



Assessing the Perceived Impacts of Community Participation on Rural Development Effectiveness: An Empirical Study of Langchenphu Gewog, Bhutan

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Abstract: Bhutan's democratic decentralization has made community participation an essential element of rural development, empowering grassroots citizens to self-manage their social, economic, and environmental well-being. Nevertheless, in practice, the level of community participation in rural development programs and citizens' perceptions of their contribution, remain unknown. Hence, this study assesses the perceived impact of community participation on rural development effectiveness. This study employed a household census survey, covering every household in Langchenphu Gewog (Block). Data were collected from 237 respondents, consisting of household heads or any eligible member of the household whose age is 18 and above. Information was gathered using a structured, closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaire. Information was gathered using structured, closed-ended Likert-scale questionnaires. The community participation levels was measured using six key indicators, and the perception of the effectiveness of rural development was assessed using three dimensions, which were quantified through nine specific indicators. Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and multiple linear regression were applied to the quantitative data. Results indicated a strong positive correlation between perceived community participation and the effectiveness of rural development ($r = 0.839$, $p < .001$; $B = 0.831$). In addition, multiple regression analysis revealed that participation was a strong predictor of project success outcomes, while demographic factors did not have any significant impact. These findings confirm that inclusive and wide-ranging participation is more decisive than demographically specific intervention. Therefore, the study recommends the institutionalization of participatory practices, the development of community capacity, and the strengthening of local governance bodies' accountability for effective and inclusive rural development.

Keywords: Community Participation, Rural Development, Project Performance, Community Satisfaction, Development Effectiveness

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Rural development is an important aspect for developing countries with large rural populations. Galan (2025) stated that statistical data shows that 42.75% of the global population lives in rural areas. Rural development is a strategy aimed at enhancing the economic and social well-being of rural communities. In recent years, top-down development approaches have been subject to considerable criticism for their inefficiencies. This has led to the global shift towards decentralized governance. This approach empowers local communities to manage their agendas, focusing on developmental activities (Ndraha and Uang, 2022).

Aworti (2013) stated that community participation ensures the active involvement of members in the planning, execution, and management of local projects. The study also highlighted that community participation refers to the collective effort of local people in identifying their needs and organizing strategies to address them. Adetiba (2021) noted that community participation is a crucial instrument for effective rural development. Ndraha and Uang (2022), however, argue that participation is no longer a privilege granted by the government. It is a fundamental community right, ensuring democratic accountability, transparency, and sustainable rural development.

In Bhutan, formal community participation in development began with the establishment of the Tshogdu Chenmo* (Paljor, Lobzang, and Kawai, 2021). The process was further supported by the establishment of the Dzongkhag Tshogdu† in 1981 and the Gewog Tshogde‡ in 1991, both of which facilitated greater grassroots participation in decision-making. Moreover, the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Local Government Act of 2009 have enforced direct citizen participation in determining their socioeconomic well-being at the grassroots level. The Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB) has encouraged community participation through fiscal authority to local government institutions. Gewog Grants (GG) were given on a five-year plan basis and released each year in the form of Gewog Annual Grants (GAGs) to fund rural development programs.

The planning process starts at the grassroots level, and the Chiwog Zomdu§ is conducted at the Chiwog** by the elected representative, known as the Tshogpa††. The meeting must be attended by a representative from every household to decide and delineate local government priorities (Local Government Assessment Study [LGAS] 2016, p. 12). The suggested priorities are discussed at the Gewog Tshogde, chaired by the Gup‡‡, which plays a significant role in coordinating development plans with the community's needs.

Problem Statement

There is evidence from authentic sources that highlights the lack of community participation in local governance. The Gewog Tshogde meeting agendas, community meeting resolutions, and reports from the Local Governance Assessment Study and Annual Audit Report have explicitly mentioned the lack of community-led initiatives, meaningful involvement, and insufficient capacity-building for both officials and community members (RLGP, 2020). Although there is a legal framework supporting and mandating community participation in rural development, the involvement of people in local governance processes remains limited. This inadequate participation has led to undesired outcomes such as project delays,

* The National Assembly, established in 1953, is now known as the Chi-Tshog.

