DETERMINATION OF THEFACTORS INFLUENCING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN THE URBAN PLANNING PROCESSES IN ENUGU URBAN, SOUTH-EAST, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

In the recent past, much empirical studies on the factors affecting public participation in urban planning process have received enormous attention, mostly in Western and Asian countries. However, not much is known of the factors influencing public participation in urban planning process in the cities of developing and rapidly urbanizing countries like Nigeria. This study therefore determined the factors affecting public participation in the urban planning process in Enugu urban, south-east Nigeria. The data were derived from a questionnaire survey of 400 developers and analyzed using descriptive and principal component analyses. The results revealed that the factors affecting public participation in the urban planning process in Enugu were patterned in eight key dimensions: citizen's knowledge, citizens' willingness/intentions, social media factor, political influence factor, intrinsic factors, external social environment, spatial environmental condition and institutional/legal framework factors. This understanding of the factors that influence public participation in urban planning projects, urban planners can come up with remedial approaches which would ensure that their future planning activities are more inclusive, pro-poor and hence sustainable.

Key words: Factors, Process, Public, Participation, Analysis

1. Introduction

Urban planning is the comprehensive development of urban construction to the specific period of construction and planning, so as to improve the rationality and intensification of urban resource application and maximize the role of urban resources. Public participation is a formal institutional arrangement that occupies an important place in urban planning work programs. However, in the actual planning operation, the public participation system is usually simplified and marginalized and the public does not really participate in the planning decision-making..Public participation can be defined as the process by which people influence the potential for designing, executing, and continuing interventions that better appropriate society needs, improve society capacity, and result in policy changes

(World Bank, 2020). Numerous studies have discussed the concept of participation (Bailey, 2019; Cheng, 2013; Creighton,2005; Hemmersam et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2021). These studies confirm that the essential value of public participation is the ability of participants to affect the decision-making process, in order to achieve empowerment and equity, thus maximizing socio-economic benefits. In other words, the urban planning process can be used as a political instrument, by achieving an equitable balance between citizens and the central government with regards to community needs and priorities.

Experiences from various urban planning projects have shown that very few members of the public wish to participate in urban planning projects. This is in spite of the many advantages associated with public participation in planning. For example, the greater the number of public participants: the more likely it is that the plan will reflect their needs and concerns accurately, the higher the chances that the plan will be implemented, and the harder it becomes for public officials to ignore the plan (Al-Kodmany, 2000).

The problem addressed in this research is that despite the efforts made by concerned physical planning agencies of government to evolve physical plans to guide development in Enugu Urban of Enugu State, Nigeria, there has not been a commensurate physical manifestation of such efforts on the ground. This has led to some harmful situations like poor traffic flow and lack of a good number of facilities that enhance a functional urban town. The fundamental assumption is that if the formulation of plans for uplifting the area are done by the authorities concerned, in conjunction with those involved in carrying out such plans (in the form of public participation), there is the tendency for replicating what has been planned on the ground.

Since the 1960s, public participation has become the subject of interest for governments in planning for socio-economic and environmental development. Large number of studies have emphasized public participation as a tool to achieve and maintain target objectives especially in developing countries (Poplin, 2012). Despite the significance of public participation in enhancing human societies, there is still evidence of poor application of the programme in urban development in Nigeria. The prolonged military rule, repeated military

interventions in civilian governance at the slightest democratic challenge including poor administration of elections have been cited as being responsible for the poor public participation in governance in Nigeria. From studies, these challenges are more complex in the cities of developing countries which is affecting planning and management of entire sectors of urban areas. There is therefore need to canvas vigorously the rational for citizen participation in the planning process.

The Nigerian Urban and Regional Planning Law (NURPL), Decree No. 88, section 13 & 16 of 1992 forms the environmental planning legislation in Nigeria for public participation programme. Despite the provision of this law (NURPL, 1992) in Nigeria, the practice of the programme is yet to accomplish its target in the development of urban centres as residents' motivation and willingness to participate in the physical planning decision-making process has been significantly low (Swapan, 2014; Dung-Gwom, 2014) especially in Enugu Metropolis. Previous studies have shown that the major factor to low citizen involvement in the decision-making process could be traced to ineffective public communication (Muse, 2014).

