machines for manufacturing purposes thereby enhancing economic transformation. Electricity is a veritable means for job creation. It also contributes in no small measures to healthcare delivery, because it helps to power magnetic resonance imaging machines, X-ray machines, and ventilators. Electricity is a chief cornerstone of modern development. Its uses cut across all sectors of economy, ranging from agriculture, transportation, security, information technology and so on. The question is, to what extent has autonomous community system contributed towards rural electrification in Ikeduru? It is on this background that this study sought to examine the contributions of autonomous community system towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria. The study hypothesized that autonomous community system has not contributed substantially towards rural electrification in the study area.

This research report is systematically structured into five segments. The first section described the introductory part of the research. The next is the second section which encapsulated concept explication, literature review and theoretical framework. The methodology was carefully enunciated in the third section, while data presentation, analyses and discussion of the findings were captured at the fourth segment. The fifth section summarized the concluding remarks.

Materials

Conceptual Elucidation

Autonomous Community: Legacy of peace (2005), described an autonomous community as a group of people inhabiting a definable geographical area comprising one or more communities and bound by common traditional and cultural way of life with common historical heritage and approved by the state government. Osuji (1998), portrayed autonomous community as "any community that is independent of the local or traditional authority of another community having its own community leadership and authorities as may be prescribed in the constitution of the community or its apex union. He further stated that, each autonomous community must have the following institutions, a traditional rulership, town union, market and circumscribed body of traditions and culture. Other structures may include different age grades, associations, such as those of first sons, first daughters, and first wives etcetera. He noted that an autonomous community may be one town or two towns joined together to form one autonomous community.

In this study, an autonomous community is taken to be a unified body of individuals with a common characteristic or interest (a common history or a common socio-economic and political interest and cultural affinity) living together within a larger society and it must be recognized by the government, other communities and towns. Furthermore, in a typical Imo State autonomous community, rulership is a combination of the traditional ruler at the helm of affairs, supported by the "opara" (village heads), "umunna" (village assembly), and "oha-na-eze" (town union). This made rulership collective and democratic. Autonomous community system exists to improve the standard of living of the people. It is seen in Imo state as family "writ large". The people believe that each member should contribute in proportion to their financial resources and to the development of the community for the welfare and enjoyment of all. The people are attached to their autonomous communities emotionally and socially. This system has encouraged positive competition among autonomous communities. No wonder in majority of Imo communities, there are a lot of developmental projects executed through communal efforts. These include rural electrifications, building of markets, schools, hospitals, and pipe borne water et cetera.

Community Development

Ogunna (2007) noted that community development is associated with social process, it is both rural and urban exercise, community development is a universal process involving both developing and developed nations, and it is a continuous process which means that it has no end in a community as there is no further

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development. It is an all-round affair embracing economic, social and political dimensions and also it is an integrated process. In this study, community development is seen as a holistic activity that calls for the involvement of all, because the benefits derivable from these activities would be for the entire community. It is active involvement of people in the issues which affect their lives. Community development is all embracing developmental activities which have no end.

Literature Review

In this section, efforts were made to review related works on the relevance of electricity. Electricity is a vital component of modern life and performs a critical function in various facets of economic activities. It is crystal clear that no human society can make progress without electricity. Some of its importance include powering of divergent household appliances, providing illumination both at home and in industries, so as to enhance safety and productivity. It powers Industrial machines for manufacturing purposes thereby enhancing economic transformation. Electricity is a veritable means for job creation. In line with the foregoing, Gabrielle Short (2015), Noted that the importance of electricity in improving quality of life in rural areas is quite obvious. These according to author include: Electricity is vital for the supply of free from dirt water, keeping the environment clean and improving the health care delivery. It provides illumination for extended studying and working periods, powers household appliances to save effort and time and it is used to power farm machinery – such as dryers, grinder's water pumps etc. He finally pointed that provision/assess to electricity is a sure way to rural transformation, because it leads to higher education rate due to less time is required for daily household chore such as gathering woods for cooking.