† District Council in Bhutan. It is the highest decision-making body in a district head.

‡ Block Council in Bhutan. It is the decision-making body at the Gewog (block) level headed by Gup

§ Chiwog Zomdu refers to a village-level meeting where community members gather to discuss and prioritize development activities at the village level.

** Chiwog is the smallest administrative unit, typically made up of a group of villages.

†† Tshogpa is an elected representative of a chiwog (village cluster) who serves as a member of the Gewog Tshogde and acts as a bridge between the local government and the community.

‡‡ Gup is the elected head of a block

compromised quality of implementation, and lower levels of community needs fulfillment and community satisfaction.

There is limited empirical research specifically investigating the extent of community participation (CP) and its impact on the effectiveness of rural development (RDE) in Bhutan. Moreover, although some literature may exist, the relationship between CP and RDE remains underexplored in academic and policy literature in Bhutan. No such studies have been conducted in Langchenphu Gewog, a remote and underdeveloped region, leaving a significant gap in understanding how community participation influences rural development outcomes in this context.

Research Objectives

The objective of the research is to:

- To assess the levels of community participation in rural development processes in Langchenphu Gewog.
- To evaluate the perceptions of the community on the effectiveness of rural development initiatives in Langchenphu Gewog.
- To analyze the relationship between the level of community participation and the perceived effectiveness of rural development projects.

Research Question

- What are the levels of community participation in rural development in Langchenphu Gewog?
- How do community members perceive the effectiveness of rural development initiatives in Langchenphu Gewog?
- What is the relationship between the level of community participation and the perceived effectiveness of rural development projects?

Research Hypotheses:

- **H₀:** There is no significant relationship between community participation and the perceived effectiveness of rural development in Langchenphu Gewog.
- **H₁:** Alternative Hypothesis (H₁): There is a significant positive relationship between community participation and the perceived effectiveness of rural development in Langchenphu Gewog

Operational Definitions

To study the perception-based impact of community participation on rural development, the following terms were defined in the context of Langchenphu Gewog:

- [*Community participation* in this study refers to the extent of citizens' involvement in rural development processes. This includes participation in planning, project

implementation, attendance at community meetings, involvement in monitoring and evaluation, decision-making, and engagement in all phases of the project. These levels of participation are based on respondents' self-assessed experiences]

- [*Rural development effectiveness* is defined as the community's perception of the impact of rural development initiatives on improving social and economic conditions measure respondents' satisfaction, their views on project performance, and their self-reported socio-economic outcomes]

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The Concept of Community Participation in Rural Development

Community participation, widely recognized as a crucial element of democratic governance and development planning, has become a vital tool in achieving sustainable rural transformation. Defined as the active involvement of local populations in the planning, execution, and management of development initiatives, community participation promotes transparency, accountability, and social inclusion (Awortwi, 2013; Mahuwi, 2020). It not only empowers individuals but also strengthens collective ownership of development outcomes. Jaurino et al. (2019) identify participation as a cornerstone of good governance and argue that inclusive engagement is integral to long-term rural sustainability. Various internal and external factors shape the dynamics of participation. Nurbaiti and Bambang (2018) categorize these into personal characteristics, such as age, gender, education, and income, as well as external influences, including government communication strategies and the role of private sector actors (Maharjana and Lal, 2021). This bifocal understanding implies that participation is not merely about presence but about agency, shaped by intersecting social and institutional forces.

Community Participation Indicators and Levels of Citizen Power

A practical way to evaluate this involvement is through Community Participation Indicators (CPI). Sutiyo et al. (2017), in a study from Indonesia, identify critical participation points, including community engagement in meetings, planning sessions, project execution, and evaluation activities. These participation phases reflect the multifaceted nature of development, where citizen involvement is required not only for legitimacy but also for operational effectiveness.