Urban and regional planning being an intervention to change an existing environmental condition requires the application of public participation to achieve its objectives of enhancing human societies. Despite the great importance of technical policy instruments for managing urban growth, it is not possible to achieve the ultimate goals of urban planning such as empowerment, equity, and sustainable urban development without effective public participation (Alnsour, 2016). For instance, although Enugu State government has developed many technical and planning policy instruments (such as master plans, zoning ordinance, planning schemes, and building standards) to manage urban growth, urbanization outcomes indicate there is unsustainable urban development, weak empowerment, and imbalanced development benefits between cities in the state. (Ubani et al, 2023). Davids et al. (2005) observe there should be equitable distribution of development benefits, as well as distribution of physical and social services, which would enable low-income residents to gain increased benefit from development, and to participate more effectively in the development process. Even if the State government can maintain current spending on

central development, it may still find it difficult to maintain its efforts in achieving sustainable urban development without real public involvement.

A recent World Bank assessment of development projects asserts that only those which rely on public involvement have succeeded and are rated sustainable (Olukotun, 2017). Therefore, the lack of public participation in the urban planning process needs to be addressed (Aina et al., 2019; UN-Habitat, 2019). Existing studies on public participation in Nigeria have largely dwelt on its rising scope and scale (Adedoyin, 2014; Oloyede, 2010), rationale to meet and maintain programme objectives (Solanke, 2014), ineffective communication methods or tools (Muse, 2014), mechanisms to enhance efficiency of public participation (Ojigi, 2012; Mohammadi, 2011) among others. However, researches assessing the factors affecting public participation in urban and regional planning in the urban development process are few if not non-existent and require further research. Only a few studies (Swapan, 2014; Fox, 2014) have considered issues on this subject in the African continent and their studies considered the factors based on town planners' perspective. The review by Alderghrishem (2023) reported that most of the existing studies on the factors affecting public participation in urban planning process have thus far concentrated on western cities which have different urban structures and socio-cultural dynamics as cities in sub-Saharan Africa in general and Nigeria in particular. As a result, the findings of these studies do not have valid implications for urban areas in Nigeria. In Enugu, one is poised to ask the following pertinent questions like why do few people participate in urban planning projects? Could it be that the public is often unaware of such planning activities? Are they informed but choose not to participate because they have problems accessing meeting venues? Or does one's financial status influence his/her participation in urban planning projects? All these questions and many others form the fulcrum of the study. The aim of this study therefore is to examine the factors influencing public participation in the urban planning process in Enugu. This study hypothesized that factors influencing the public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu urban cannot be significantly patterned. Furthermore, the findings of this study could be extrapolated for use in other developing countries, particularly those in the

sub-Sahara African region, which have similar issues to those affecting urban planning in Nigeria cities.

2. Theoretical Framework

Some of the theories that guide urban planning processes include: rational - comprehensive (where planners follow a sequence of predetermined steps); incrementalism (where planners issue a number of options to the public, take note of the public's reaction before choosing the option with the least public resistance); transactive (the public is more active in the policy setting process while planners act as distributors of information and sources of feedback); communicative (aims to make the different parties understand each other); advocacy (campaigns for the interests of the socially excluded to be given first priority); equity or bargaining model (sees planning as a give and take exercise among all stakeholders while planners simply implement the public's agreements) (Lane, 2005).

The transactive planning theory forms the theoretical framework for the research. Proposed by John Friedmann, a pioneer urban theorist of the late twentieth century, it emphasized that citizens and civic leaders (not planners) should always be at the center of urban planning projects if such plans are ever to be implemented (Stiftel, 2000). According to Friedmann'stransactive theory, participation and empowerment should be considered as goals to be achieved rather than methods to be used in the planning process (Lane, 2005).

