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Community Participation Cum Print Media: A Paneasea For Wildlife Conservation In Oban Hill Community In Akamkpa Local Government Area Of Cross River State, Nigeria

Dr. Jude Ubuh Kujoh Judekujoh123@gmail.com	B	Department of Environmental Education, University of Calabar,
Dr. Ayuk, Godwin Omah Ayuk.omah@yahoo.com	A	Department of Environmental Education, University of Calabar,
Dr. Theresa Nkim Omang nkimomang@gmail.com	C	Department of Continuing Education and Developmen Studies, University of Calabar, Nigeria

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Correspondence
Judekujoh123@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study examined the influence ofcommunity participation cum print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill community of Akamkpa Local Government area of Cross River State. To achieve the purpose of the study, two research questions were posed and two null hypotheses formulated for the study. The population for the study consists of all the inhabitants of Oban in Akamkpa LGA. The sample of the study comprised 226 rural indigene of the research area (Oban community) was used for the study. From the administered questionnaire, data was analyzed using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation analysis for both hypotheses. The findings of the study revealed that community participation and use of print media significantly influences wildlife conservation in Oban Hill community of Akamkpa Local Government area of Cross River State. It was recommended that there is need for the community to intensify their participation in wildlife conservation by imposing traditional fine on defaulters. There should be proper enlightenment campaign against overexploitation of wildlife through the use of print media such as posters, flyers, hand bills and open bill board.

Introduction

The success of wildlife conservation depends upon the development of community understanding of the relationship between plant and animal species, the environment and people's actions interacting with the environment using appropriate community education strategies. Other traditional conservation programmes strategies such as conservation management of captive population, reintroduction of extinct plant and animal species, and

habitat protection depend on education initiative to change the practices of the community (Igwebuike, Kujoh& Ayuk, 2021). Africa's wildlife is remarkable for its abundance and diversity. The variety of wildlife and the unique habitats attract tourist and wildlife enthusiasts to the continent. African's wildlife has traditionally been regarded as a valuable community asset, and has been protected by customs and taboo. Contemporary valuing of wildlife occurs for economic, ecological, medical, educational scientific, recreational and intrinsic reason.

Oban as a community in Akamkpa local government area of Cross River state, is known because of her unique environmental qualities harboring enormous forest that extends from the Cross River National Park. The area houses many important wildlife that are endemic to the area. Wildlife provides employment and contributes to the national incomes of many countries through earnings from wildlife tourism and the sale of wildlife products. It plays an essential role on African savannahs, contributing to diversification of ecosystems, reduction of bush land and expansion of grasslands. In efforts to conserve the diversity of free-ranging animals, the dominant colonials strategy for wildlife management was the creation of protected areas.

In terms of this strategy, several approaches were used to conserve wildlife by separating humans and wildlife. They entailed the creation of protected areas, the prevention of consumptive use and the minimization of other forms of human impacts (Adams and Hulme, 2012). According to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) a protected area is a clearly geographical space, recognized, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means to achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values (Dudley, 2018). Protected areas aimed at wildlife management include national (or game) parks, game reserves and ranches. The creation of protected areas was seen as an ethical obligation to future generations to prevent non-human species loss through human action (Dudley, Hoggins-Zogih and Mansourian, 2018).

In Africa and particularly Nigeria, the African traditional religion has helped to conserve and preserve the environment and its resources. The existence of evil forests, sacred streams and totemism, are promoted by the existence of African tradition religion. Due to punishment attached to the violation of the tenets of this religion, human beings are often afraid of doing anything especially in forbidden areas to avert punishment banishment or death from the gods or goddess (Abiodun, 2009). The idea of sustainable development and management of the wildlife is government oriented, while sustainable living is that everyone is able to judiciously manage the natural resources in a way that maintains the biodiversity, productivity, regeneration capacity and their potential to fulfill the present and future generation. Sustainable living in itself is a function or environmental conservation. This involves training of personnel through workshops, seminars and communication strategies such as conservation clubs, community awareness, electronic media, print media, community sensitization as well as practical way of handling the environmental resources sustainably.