Kuswanto and Anderson (2023) advance this argument by emphasizing that the quality of engagement in planning processes directly influences the effectiveness and public acceptance of development projects. Their findings suggest a strong correlation between citizen satisfaction and involvement, as active participation ensures that projects are better aligned with community priorities. Fhika (2015) supports this by developing participatory indices in Tanzania, revealing that meaningful engagement across development stages improves project relevance and sustainability. Conversely, failure to include communities meaningfully often results in development failure, reinforcing the need for deliberate strategies that promote inclusive engagement.

Obot, Afia, and Johnson (2022) as cited in Rubin and Rubin (2014), affirm that participatory decision-making significantly enhances the success rate of development

projects. Their work reveals that when communities are consulted and their views respected, projects are more likely to meet local needs, increasing the legitimacy and impact of development initiatives. Despite widespread agreement on the value of participation, the literature acknowledges disparities in the actual influence communities wield. Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) provides a seminal framework to assess the levels of citizen power. This model identifies eight rungs of participation, ranging from manipulation and therapy (non-participation) to informing, consultation, and placation (tokenism), and finally to partnership, delegated power, and citizen control (citizen power). This continuum helps differentiate symbolic gestures of inclusion from genuine empowerment. Various scholars (Soviana and Kühn, 2010; Oni, 2015; Patrick, 2016; Dube et al., 2021; Niki and Awuor, 2024) have applied this model to rural development, finding that many projects remain stuck at the tokenism stage, lacking mechanisms for communities to influence actual outcomes. Arnstein's framework is thus instrumental in critically evaluating not just whether communities participate but how and to what extent their voices shape decisions.

As an alternative to top-down development, the participatory development approach emerged in response to criticisms of centralized governance models. Advocates such as Ndraha and Uang (2022) argue that decentralized systems promote localized decision-making, aligning development goals with community needs. Gupta et al. (2024) highlight the participatory approach as a pathway for poverty reduction and livelihood enhancement, especially in marginalized rural contexts. Nelson and Wright (1995) reinforce that development is most effective when communities plan, implement, and evaluate projects, arguing that this approach repositions beneficiaries as active agents rather than passive recipients. Hence, participatory development represents a paradigm shift toward a bottom-up process that centers community voice in decision-making.

Dimensions of Rural Development Effectiveness

While the conceptual and procedural importance of participation is well-established, a more critical concern lies in evaluating its outcomes. Does community participation translate into effective rural development? To answer this, the literature suggests evaluating three key dimensions: project performance, community satisfaction, and socioeconomic outcomes.

Wandiri and James (2020) provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating project performance using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), including timeliness, budget compliance, technical quality, and community satisfaction. Their study on rural infrastructure projects shows that successful performance is not solely technical but also hinges on how well community expectations are met. This evaluation method aligns with Vandevorde and Vanhoucke (2006), who emphasize the need to measure both tangible deliverables and community perceptions to determine effectiveness.

Community satisfaction, a subjective yet essential metric, is deeply influenced by expectations. Tri and Thuy (2021), drawing on Oliver's (1999) expectancy-disconfirmation model, argue that satisfaction depends on whether project outcomes meet or exceed citizen expectations. Projects that fail to deliver perceived value often face resistance or apathy from communities, undermining their long-term viability. Fleming and Barnhouse (2006) further link satisfaction with institutional trust, noting that participatory processes enhance public confidence in local governance systems.

Socioeconomic outcomes provide a broader lens for assessing impact. Panakaje et al. (2025) identify critical indicators, including income levels, access to education, healthcare, employment, and overall living standards. These dimensions reflect the transformative potential of rural development initiatives. Mitra (2025) expands on this by using composite indicators, emphasizing the interlinkages between basic services and socio-economic upliftment. Notably, projects that enhance access to infrastructure, healthcare, and education correlate with improved household livelihoods and economic mobility. These outcomes are not merely end results but evidence of a development process that responds to local realities and priorities.