The transactive planning approach focuses on intact experiences of people's lives since these tend to reveal policy issues which should be addressed (Friedmann, 1973). According to the transactive theory, urban planning should be carried out in a face to - face fashion with the people affected by decisions and not with respect to anonymous target communities/beneficiaries. It should be centered on interpersonal dialogues and viewed as a process of mutual learning. Transactive urban planning is meant to enable people take increasing control over the social processes that govern their urban welfare (Friedmann& Huxley, 1985)

3. Research methods

3.1 Research Design and Study Population

The research design adopted in the study is a cross-sectional survey. The choice of this research design was due to the nature of the subject matter being investigated and the

objective of the study. Besides this, the survey method affords the respondents time to articulate their answers adequately as previously noted by Mitra and Lankford (1999). In addition, the survey research design, according to Cooper and Schindler (2006), is considered the best method to understand the preferences of a large population. The research population comprised developers who had lived up to 5 years in Enugu urban. The number of developers in the metropolis stands as 643,878 according to the aggregated number of landlords in the Landlord Association register as at 2023. In this study, landlords were used as surrogate for developers

3.2 Sample size determination

The sample size was determined using Williams (1978) formula as was adopted by Kerlinger and Lee (2000). The formula is given as:

$$S = \frac{n}{1 + n/N}$$

Where:

S = Sample size

n = The proportion of developers population that was sampled which was 2.5 percent.

2.5% was used because of its aptness in calculating proportions that relates to developers.

N = the total number of developers

Therefore, the minimum sample size was determined as follows:

$$S = \frac{347, 522}{1+ 2.5\%/347, 522}$$

S = 399.9,

Approximately : 400

A sample size of four hundred was obtained as sample size for developers using Williams (1978) formula as was adopted by Kerlinger and Lee (2000)

3.3 Data collection instrument and variables investigated

The major instrument that was used in the study is the questionnaire. They were given to the developers who represent the citizens. The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part consisted of the personal data of respondents. The second part comprise of structured and unstructured questions. The structured or closed questions were meant to tailor the respondents to specific answers that addressed the research questions and hypothesis. The questions in this part of the

questionnaire have responses that were either open in ranking scale or closed choices. A 4-point Likert scale responses was used to ascertain the factors that influence citizens' participation in urban planning processes in Enugu. These factors were also derived from the literature and included in the questionnaire in the study area. The 4-likert scale was answered in scale of namely: strongly agreed (4), agreed (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). The choice of this 4-point Likert scale instead of the normal 3 or 5-point scale was to ensure that participants gave definite answers and avoided fake answers. (Cooper & Schindler, 2006). The questionnaire was first of all tested with few randomly selected residents in the neighbourhoods before administering it to the sampled residents in area. This was done in order to assess the level of comprehension of the contents of the questionnaires by the respondents and make minor changes in the grammar to avoid ambiguity of any sort.

The various factors that were identified as variables that influenced public participation in planning processes from literatures reviewed were 32 in number and are listed in Table 1. They were included in the questionnaire as the possible variables that influenced public participation in planning processes in the study area.

Table 1: The 32 variables that influenced public participation in planning processes

X1	Understanding of local planning process
X2	citizen trust on planning authorities
X3	citizen interest
X4	mutual relation between citizen and planning body
X5	Negative perception about planning authority
X6	Access urban information
X7	Poor communication channels about upcoming urban issues
X8	Not among the decision making class
X9	poor knowledge of urban policy goals
X10	Poor discussion with others about planning issues
X11	Lack of interest on planning issues
X12	No access on planning issues from facebook
X13	No access on planning issues from radio
X14	No access on planning issues from whapsapp
X15	I don't have right about planning issues
X16	Am not yet qualified to participate

X17	planning issues are unimportant to me
X18	My view will not be considered
X19	Restriction by law
X20	Long protocol and bureaucracy
X21	I do not have money
X22	There is a concluded/preconceived view on the planning issues
X23	No clear understanding
X24	Complexity of urban planning
X25	Citizens' participation slows down the process
X26	It cost government much to involve the public
X27	Poor practice of town planning
X28	No benefit attached to it
X29	Lack of trust on government
X30	Nature of the place for meeting
X31	Accessibility of the place for the meeting
X32	Distance between residences to the public meeting area

Source: Extracted from reviewed literatures, 2023

3.4 Data collection and analysis

Multi stage sampling techniques was used to proportionately select the residential densities and respondents used in the study. Enugu urban have 24 neighbourhoods. However, there were pockets of slums like UgboOdogwu, Aguabor, UgboObed, Ugboezeji etc. These slums were not considered in this study because they are literally outside the core urban area of the study area. Stratified random sampling was used to divide these 24 neighbourhoods into residential densities- high, medium and low densities. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 167 streets out of the 203 streets in the selected study area. This was done by writing out these streets in a paper and folding it and putting all of them in a basket. Then they were thrown up and anyone that falls off the basket was selected without replacement. Systematic sampling techniques was used in selecting the evenly spaced intervals or natural sequence building unit until the desired number of units was obtained. The first building was selected by casting of dice and any street number that appears in that dice was picked as the first house to start from, then with subsequent units selected at every 5^{th} residential building sequel to the listing of building based on street numbering system and centering of buildings were houses were not numbered.