Jörg Peters and Maximiliane Sievert (2016), Noted that the relevance of Electricity to rural population cannot be over emphasized because it contributes to various dimensions of human development. This include, increase in home business activities to better employment opportunities in now connected enterprises in the community. There are three vital aspects of socio-economic impacts of rural electrification. These include potential positive health effects through a reduction in kerosene usage, investments into academic/school related to lighting usage for studying and income increase potentials. Stern (2010) argues that energy plays a vital role in economic growth and development of an area. Energy is needed in the production processes, because it is used to power industrial equipment for the production goods and services. The provision of energy is essentially associated with improved human development. He noted that production should be seen as a function of energy, capital and labour.

In their study on "Who Benefits Most from Rural Electrification", Shahidur, R. Khandker et al.(2012) noted that the aim of rural electrification projects in developing nations goes beyond providing households affordable modern energy at a cheaper rate. Rural electrification is expected to improve rural dwellers standard of living and encourage growth and development in all human endeavour. Various examples abound to substantiate such expectations. As better alternative for kerosene-based lighting sources, electric lighting essentially reduces indoor air pollution and carbon emissions in our homes. Also, it allows students to read during evening hours, thus leading to more hours of study. Furthermore, it is vital for productive activities. This leads to fast and more production of goods and services

Community Development Model

Holdcroft (1976) saw community development as a process, programme and movement involving the communities in the solution of problems, teaching democratic principles and facilitating transfer of technology to a community for effective solution of its problems. Ogunna (2007) noted that community development is related to the following characteristics. It is a social process that involves both rural and urban practice. It is a universal process involving both developed and developing societies. Community development is a continuous process which implies that it has no end in a community as there is no community which is fully developed, satisfied and requires no further transformation. Community development is an integrative process of all round affair embracing economic, social and political dimensions. Community development is an exercise that involves/requires the people's initiatives and

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participation in a non-coercive manner. It encompasses both effective and efficient leadership in line with the people's norms and values.

Community development model of rural transformation gives the people opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation of communal projects in a democratic and non-coercive manner. Community development approach makes it possible for the people to be fully in charge of the transformation processes that are geared towards improving their conditions of living. This model is associated with this work because autonomous community system is deeply involved in self-help activities and projects that are geared towards improving the living conditions of their people. Autonomous community system is involved in building and maintenance of markets, schools, feeder roads, electrification projects et cetera. This model is worth adoptable because it is democratic in nature, encourages local initiatives/innovations and inspires the people to take responsibility of their collective welfare.

Research Methodology

Research Design

Kothari & Garag (2019) described research design as the preparation of conditions for gathering and analysis of data in a method that targets to combine significance to the research purpose with economy in procedure. This research adopted mixed research design. This study used mixed design in order to bring to bear the advantages of both qualitative and quantitative designs that encouraged collection of precise, consistent, reliable, detailed and in-depth data. In line with the above, this research utilized observation, questionnaire, and interview instruments for gathering data. The study employed simple percentage, Karl Pearson correlation, and regression analysis for data presentation and analysis.

Study Area

The study was carried out in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, South East, Nigeria. The Local Government is one of the twenty seven Local government Areas that make up Imo state. In an interview conducted by Eghujor (2006), Egeolu pointed out that Ikeduru before the advent of colonial rule was made up of fifteen autonomous communities. These communities migrated from different places and settled in their present locations. He noted that before the coming of the colonial masters, these autonomous communities were administered independently from one another. "IKE- DURU" was created by the colonial masters through the help of village heads and Warrant Chiefs for easy identification and administrative convenience. Similarly, in an interview conducted by Egbujor (2006), Owuamanam a member of the Jury during the time of Mass bench, noted that prior to the advent of colonial rule, the name Ikeduru was not in existence, because autonomous communities organized and administered themselves in their own ways .He went further to say that the British merged these communities together and established a court at the Eziama-Ikeduru.