While existing studies affirm the positive link between participation and development outcomes, they often overlook a vital intermediary perception. Most research emphasizes measurable outputs while sidelining how communities interpret and experience these changes. This gap is particularly relevant because development effectiveness is ultimately judged by those it aims to serve.

Research Gap and Justification for the Study

Despite the wealth of research connecting community participation to development outcomes, several limitations remain. First, many studies focus on whether participation occurs rather than examining the depth or quality of that participation (Maxwell and Nsingo, 2008; Aref and Redzuan, 2009; Patrick et al., 2016). Second, much of the literature assesses development success through externally imposed metrics rather than community-defined perceptions of effectiveness. Most significantly, there is a paucity of empirical research linking the levels of community participation, quantified through instruments such as the Community Participation Index (CPI), with perceived development effectiveness. While frameworks such as Arnstein's Ladder offer theoretical guidance, there remains a need for localized empirical studies that translate these models into context-specific insights.

In the Bhutanese context, this gap is even more pronounced. Despite Bhutan's emphasis on Gross National Happiness and community-centered development philosophies, no rigorous empirical studies have assessed how community participation affects the effectiveness of rural development from the community's perspective. Therefore, this study addresses a critical void by evaluating how levels of participation, as measured by CPI, influence rural development outcomes in Langchenphu Gewog. By incorporating perceptions of project performance, satisfaction, and socio-economic outcome, this study offers a multidimensional and community-rooted understanding of development effectiveness.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Design of the Study

This study utilized a quantitative research design to evaluate the impact of community participation on the effectiveness of rural development in Langchenphu Gewog based on respondents' self-reported perceptions. Descriptive, correlational and regression statistical methods were employed to assess levels community participation and evaluate the relationship with perceived rural development effectiveness. This design is adopted in alignment with Bryman (2016), who states that this methodological approach allows a

comprehensive description of key variables and examines predictive relationships, thereby supporting the generalization of findings to the broader population.

The Place of Study

The study was conducted in Langchenphu Gewog, a small Gewog located in the southeastern corner of Bhutan under Samdrup Jongkhar district. It covers an area of 222.43 square kilometers and has a population of 968 rural residents and 243 regular households (Population and Housing Census Bhutan, 2017). It is divided into five Chiwogs and 15 villages. The primary occupations are agriculture and livestock.

Population and Sampling

The study used a census sampling technique to determine the sample size to maximize statistical power and minimize sampling error. The decision for complete enumeration was methodologically justified by the relatively small and finite population size. The household data was further validated against current Gewog administrative records to ensure accuracy. Ultimately, 237 households participated in the study that constitute 97.53% of the total population.

Data Sources

This study utilized both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were collected via structured household surveys using a five-point Likert scale. Secondary data were obtained from authoritative documents such as government reports, Gewog administration records, the 2017 Population and Housing Census, Local Government Assessment Study (LGAS) reports, and project evaluations conducted by the Royal Audit Authority (RAA).

Data Collection Tools

The study employed a structured, closed-ended survey questionnaire to operationalize its three core constructs: perceived community participation, perceived rural development effectiveness, and demographic characteristics. Data on indicators of dependent and independent variables were collected using the five-point Likert scale across their indicators. The instrument also gathered demographic data on household location, age, gender, education, and occupation to support a more nuanced analysis.

Variable Operationalization

Multiple indicators and sub-dimensions were developed for the variables. The Community Participation was assessed using the Community Participation Index (CPI) and perceived Rural Development Effectiveness was measured using the Rural Development Effectiveness Index (RDEI). The CPI-independent variable was constructed from six items/indicators designed to assess respondents' perception on participation across various stages of rural development projects. These items included participation in project planning, active involvement during implementation, attendance at community meetings, and engagement

in monitoring, evaluation and decision-making processes. The CPI also encompassed overall perceptions of the community's role in project governance.