Housing units not occupied by house owners were dropped and next buildings occupied by

house owners were selected. Purposive sampling techniques were also employed to choose the head of the households. Proportionate allocation strategy was used to get the sample size for each of the neighbourhoods using their various developers' numbers. The table 2 shows the selected neighbourhoods, their residential densities and the number of developers

Table 2: Sampled neighbourhoods and their population

NEIGHBOURHOODS	DENSITY	DEVELOPERS
Abakpa	HIGH	52,836
Asata		30,887
Ogui		41,189
Maryland	MEDIUM	36,925
New haven		45,022
Uwani		43,491
Independence layout	LOW	28,733
G.R.A		31,049
TransEkulu		37, 390
Total		**347, 522**

Source: Derived from 2023 Landlord register for Enugu.

The study using the proportionate allocation strategy ensured that the neighhourhoods with larger number of developers had more sample size. Table 3 showed the developers population and number of questionnaires that was administered:

Table 3 : The sampled neighbourhoods and the sample sizes

NEIGHBOURHOOD	DEVELOPERS	SAMPLE SIZE
Abakpa	52,836	**79**
Asata	30,887	**25**
Ogui	41,189	**52**
Maryland	36,925	**32**
New haven	45,022	**56**
Uwani	43,491	**54**
Independence layout	28,733	**38**
G.R.A	31,049	**29**
TransEkulu	37, 390	**35**
TOTAL	**347, 522**	**400**

Source: Researchers' Survey, (2023).

The total number of questionnaires share were 400 for developers, In all, a total of 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed

3.5 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using simple descriptive statistics - frequency and percentage distributions, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) - a variant of factor analysis. The data processing and

analysis were performed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0 for Windows.

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) - This was used to compress the32 primary variables which were the identified factors influencing the public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu urban. These factors were obtained through reviewed literatures. However, before subjecting the data to PCA, the dataset was subjected to the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Sampling Adequacy test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. The results revealed that the KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy was 0.854, which is greater than the recommended minimum value of 0.6, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at 0.001. This result implies that the sampling for the study is adequate and the result of the PCA was robust and reliable. Inferences were made from the percentages, factor loadings, and eigenvalues of each component. The researchers adopted factor loadings of 0.500 and above.

PCA is mathematically stated as:

F = WjXj = Wi Xi + W2 X2 +..... WnXn (1)

Where: i -Wn are the factor weights.

Xi – Xn = initial variables

4. Results

4.1 *Factors influencing Public Participation in Urban Planning Processes*

In the course of the study, 32 primary variables were identified as factors that could influence public participation in urban planning processes. This was seen in table 1. The chosen factors were those that were conversant with the respondents. These factors which were initially derived from the literature were 40 in number, however, during the pilot survey, it was observed that only 32 of them were conversant and readily identified and agreed by the respondents. Hence, they were the ones that were used for the study. These factors or variables were later transformed into a fewer secondary variables/components for better management, this was done using Principal Component Analysis statistical tool. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was used to reduce the 32 identified primary variables to 8 dimensions. These 8 dimensions derived formed the secondary variables (factors) that influenced public participation in urban planning processes in the study area

The PCA output showed that 8 components (factors) expressed the bulk of the common variance among the 32 primary variables.

These eight dimensions (factors) were continually referred to as the factors that influenced public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu metropolis. Each of the factors was given a component name. (Table 4)

For clarity, each of the factors was named to match the variables that were found in them.

Factor 1 - Citizen's knowledge

Factor 2 - Citizens' willingness/ intentions

Factor 3 - Social Media

Factor 4 -Political influence

Factor 5 - Intrinsic factors

Factor 6 - External social environment

Factor 7 - Spatial environmental condition

Factor 8 - Institutional/legal framework

In other to have a clearer understanding of the output, table 4 showed those primary factors/ variables that made up each component with their factor loadings. This table shows the factors and the corresponding variables that make up each of them.