The natural environment is of great importance and it requires no emphasis by us as human beings. It is the only planet in the universe where life is known to exist. Human beings as culture building animals, made possible by their very highly evolved brains, undertake forms of learning to attain increased control of the environment. This learning which could be self-directed, as individuals or groups, motivates man to impact upon the living environment as he attempts to explore, exploits and expropriate the natural resources of the environment to serve his needs (Ikpeme, 2017). Also as human activities go on inestimably, a lot of pressure becomes exerted on the carrying capacity of the living environment. Careless and over exploitation of the wildlife seems to focus on meeting the needs of today without providing for the requirements of our future generations. The result is that future generation face the threat of environmental degradation and its consequence (Ibanga, 2008).

It is against this background that the research was poised to examine the influence of community participation and print media usage on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill community in Akamkpa LGA of Cross River State.

The concept of community participation in wildlife conservation

Historically, forest monitoring has beenperformed by external professionals who usestrict scientific approaches (Angelsen *et al.,* 2009).However, in recent times these responsibilitieshave been successfully implemented by local community members through participatory and locally appropriate techniques (Palmer Fry, 2011).With the right training on appropriate methods ofdata acquisition, local people can collect reliable,accurate and precise information on a range ofindicators including carbon (Danielsen *et al*.,2013), deforestation (Danielsen *et al*., 2011) andbiodiversity (Brashares & Sam, 2005)

Community participation in environmental programs has been proven to enable more effective decision making in protecting the environment and its natural resources. More importantly, this process gives an opportunity to the community to have a say over aspects that affects their lives. According to Steg (2013) sustainable development concept place emphasis on the wellbeing of the environment through community involvement, the literature states that to have awareness about environmental issues may or may not influence an individual to participate actively in environmental programs. However, various studies also show that having awareness along does not necessarily result in pro-environmental behaviour (Steg, 2013). An environmentally responsible citizen and community in addition to having awareness should possess basic understanding of the environment and its problems, feelings of concern for the environment, skills and motivations to solve and eventually participate in environmental improvement programs (Ostrom, 2014).

Abe and Didham (2013) asserted that an outcome to measure public environmental awareness level is by assessing their extent of participation or involvement in the environmental programs. Feeney (2016) argued that the local people have been over looked completely in the local community which are supposed to be involved in resource management through the process of gradually handling of harvesting and management activities of their natural resources government focus on the role in natural resources management whereby it should be directed

on the evaluation of the initiatives of local people, state and the institution involved in the promotion of extension services that is of immense benefits to the community and the future posterity. Furthermore, he categorized three (3) different ways in which communities can participate in forest management such as community based management, collaborative management and non-governmental organization.

Etefia (2007) opines that National park have become the most widely used category of protected areas in developing countries including Akamkpa Local Government Area. However, conservation with development has emerged as the theme of the new strategy for protected area management approach to the conservation of wildlife and ecosystem.

The concept of print media and wildlife conservation

Print media content analysis is a reliable source of determining trends in public perceptions and plays a powerful role in presenting wildlife as either to further its conservation, or leave it as a neglected element of our natural heritage (Lunney & Moon, 2008). The mass media can aid in achieving biodiversity conservation goals by encouraging awareness and encouraging acceptance through public discourse which are key factors in recovery of populations of various species (Jacobson, Langin, Carlton & Kaid,, 2012). Print media such as newspapers can also inform on local constituencies, reflect urban and rural, as well as regional differences; they can track, in are latively undistorted way, historical changes and can reflect the experiences and concerns of a large fraction of the general public (Kellert & Westervelt,, 2009)

Print Media The contemporary surveys on the use and importance of print media has proven that globally there is a greater need for print media (Kipphan, 2011). Print media includes magazines, books, newspapers, and even T-shirts, as a form of ‘one-way communication’ (Biagi, 2013). In other words, the message is from sender to receiver only. The Bring Back Our Girls campaigners used both online and offline communication strategies to reach their target audiences. Print media has a huge influence on the characteristics of society as it can reach people who are lacking facilities to connect to digital media or electricity through newspapers and posters (Mozorov, 2019). It has ability to provide a detailed analysis of the incident and can create a bias toward a particular side. However, print media can create a negative impact towards any incident by serving distorted news that can affect the reputation of individuals or organisations and generate negative sentiments among people.