The dependent variable (RDEI) integrated three core dimensions:

1. *Project performance*: This variable is evaluated based on the respondents' perceptions of indicators such as whether rural development projects were completed on schedule and adhered to expected quality standards, timelines, and budgets.
2. *Community Satisfaction*: The satisfaction scores measure the respondents' contentment with how well the projects addressed local needs, delivered intended outcomes, and ensured the equitable distribution of benefits among diverse community groups.
3. *Socio-economic Outcomes*: It captures perceived improvements in access to basic services, enhancements in living standards, and increases in income and employment opportunities within the Langchenphu Gewog. *A comprehensive summary of the variables and the measurement scales used in this study is provided in Appendix A.*

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 presents the internal consistency of constructs measuring community participation and perceived effectiveness of rural development. The six items' of CPI show strong reliability ($\alpha=0.940$). Secondly, the internal consistency of each indicator under those three dimensions under RDEI was also found to be strong and within an acceptable range. For instance, the perception of project performance (PPI) has 3 items with an α of 0.856, the satisfaction indicator (SI) also has 3 items with an α of 0.846, and the socio-economic improvement indicator (SEII) has 3 items with an α of 0.849. In total, 15 items yielded an overall Cronbach's alpha of ($\alpha = 0.965$). All indices fall within the acceptable to excellent reliability range. Barrett (2001), as cited in Nimon, Zientek, and Henson (2012), noted that reliability is typically assessed by correlating rater responses, where correlation coefficients of 0.70 or higher are generally considered acceptable. These results affirm the robustness and consistency of the measurement instruments used in this study.

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha values for variables

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
[Community Participation Index (CPI)]	6	0.94
[Project Performance Indicator (PPI)]	3	0.856
[Satisfaction Indicator (SI)]	3	0.846
[Socio-Economic Improvement Indicator (SEII)]	3	0.849
Total	15	0.965

Data Analysis Techniques

Firstly, the collected data were downloaded from the Google survey form in Microsoft Excel version 2021 and properly coded and imported into IBM SPSS version 25.0. After that, descriptive analysis, including frequencies and percentages, was used to summarize

demographic characteristics. Levels of community participation were analyzed and assessed by means and standard deviations in SPSS. To facilitate interpretation, an a priori convention suggested by Lindner and Lindner (2024) was applied as follows: Strongly Agree=5.00-4.51, Agree=4.50-3.51, Neutral=3.50-2.51, Disagree = 2.50-1.51, and Strongly Disagree=1.50-1.00. For the second part, correlation analysis was employed to assess the relationship between community participation (CPI) and rural development effectiveness (RDEI). Furthermore, multiple linear regression was executed to evaluate the effect of community participation (CPI) on rural development effectiveness (RDEI), controlling for covariates (household location, gender, age group, occupation, and education level). For both analyses, statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$ with a 95% confidence interval.

Ethical Consideration

This study strictly followed the moral considerations, principles, and rules Dr. Nilesh B. Gajjar mentioned. Gajjar (2013) advises on the importance of honesty in reporting data, integrity, carefulness, openness, and confidentiality in research. As far as the researcher is concerned, these ethical considerations were made from the researcher's side. To protect participants' privacy, as Gajjar (2013) states, research ethics, including informed-consent rules, were followed. Participants were informed to ensure their voluntary understanding of involvement in the study. Anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy were strictly maintained. Finally, approvals were sought from the Gup (Head of Gewog) to ensure compliance with Gewog and local regulations, as well as ethical standards, if applicable.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Characteristics of Respondents

The survey participants in this study consisted of 237 individuals. As summarized in Table 2, the majority of respondents are from Langchenphu (27.4%) and Agurthang (25.3%), and smaller proportions are from Jangsa, Jampani, and Rongchuthang. Gender distribution is relatively balanced, with females slightly outnumbering males at 51.5%. Most participants fall within the 35-59 age group (55.3%), followed by those aged 60 and above (25.3%). The majority of the respondents are from farming backgrounds, 68.8% of respondents, and other respondents were from business, government jobs, or are unemployed. In terms of education, 32.5% have no formal education, 20.3% attended non-formal education programs, and only a small fraction (2.5%) hold a bachelor's degree.