Table 4: **Factor Groupings of the primary 32 variables**

Component Names	**Variable Identity**	**Factor Loading**
FACTOR 1: **Citizen's knowledge**		
- poor knowledge of urban policy goals	X9	.817
- Poor communication channels	X7	.799
- Access urban information	X6	.756
- No clear understanding	X23	.658
FACTOR 2: **Citizens' willingness/intentions**		
- Poor discussion with others about planning issues	X10	.931
- citizen trust on planning authorities	X2	.854
- planning issues are unimportant to me	X17	.751
- Lack of interest on planning issues	X11	.740
- No benefit attach to it	X28	.590
-		

FACTOR 3: **Social Media**		
No access on planning issues from facebook	X12	.732
No access on planning issues from radio	X13	.660
No access on planning issues from whapsap	X14	.593
FACTOR 4:**Political Influence**		
- I don't have right about planning processes	X15	.604
- Not among the decision making class	X8	.677
FACTOR 5*:* **Intrinsic factor**		
- Am not yet qualified to participate	X16	.745
- My view will not be considered	X18	-.645
- Long protocol and beaurocracy	X20	.579
- I do not have money	X21	.561
FACTOR 6: **External social environment**		
- citizen trust on planning authorities	X2	.785
- mutual relation between citizen and planning body	X4	.620
- Negative perception about planning authority	X5	.604
- There is a concluded/preconceived view on the planning issues	X22	.592
- Lack of trust on government	X29	.511

FACTOR 7: **Spatial Environmental Condition** - Nature of the place for meeting - Accessibility of the place for the meeting - Distance between residences to the public meeting area	 X30 X31 X32	 .755 .646 .616
FACTOR 8: **Institutional/legal framework** - Restriction by law - Complexity of urban planning - Citizens' participation slows down the process - It cost government much to involve the public - Poor practice of town planning - Understanding of local planning process	 X19 X24 X25 X26 X27 X1	 .985 .820 .810 .755 .646 .616

Sources: PCA Result

The eight components/factors that were presented in table 4 accounted for the factors that influenced public participation in planning processes in Enugu metropolis. This result was elicited from the responses from the developers

The result of the of hypothesis using the PCA patterned and dimensioned the predominant factors that influenced public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu urban into 8 components that explained 58.130 percent of observed variation in public participation in urban planning processes variables. The identified predominant factors that influenced public participation in urban planning processes that accounted for the explained percentage variations were as follows: Citizen's knowledge (18.35%), Citizens' willingness/intentions (12.32%), Social Media (6.07%), Political influence (5.58%), Intrinsic factors (4.73%), External social environment (3.9%), Spatial environmental condition (3.99%), and Institutional/legal framework (3.45%)

5. Discussion of Findings

The study was aimed to analyse the factors that affect public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu urban, with a view to evolving a functional participatory framework for the area. This study has some striking revelations which have been presented earlier and in this section these findings shall be discussed extensively. It was determined from the study that eight predominant factors affected public participation in urban planning processes in Enugu urban and they include - citizen's knowledge, citizens' willingness/intentions, social media factor, political influence factor, intrinsic factors, external social environment, spatial environmental condition and institutional/legal framework factors. It is noteworthy to explain that these variables are the empirically established factors that affect public participation in urban planning processes in in the study area

The importance of the public having adequate knowledge of the urban policy instruments and processes cannot be overemphasized. The study showed that poor knowledge of urban policy goals as well as poor access to information highly influenced public participation in the study area. Policy instruments provide valuable insights to the decision-making process, such as master plans, regional plans, local plans, action plans, and development strategies. The level of community participation in terms of preparing and implementing these instruments over the different spatial levels affects local residents environmentally, economically and socially. In a practical sense, successful urban decision-making often results from a process of public participation in which all stake holders are allowed to provide their views and perceptions (Innes &Booher, 2000). In this way, public participation provides socio-economic benefits and technical insights into the urban planning process (Illies& Reiter-Palmon, 2004). Corburn (2003) notes that local knowledge can improve the urban planning process in several ways, such as developing an adequate environmental policy, providing low-cost alternatives, generating new ideas, and addressing inequitable distribution of environmental challenges. Hence, successful participation is based on the knowledge level of participants (Wang et al., 2021). The results found in this study agree with Corburn (2003) and Mensah et al. (2017), in which knowledge of stakeholders does not include technical knowledge only, but also