Print media is used in this campaign as it helps to connect to people living without electricity and create awareness among them about the security conditions of Nigeria. It also helps highlight the actions taken by government on wildlife exploitation. Through this media, people are able to communicate to other people and provide news. However, in some cases, it can also act as two-way system as many print media asks for questions and reviews through letters from its audience, which are published in the same print media.

Ejim (2015) stated that increasing demand for recreation and aesthetic values of wildlife are one channel through which foresters can gain public co-operation and recognition of private forest management. Private forest land owners and holders of long term tenures on forested lands have no objections to public use of their lands for sport hunting, fishing, or camping. What they do object to is destruction of their equipment or carelessness with fire. In areas where deer browsing is a problem, forest owners would like to see increased deer hunting, but many are not willing to risk the increased fire hazard or vandalism. Wildlife managers would like to extend hunting seasons and bag limits on areas which are over stocked with game species, but often the general public feels, mistakenly, that more liberalized hunting regulations would deplete their source of recreation. What is needed is closer communication between foresters, wildlife managers and users of the wildlife re- source in order that maximum economic returns can be realized from forested lands. Better mutual understanding and co-operation is therefore the first step towards multiple use and the maximization of economic returns. Wildlife values on good forest sites may be comparable with the value of timber, but if wildlife interests clash with timber interests, the later must take priority. However, these clashes are seldom insoluble, and the economic returns from any forested land can be increased by also utilizing the wildlife crops (Bright, 2017).

Statement of research problems

The rate at which forest resources are depleted in Cross River State today is so alarming and is of grave concern to the stake holders. For instance, forest loss in Nigeria is put at a "normal of 400,000 hectares (ha) per annum, while afforestation has just 32,000 hectares (ha) yearly, the combined impact of this is that the nation has lost 50 million hectares of woodland in under 100 years**.** As the health of planet continues to deteriorate, it is critical to develop environmentally literate citizens. The sustainability of wildlife resources has been threatened by over harvest worldwide, especially in sub-tropical and tropical forest. It is difficult to think of any wildlife that is unaffected by humans or their actions. Humans exploit animals big and small, mainly for subsistence or profit, but also for sport and entertainment. If animals are not exploited directly, they may still be affected by human activities either gaining or losing interms of protection, food and available habits. The human population is steadily increasing, requiring more space and demanding more resources. It is apparent that more extensive wildlife management is required to slow the inevitable loss of biodiversity, and that to be effective it must confine any exploitation within sustainable limits.

The uncontrolled destruction of wildlife continues to increase despite the enlightenment campaign against unsustainable use of ecological resources. The animals are attacked through hunting, indiscriminate shooting of different species and sizes of wild animal. Thus, reducing the number of the animal drastically. The world is now so tied together by flows of energy, information and commodities, that action in one part of it, is likely to have implications for many other parts. Numerous biological resources, particularly wildlife and forests are being depleted more by foreign demand than by direct local consumption. Money earned by depleting resources in them often invested in imported industrial products, which themselves may have had a negative environmental impacts in the country of their production. Solutions to conservation problems must address both overt symptoms such as disappearing forests, and the

more fundamental issues underlying the symptoms such as human overpopulations and profligacy. Whether conservation action is aimed overall strategies are required to establish a common base of information to define the problems in ways that will lead to their solutions.

This study therefore examined the extent to which community participation and and the use of print media in dissemination information of wild life overexploitation influences the wildlife conservation in Oban Community in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The major purpose of the study was to ascertain the influence of community participation cum print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill Akankpa LGA of Cross River State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Determine the influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria
2. Evaluate the influence of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Methodology

A survey design was used in the study. This design was chosen because it is relatively quick and easy to conduct data on all variables, it makes use of the questionnaire and interview to secure data from the respondents and it equally gives room for a sample of the population to be used as a representative to the entire study population. The data collected during the study were analyzed with One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) using package IBM SPSS Version 22.

Research questions

1. To what extent does community participation influences wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria?
2. Is there any significant influence of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria?
3.