Table 2: Respondent distribution by household location, gender, age group, occupation, and level of education

S/N	Demographic Parameters	Frequency	Percent
1	<i>Household Location</i>		
	Langchenphu Chiwog	65	27.4
	Jangsa Chiwog	49	20.7
	Agurthang Chiwog	60	25.3
	Jampani Chiwog	39	16.5
	Rongchuthang Chiwog	24	10.1

	Total	237	100.0
2	<i>Gender</i>		
	Male	115	48.5
	Female	122	51.5
	Total	237	100.0
2	<i>Age Group</i>		
	15-34	46	19.4
	35-59	131	55.3
	60+	60	25.3
	Total	237	100.0
4	<i>Occupation</i>		
	Farming	163	68.8
	Govt. Employee	12	5.1
	Business	21	8.9
	Unemployed	41	17.3
	Total	237	100.0
5	<i>Education Level</i>		
	No formal education	77	32.5
	Non-formal education (NFE)	48	20.3
	Monastic education	14	5.9
	Primary (class PP-6)	38	16.0
	Lower secondary (class 7-8)	17	7.2
	Middle secondary (class 9-10)	23	9.7
	Higher secondary (class 11-12)	12	5.1
	Diploma/Certificate	2	0.8
	Bachelor's degree	6	2.5
	Total	237	100.0

Levels of Community Participation in Rural Development Processes

Respondents reported their level of agreement (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) on six items ($\alpha = 0.94$) that measured the Community Participation Index (CPI) on a five-point Likert scale.

Table 3: Mean Scores of levels of Community Participation Indicators (CPI) based on Likert Scale Responses

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Agreement Level
[Community involvement in all phases of the project]	3.99	0.856	Agree
[Participation in the implementation of the projects]	3.75	0.945	Agree
[Participation in community meetings]	3.73	1.042	Agree
[Involvement in monitoring/evaluating development projects]	3.70	0.921	Agree
[Opinions considered in the decision-making]	3.65	1.037	Agree
[Involvement in planning rural projects]	3.55	0.922	Agree
CPI (IV), Total: 6 Indicators, (Composite: M=22.3629, SD=5.02991)			

As shown in Table 3, the findings reflect that community members tended to agree to their involvement in various aspects of rural development projects. The highest

agreement was recorded regarding involvement in all stages of the project ($M=3.99$), followed by project implementation ($M=3.75$) and attending community meetings ($M=3.73$). Similarly, respondents reported involvement in monitoring and evaluation processes ($M=3.70$) and perception of their views being taken into account in decision-making processes ($M=3.65$). Although marginally lower, involvement in planning processes ($M = 3.55$) fell into the "Agree" category. Overall, the composite score for the Community Participation Index (CPI) ($M = 22.36$, $SD = 5.03$) indicates a moderately high rate of community participation in all aspects of rural development processes.

Perceptions of the Community on the Effectiveness of Rural Development (RDE)

To evaluate the respondent's perception of the rural development effectiveness, a five-point Likert scale (1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3-Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5-Strongly Agree) was used to rate respondents' level of agreement. Table 4 presents data on three key indicators: project performance, community satisfaction and perception on socio-economic outcomes. Each of them are broken down into three sub-indicators (Sub-I) as follows:

Perception of Project Performance

Overall, this study found that the respondent perceived moderately high level of project performance in the Langchenphu Gewog. For three sub-indicators, participants indicated that (Sub-I 1) projects are completed on time ($M=3.940$, $SD=0.795$), (Sub-I 2) projects meet expected quality standards ($M=3.921$, $SD=0.794$), and (Sub-I 3) they adhere to budget/are completed within the planned budget ($M=3.81$, $SD=0.872$). Overall, the project performance of the composite ($M=11.6751$, $SD=2.1687$) reflects steady performance with moderate variability among respondents.