information about local settings, urban challenges, socio-economic context, effective solutions and planning for the future, meaning that the overall information of stakeholders has created a knowledge base used for urban policy making in their study area. Furthermore, the findings of study are also in line with the study by Baptiste et al. (2015), where they concluded that participants with more knowledge are more interested in public participation in Cyprus. Findings of this study equally agree with the conclusions of Erfani and Roe (2020), who found that an increase of urban development efficiency in Tehran was related to the level of knowledge of its stakeholders. Similarly, Alnsour (2014) found the that the level of knowledge of stakeholders enhanced the effectiveness of urban management in Jordan.

Further revelation from this study shows that public willingness and intention has a strong influence in public participation in planning processes in Enugu. It was observed that there were lack of interest, and much lack of trust on planning authorities. Some of the developers posited that they lacked interest in planning issues. This was quite unfortunate. A willingness to participate is essential for an effective, community-based planning system. Moreover, motivation towards public participation is primarily influenced by an individual's willingness to participate in the urban planning process (Dai et al., 2022). Issues such as the ability to express one's self, interpersonal communication, trust, and initiatives by individuals are all considered to be driving forces for an individual's willingness to participate in urban planning activities (Koirala et al., 2018). Hoppner and Frick (2008) stated that the level of an individual's willingness to participate in landscape planning is influenced by perceived self-efficacy, trust in the outcomes of participation, and personal interest in the urban landscape. Despite many previous studies (Koirala et al., 2018; Li et al., 2020; Baptiste et al, 2015) confirming that willingness to participate affects the level of community participation in the urban planning process, the findings of this study further supported these findings that willingness to participate does impact on the level of public participation in the urban planning process in Enugu community. According to the literature (Dai et al., 2022; Heberer, 2009; Shan, 2012) willingness to participate in urban planning can vary from one place to another and from one individual to another, due to socio-political changes. For

example, in China, Dai et al. (2022) found empirically that the level of willingness to participate in EIA decision-making on urban infrastructure projects was low in Wuhan, while Shan (2012) found empirically that the level of willingness to participate in decision-making of urban green spaces was positive and strong in Guangzhou. In this context, Enugu urban is still in the political transformation phase towards governance, meaning more openness and higher democracy levels could promote a willingness to participate. In addition, individual willingness to participate in urban planning activities is influenced by a number of factors, such as trust in the planning authorities, interest in urban planning, and interpersonal communication (Koirala et al., 2018; Hoppner& Frick, 2008).

The influence of social media was noticed in the study as having a strong impact in public participation in urban planning process. Most of the respondents do not have access to planning issues through the internet or radio. It is expected that with rapid technological advancement in social media, people can express their perceptions on a topic directly and, on most social networks, in a highly public way. Such perceptions and information have strategic benefits as a type of real participation, rather than only those who actually plan and manage cities being able to access new information and different ideas which could improve the decision-making process. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google, YouTube, MySpace, Weblogs and many more have facilitated the ability to connect as many people as possible, and to share information in an interactional way (Bertot et al., 2010). Several factors can hinder the ability of social media to support public participation. These factors include training employees on correct record management procedures, updating information technology platforms, and privacy concerns (Franks, 2010; Wilshusen, 2010). The inability of information policies to recognize the value of networking using social media has resulted in ineffective interaction between individuals and urban issues. Therefore, embedding social media within information policy is significant, in terms of its speed, spread and influence.

Further revelation from the study showed that political influence has great impact in public participation in urban planning process in Enugu urban. Respondents felt that they did

not have right to participate in the process, some also posited that they were not part of the decision making process. This was quiet absurd since patterns of orientation with regard to public participation are determined by attitudes of political leadership, which in turn are related to a unified community, demographic structure, political parties, civil society organizations, and socio-economic conditions (Formisano, 2001). Political influences provide opportunities to achieve a balance between responsibilities and rights, leading to an increase in the level of public participation. According to Li et al. (2020), a community with a well-developed political culture is more likely to improve its decision-making process, while Verdini (2015) observed there was a positive association between political culture and power in the context of the historic urban area in China.