After the attainment of political independence in 1960, Ikeduru district was merged with Mbaitolu and they become Mbaitolu /Ikeduru Local Government area with its headquarters at Iho and sub office at Nwaorieubi. Mbaitolu/Ikeduru Local Government was among the thirty five divisions that made up the defunct East central state and among the seventeen divisions that made up Imo state on its creation in1976.In 1989 Ikeduru was made a separate local government area. According to Nigerian population census of 2006, Ikeduru has the population of One Hundred and Forty Nine Thousand seven hundred and Thirty Seven (149,737), and was projected to be Two Hundred and Sixty two Thousand, six Hundred and sixty three (262,663) in 2024. Ikeduru Local Government Area has twenty nine autonomous communities and they are: Abazu, Akabo, Amaeke, Amaimo, Amakohia, Amatta, Assa, Atta, Atta-West, Avuvu, Awo-ohii-Dim, Ebikoro, Ezenoomi, Eziama, Iho-Dimeze, Ikembara, Inyishi, NgugoObnire, Nneise, Obodo, Okwu, Owalla, Owubinubi, Ugiri-ike, Umudim, Umuonyeukwu, Umuofor, Umuri, Uzoagba.

Ikeduru Local Government area is located in the Eastern part of Imo state, South East, Nigeria, West Africa. Ikeduru shares boundaries with Owerri North Local Government Area in the south, Aboh Mbaisi and Ahiazu Mbiase Local Government areas in the East, Mbaitolu Local Government area in the West and

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Isiala Mbano to the North. Ikeduru Local Government Area is washed by three streams. These streams include; "Mbaa" which travels through Umuonyeukwu, Umudim, Inyishi, Ikembara, Ngugo Obaire to Uzoagba. The second stream is "Uramiriukwa which travels along Amaimo, Ugiri-Ike, Amakohia and Uzoagba. The third stream is "Okatankwo" which is seasonal and it runs through Akabo, Amatta and Uzoagba. Ikeduru has a table land. The main stay of Ikeduru economy is Agriculture. Ikeduru is known for the production of palm oil, palm kernel, plantain, cocoyam, cassava etcetera. There are few industries in Ikeduru Local Government Area. They include; Aluminum extrusion industry Inyish, my radio 101.1FMAkabo.

Population of the Study

The population of this research is Two Hundred and Sixty two Thousand, six Hundred and sixty three (262,663). This figure is the population of the twenty nine autonomous communities in the study area.

Sample Size

This study adopted two thousand nine hundred sample size (2900). This choice was purposeful because the people of Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State are homogeneous in nature. The researchers ensured that hundred respondents were selected from each of the twenty nine autonomous communities in the Local Government.

Sampling Technique

This study adopted both probability and non-probability sampling technique. Firstly, the study area was stratified (divided) into twenty nine autonomous communities and purposefully ensured that community leaders (village heads, town union chairmen, women leaders and youth leaders) and market women were selected. Also the study adopted accidental or convenience sampling so as to get the input of every other categories of people that were not purposely selected.

Instrumentation

This study adopted survey method of data collection. The survey instruments utilized in this work are: questionnaire, interview and observation. The questionnaire was divided into two distinct parts (A and B). Part 'A' of the questionnaire captured the demographic information about the respondents. While part 'B' focused on the contributions of autonomous community system toward rural electrification which is the main focus of this research. The questionnaire was delivered and recovered through community leaders, religious institutions and the researchers. A total of two thousand nine hundred (2900) questionnaire was distributed but two thousand eight hundred and fifty (2850) was recovered. This study recorded two percent (1.72%) attrition rate. Ethical consideration was brought to forefront in this research. This was carried out by attaching an introduction letter to the questionnaire which clearly described the aim of this research to the respondents.

The study also employed interview method for data collection. The study adopted personal face to face and unstructured interview. This is because individual interview gives the respondents confidence to express themselves freely and impassively. While unstructured interview gave the researchers more flexibility to rearrange the interview questions as situations required. The major group of people interviewed were community leaders (village heads, town union chairmen, women leaders and youth leaders) and market women. The study chose these group of individuals because they are well-informed about how their respective autonomous communities got electricity.

Reliability of the Instrument

This study adopted test-retest reliability technique. In this regard, two percent (2%) of the questionnaire was administered to the respondents at Atta and after six months, the respondents were given the same questions. The respondents' opinions and correlation of the test-retest analysis are presented in table I.

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Consequently, from table 1, it is obvious that the correlation coefficient between test and retest is 0.969 and P value is 0.003. This indicates clearly that there is a substantial association between the first test and the second test at a significance level of 0.01. This shows that the instrument of data collection is dependable.