Statement of research hypotheses

1. There is no significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria
2. There is no significant the influence of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria

Results

Ho:1

There is no significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable is community participation, while the dependent is wildlife conservation. One-Way Analysis of Variance

(ANOVA was used to test the hypothesis. The hypotheses was tested at 0.05 level of significance and 2 and 223 degrees of freedom (df). The result of the analysis is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: ANOVA analysis of the influence of community participation on wildlife Conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria (N=226)

Community participation	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Low	56	35.1754	3.06473
Moderate	93	36.6016	3.18219
High	74	36.4094	2.87315
Total	226	36.1310	3.11749

Source of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F-ratio	Sig of F
Between group	223.875	2	111.938	21.947*	.000
Within group	5481.041	223	9.369		
Total	5704.917	225			

* Sig. at .05 alpha, p-value =.000, df= 2, 223.

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The finding on Table 1 uncovered that the F-ration calculated value of 21.947 is significant at .05 level of significance and 2 and 223 degrees of freedom. The outcome also show that the p<.000 is less than p<.05. In light of this, the null hypothesis which expressed that there is no significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeriawas rejected indicating that there is a significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria

Ho:2

There is no significant influence of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria. The independent variable is print media, while the dependent is wildlife conservation. One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 significant level and 2 and 223 degrees of freedom (df). The result of the analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 1: ANOVA analysis of the influence of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria (N=226)

Print media	N	$\bar{x}$	SD
Low	56	35.2079	3.06180
Moderate	93	36.6239	3.19529
High	74	36.4091	2.87307
Total	226	36.1310	3.11749

Source of variance	SS	Df	Ms	F-ratio	Sig of F
Between group	223.875	2	111.078	16.854*	.000
Within group	5481.041	223	9.372		
Total	5704.917	225			

* Sig. at .05 alpha, p-value =.000, df= 2, 223.

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The finding on Table 2 uncovered that the F-calculated value of 16.854 is significant at .05 level of significance and 2 and 223 degrees of freedom. The outcome also show that the p<.000 is less than p<.05. In light of this, the null hypothesis which expressed that there is no significant influence of print media usage on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeriawas rejected indicating that there is a significant influence of print media usage on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

Community participation and wildlife conservation

The first hypothesis result showed that there is a significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria. This conclusion is in line with the work of Steg (2013) who stated that Community participation in environmental programs has been proven to enable more effective decision making in protecting the environment and its natural resources. More importantly, this process gives an opportunity to the community to have a say over aspects that affects their lives. Sustainable developments place emphasis on the wellbeing of the environment through community involvement, the literature states that to have awareness about environmental issues may or may not influence an individual to participate actively in environmental programs. However, various studies also show that having awareness along does not necessarily result in pro-environmental behaviour (Steg, 2013).

Also in line with the present study, Ostrom (2014) stated that an environmentally responsible citizen and community in addition to having awareness should possess basic understanding of the environment and its problems, feelings of concern for the environment, skills and motivations to solve and eventually participate in environmental improvement programs.

Print media and wildlife conservation

The result of the second hypothesis indicated that there is a significant influence of print media usage on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria. This conclusion is in line with the work of Lunney and Moon (2008) who stated that Print media content analysis is a reliable source ofdetermining trends in public perceptions and plays apowerful role in presenting wildlife as either to further itsconservation, or leave it as a neglected element of ournatural heritage.

Still in line with the present work Jacobson, Langin, Carlton and Kaid (2012) stated that the print media can aid in achievingbiodiversity conservation goals by encouraging awarenessand encouraging acceptance through public discoursewhich are key factors in recovery of populationsof various species. Print media such as newspapers canalso inform on local constituencies, reflect urban andrural, as well as regional differences; they can track, in arelatively undistorted way, historical changes and can reflectthe experiences and concerns of a large fraction ofthe general public (Kellert &Westervelt, 2009).

Conclusion

In view of the findings of the study the researcher arrived at the following conclusion that there is a significant influence of community participation on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria. And there is a significant influence of use of print media on wildlife conservation in Oban Hill, Akamkpa LGA, of Cross River State, Nigeria**.**

Recomendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations were afforded by the researcher that

1. There is need for the community to intensify their participation in wildlife conservation and also by imposing a traditional fine on defaulters.
2. There should be proper enlightenment campaign against overexploitation of wildlife through the use of print media such as posters, flyers, hand bills and open billboard.

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