The results of this study, however, confirmed that political culture has a positive and significant impact on the level of public participation in the urban planning process. This finding agrees with the argument of Li et al. (2020) in which a community with a well-developed political culture is more likely to participate in the decision-making process. The results are in line with Yuan (2020) conclusions, in which public participation was greatly influenced by the political culture in the community. Similarly, Zakhour (2020) found that political culture affects public participation by revealing critical insights into potential challenges for improving planning outcomes. Gao et al. (2020) concluded that the face of urban problems requires understanding the gap between centralized government and the public in terms of the social, political, and cultural aspects of communities and land use systems.

Furthermore, issues like external social environment and spatial environmental conditions were seen to have some influence in public participation in planning process in Enugu. The closeness and accessibility to areas where meetings are held and decisions taken are of much concern to the stakeholders. Findings from this study are in line with previous work done by Taqvaie et al, (2009) where they posited that public participation considers spatial factors and environmental conditions, the type and nature of places, accessibility, and the spatial distance between residences. In their perspective, the importance of embracing local norms and local structures for participation was emphasized, and the

significance of social, economic, and cultural interests in participation, coupled with environmental considerations were taken into account. Accordingly, the differences and spatial characteristics of various regions have an impact on participation

6. Conclusions and Study Implications

The outcome of this research has some importance practical implications and recommendations. Firstly, the study portrays that the eight identified factors that influenced public participation in planning process in Enugu are very vital and important in handling of policies that are geared towards making the populace to be part of planning matters in the State. This revelation calls for methodical urban planning and new paradigm shift from the top-bottom planning approach to the public oriented bottom-up approach. Hence, researchers and scholars interested in this subject area should pay attention to these eight factors for further planning matters that have to do with public participation in planning process

Secondly, digital technology is a tool that can be deployed to foster public participation in planning. In places where public participation is established, predominant in-person consultations have been deemed laborious. Digital tools have thus been strongly recommended to facilitate public participation. This presents an opportunity for Nigeria to go a step further and promote public participation using digital technology. Rolling out e-engagement platforms is certain to achieve a high range of engagement and participation. Leveraging technology and social media is a good way to educate and enhance public participation in planning from the youth demographic. This will help the youths in building and promoting a culture of participation using a means they are already familiar with will ensure continued participation even as they get older.

Thirdly, the findings also imply that to evolve any robust and sustainable policy that will involve the public participation in cities of Nigeria, urban planners and other development agencies need to also pay attention to the eight variables that were empirically determined in this study.

Fourthly, planners are encouraged to actively seek avenues to connect with locals more and engage in advocacy as it is an important aspect of planning. As there is widespread understanding of the importance of public participation among the planners, steps should be taken by the government to create avenues

to make this a reality. Planners are also in a position to advocate for this crucial aspect of successful planning. They are hereby encouraged to engage more with the government to ensure this becomes an integral and unnegotiable part of planning in their practice especially as the law mandates this.

Fifthly, reforming the urban planning practice in Enugu is crucial. This requires a fully participatory process involving consultations with all relevant stakeholders, including the general public, community leaders and civil society groups. The capacity of the administrative system to ensure implementation of plans must also be enhanced by ensuring adequacy of personnel and working equipment. The unrealistic assumptions springing from the foreign base of the Enugu State Plans and the exclusion of citizens in the preparation stages make Urban Plans alien to the people. Making Plans that incorporate local ideals is pertinent for success. The formal land administration and urban planning practices over the years have largely been divorced from the culture and traditions of the people which appreciates communal cooperation. This suggests going back to the drawing board and seeking ways of achieving better engagement with the people in the planning process.

Again, this study recommends that public participation in the urban planning process in Enugu State be improved, by establishing a unified national strategy for social media used by urban institutions, to remove current mistakes and facilitate links between urban institutions. This may enhance the general public's interaction with urban issues. Government should also promote instruments such as dialogue, incentives, and participation facilities, as they may create a willingness to participate in the population, thus encouraging people to participate. Enhancing public participation could be achieved by promoting social net- works, effective organizers, and other stakeholders who are interested in the participation process.

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