Figure 1: Test retest correlational analysis

		Test	Retest
Test	Pearson Correlation	1	.969
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.003
	N	5	5
Retest	Pearson Correlation	.969	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.003	
	N	5	5

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Authors fieldwork 2024

Validity of the Instrument

In this study, the main objective of the study was captured in the questions asked in the instrument of data gathering. Also, the contributions of autonomous community system was represented with five questions in the instrument of data gathering. The study equally utilized check question. The reason for it was to test the quality and degree of stability in having identical opinion with regards to the respondent's responses. The researchers ensured that some of the queries were repeated in divergent forms in the same questionnaire so as to achieve standard in the respondents' opinions. For example, questions one and three were some of the check questions.

Method of Data Analyses

This study employed simple percentage for presenting and interpreting the raw data from the field into a form that enabled easily interpretation. Karl Pearson correlation was also utilized for calculating the degree of statistical significance of the contributions of autonomous community system toward rural electrification in the study area. Similarly, regression analysis was utilized for analyzing the direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. Statistical package for social science software was equally used for all the calculations, so as to ensure accuracy.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major challenges the researcher encountered in the course of this study, was that the population of the selected autonomous communities were not documented. This is because the population of Ikeduru Local Government Area is documented according to electoral wards but not in line with autonomous community arrangement. The population of these communities was meant to guide the researcher in selecting the sample size of this work. However, the researcher overcame this challenge by adopting equal proportion sample size of fifty each from the selected autonomous communities. Also, some of the selected autonomous communities like Avuvu, Owubinubi, and Uzoagba had no motorable roads. There were pockets of waterlogged on the roads to these communities. The researcher walked on foot to these autonomous communities.

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Table 1: Contributions of autonomous community system towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria

S/N	ITEMS	RESPONSES				
	Contributions of autonomous community system towards rural electrification	STRONGLY DISAGREED	DISAGREED	UNKNOWN	AGREED	STRONGLY AGREED
1	The electrification project in your community was executed by the village/autonomous community sponsorship	23 (.8%)	27 (.9%)	20 (.7%)	800 (28.1%)	1980 (69.5%)
2	Damaged electric facilities in your community are repaired by the village/community efforts	14 (.5%)	16 (.6%)	10 (.4%)	490 (17.2%)	2320 (81.4%)
3	The rural electrification projects in your village/community was carried out by the government	1940 (68.1%)	878 (30.8%)	5 (.2%)	14 (.5%)	13 (.5%)
4	Cables and poles and other accessories used during the electrification of your community were proved by your village / community	6 (.2%)	3 (.1%)	1 (.0%)	590 (20.7%)	2250 (78.9%)

Source: Authors fieldwork 2024

From table 1, specifically in question 1, 97.6 percent (69.5% + 28.1%) of the respondents noted that the electrification project in their community was executed through collective efforts of their people. While 1.7 percent of the respondents had a contrary opinion. 0.7 percent of the respondents were not aware of how their community got electricity.

Similarly, in question two, 98.4 percent of the respondents observed that damaged electric facilities in their communities are repaired by the village / community efforts. While 1 percent of the respondents had an opposing view. 0.4 percent of the respondents were not aware of who repairs their damaged electric facilities. Furthermore, item three, 98 percent of the respondents noted that the rural electrification project in their communities were carried out through collective efforts of the people. Finally, in question four, 99

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percent of the respondents stated that Cables, poles and other accessories used during the electrification of their communities were provided through communal efforts of their people.

Test of Hypotheses

In this section, the researchers made efforts to test the hypotheses stated at the introductory section, with a significance level of 0.05 and the decision rule was as follows: 1: the null hypothesis should be rejected if P value is less than 0.05. 2: the null hypothesis should be retained if P value is greater than 0.05. This hypothesis states that autonomous community system has not contributed substantially towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria. The independent variable is autonomous community system while the dependent variable is rural electrification. The data was taken from table 1.

Figure 2: Correlation analysis result for the contributions of autonomous community system toward rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria

		Addax Petroleum	Human Capacity development
Autonomous community system	Pearson Correlation	1	.999
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	5	5
Rural electrification	Pearson Correlation	.999	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	5	5

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

From **figure** 2, it can be seen that the correlation coefficient between Autonomous community system and rural electrification is 0.999 and the P value is 0.000. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between Autonomous community system and rural electrification, because 0.000 which is the P value is less than 0.05 which is the level of significance. This suggest that Autonomous community system has really contributed greatly towards rural electrification in the study area.