Community Satisfaction

In terms of community satisfaction, respondents moderately agreed that they were satisfied with the effectiveness of rural development projects. They agree that the projects (Sub-I 1) deliver satisfactory results ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.802$), (Sub-I 2) effectively address community needs ($M=3.90$, $SD=0.861$), and (Sub-I 3) ensure a fair distribution of benefits among different community groups ($M=3.76$, $SD=0.839$). The composite score ($M=11.7553$, $SD=2.1724$) points out a moderately satisfaction levels in Langchenphu Gewog.

Perception of Socio-Economic Outcomes

Among these three indicators, perception of the socio-economic outcomes received the highest ratings across all three sub-indicators. Respondents agreed that projects (Sub-I 1) improve household income or livelihoods ($M=4.24$, $SD=0.772$), (Sub-I 2) enhance access to essential services ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.839$), and (Sub-I 3) contribute to long-term well-being ($M=4.04$, $SD=0.849$). The indicator composite score ($M=12.3080$, $SD=2.1575$) reflects strong community perceptions of beneficial socio-economic impacts in Langchenphu Gewog.

Finally, the finding shows that the RDEI, constructed using the composite mean scores of three components: project performance, community satisfaction, and socio-economic outcomes, recorded a mean score of 35.74 (SD = 6.19), which reflects a positive perception of overall rural development effectiveness in Langchenphu Gewog.

Table 4: Mean Scores and Composite Statistics for Rural Development Effectiveness Indicators

Indicator	Sub-I 1 M(SD)	Sub-I 2 M(SD)	Sub-I 3 M(SD)	Composite M(SD)
<i>Project Performance</i>	3.940 (0.795)	3.921 (0.794)	3.81 (0.872)	11.6751 (2.16871)
<i>Community Satisfaction</i>	3.93 (0.802)	3.90 (0.861)	3.76 (0.839)	11.7553 (2.17244)
<i>Socio-Economic Outcomes</i>	4.24 (0.772)	4.06 (0.839)	4.04 (0.849)	12.3080 (2.15748)
RDEI (DI), Total: 9 Indicators, Composite: (M= 35.7384 SD=6.19040)				

Note: Sub-I=Sub-Indicator

Community Participation and Its Impact on Rural Development Effectiveness

A correlation analysis was executed to evaluate the relationship between community participation and rural development effectiveness. As shown in Table 5, the results indicated a strong and positive correlation between the CPI and the RDEI, $r(237) = 0.839$, $p < 0.001$ (one-tailed). This finding provides compelling evidence that higher levels of community participation are significantly associated with greater rural development effectiveness in Langchenphu Gewog. Accordingly, the null hypothesis positing no significant relationship between community participation and rural development effectiveness is rejected.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation between Community Participation and Rural Development Effectiveness

Variables	CPI	RDEI
Community Participation Index (CPI)	1	.839**
Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
Rural Development Effectiveness Index (RDEI)	.839**	1
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
N	237	237
<i>Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)</i>		

Impact of Community Participation and Demographic Factors on Rural Development Effectiveness

As summarized in Table 6, a multiple linear regression analysis was performed to examine the influence of CPI and demographic characteristics on RDEI. The result demonstrated that CPI was a significant predictor of RDEI ($B = .023$, $\beta = 0.831$, $t = 22.543$, $p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This result highlights that higher levels of community participation are strongly associated with more effective rural development outcomes. In contrast, no demographic variables, such as household location, Gender, age group, occupation, or education level, exhibited a statistically significant effect on RDEI (all $p > .05$).