Regression Analysis result for the contribution of autonomous community system toward rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria

Figure 3: Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.999[a]	.999	.999	141.00031

A. Predicator: (constant), Autonomous community system

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

Figure 4: Analysis of variance (ANOVA)

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53643052.742	1	53643052.742	2698.195	.000[b]

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	Residual	59643.258	3	19881.086		
	Total	53702696.000	4			

A. Dependent variable: rural electrification

B. Predicator: (constant), Autonomous community system

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

From the ANOVA test result in **figure** four, it is observable that F value (that is, two mean squares or the ratio of variance) of Autonomous community system and rural electrification is 2698.195 and the P value is 0.000. This indicates that there is an association between the independent and dependent variables. This is because 0.000 which is our P value is less than 0.05 which is the significance level. This similarly shows that Autonomous community system has contributed significantly towards rural electrification in the study area.

Figure 5: Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (constant)	86.397	395.930		2.734	.338
Addax Petroleum	.962	.019	.999	51.944	.000

a. Dependent Variable: rural electrification

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2024

Additionally, from the result of regression coefficients in **figure** five, it is obvious that the T value of Autonomous community system and rural electrification is 51.944 and the P value is 0.000. This obviously shows that there is a significant association between the independent and dependent variables. This is so because, 0.000 which is the P value is less than 0.05, which is our significance level. Thus, considering the foregoing, the null hypothesis which states that Autonomous community system has not contributed significantly towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria is hereby rejected, and the alternative hypothesis which states that Autonomous community system has contributed significantly towards rural electrification in Ikeduru local government area of Imo State, Nigeria is hereby adopted. This is because the P vales in **figure** two, four and five (2, 4 and 5), are less than 0.05 which is this study's significance level. The result has shown clearly that Autonomous community system has contributed towards rural electrification in the study area.

Discussion of the Findings

This study assessed the contributions of Autonomous community system towards rural electrification in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The study discovered that Autonomous community system has contributed substantially towards rural electrification in the study area. (See tables 1, figure 2, 4, and 5). The result shows clearly that Autonomous community system has made a noticeable impact towards grassroots electrification in Ikeduru, particularly in the aspects of buying electric poles, cables, accessories and maintenance of transformers, replacement of damaged poles, and cables. Through the institutions of autonomous community system, security of electricity facilities have been maintained in Ikeduru. The discovery of this work is in line with community development model of transformation which gives the grassroots chance to participate in the planning and execution of common projects in a democratic and non-coercive manner. This is because the people are fully in charge of the rural electrification projects

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that are geared towards improving their conditions of living. Various autonomous communities in the study area are deeply involved in self-help activities and projects that are meant to improve the living conditions of their people. In a separate interviews with the community leaders, the researchers were made to understand that each autonomous community / villages have electricity management team, which ensures that damaged electric facilities are repaired swiftly. This system is really commendable because it makes the people to take responsibility of their collective welfare. The researchers observed that there were no complaints about wide spread embezzlement or misappropriation of grassroots electricity fund in the study area. Also, the findings of this study is in line with Ottong (2009), which observed that the objective of community self-help project(s) is to satisfy basic needs of community members in terms of food, shelter, potable water, light, good health, basic education, clean environment, as well as access to satisfactory cultural, spiritual, social and political life. From the foregoing, it is deducible that autonomous community system is a major stakeholder in rural electrification in the study area.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this work, the study concludes as follows: Autonomous community system has contributed immensely towards rural electrification in Ikeduru Local Government Area of Imo State, Nigeria. The institution of autonomous community is a cornerstone in rural electrification.

Based on the foregoing, the study recommends that Autonomous communities should be empowered by the local government to monitor the execution of government projects sited in their localities, this will ensure proper resource management, enhanced accountability and timely completion of projects, so as to actualize the goals of the projects. The government funds that are meant for the development of these communities should be entrusted in their care, so as to forestall misappropriation of public funds. This is because autonomous community system in the study area have demonstrated high level of proper management of collective resources.

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