Table 6: Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Predicting Rural Development Effectiveness

S/N	Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	p-value
1	CPI	1.023	0.045	0.831	22.543	0.001
2	Household Location	1.023	0.182	-0.055	-1.426	0.155
3	Gender	-0.041	0.447	-0.003	-0.093	0.926
4	Age Group	-0.042	0.368	-0.005	-0.115	0.909
5	Occupation	-0.218	0.194	-0.042	-1.124	0.262
6	Education Level	-0.039	0.121	-0.014	-0.320	0.749
<i>Dependent Variable: Rural Development Effectiveness Index (RDEI)</i>						

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY

Discussion

The study assessed perception-based, impacts of community participation on perceived rural development effectiveness. It found insights into the critical role that community participation plays in driving effective rural development.

Firstly, the application of Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation (1969) proves particularly revealing. As observed in the study, participation in Langchenphu Gewog largely reflects the middle rungs of tokenism, where community members are consulted and informed but lack actual decision-making power. This aligns with Arnstein's critique that such participation often lacks the capacity to effect real influence. Although community involvement is evident in community meetings, project implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, limited roles in planning suggest that participation remains largely symbolic engagement rather than empowerment. This limited involvement hinders the full realization of rural development potential, as highlighted by Kuswanto and Anderson (2023), who stress that active planning participation correlates strongly with more effective and contextually aligned outcomes.

Secondly, findings demonstrated that the respondents generally perceived better project performance in Langchenphu Gewog. Though there is no strong consensus that they strongly agree, the findings reveal that any rural development projects in their community were completed on time, within budget, and with acceptable and expected quality.

Thirdly, regarding community satisfaction in rural development, findings indicate that the community is satisfied with the rural development project. Out of three indicators, 'satisfaction with outcomes of rural development projects' and 'projects addressed actual community needs' are viewed positively. However, it found lower satisfaction with the 'fair distribution of benefits'. This reflects tokenistic participation, where some voices may dominate, thereby undermining the legitimacy of participatory processes. This supports Roberts (2004) and Fleming and Barnhouse (2006), who link equitable satisfaction with transparent and inclusive development. Therefore, the finding suggests that in addition to effective development, inclusive participation from every segment of the community is vital to maximize satisfaction among beneficiaries.

Fourthly, the findings indicate that the community perceives positive socio-economic benefits from rural development projects. Indicators such as improvements in access to basic services and household living standards indicate that rural development initiatives

effectively address key areas of community welfare in Langchenphu Gewog. Additionally, the impact on employment and income opportunities is also perceived positively. However, the slightly lower mean score on employment and income suggests that while physical infrastructure is visible and immediate, economic mobility might require longer-term or more community-driven strategies, again reinforcing Gupta et al. (2024) and Nelson and Wright (1995), who stress that participation fosters sustained socio-economic transformation.

Finally, the study found a strong positive statistical relationship between community participation and the effectiveness of rural development ($r = 0.839$; $B = 0.831$). This study directly corroborates the claims of Patrick et al. (2016) and others, including Maxwell and Nsingo (2008) and Aref and Redzuan (2009), which emphasize that the effectiveness of rural development is an outcome of community participation. Moreover, the Langchenphu case supports the Participatory Development Approach advocated by Ndraha and Uang (2022) and Gupta et al. (2024), one that moves away from top-down paradigms and emphasizes the power of localized, bottom-up models.

Conversely, the study found that demographic variables such as gender, age, education, and occupation did not significantly influence perceived effectiveness. This finding diverges from the assertion of Nurbaiti and Bambang (2018) and Maharjana and Lal (2021) that such factors strongly shape participation behavior. In the Langchenphu context, the universal influence of participation across demographics may reflect either a relatively homogenous community experience or the presence of institutional frameworks that ensure equal access. Regardless, this reinforces the importance of designing participation mechanisms that are inclusive in structure and execution rather than narrowly targeting specific demographic segments.

To summarize, community participation in Langchenphu Gewog exhibits promising levels of engagement, but the absence of genuine decision-making authority hinders its developmental potential and community ownership. Thus, it is essential to move beyond traditional top-down development models toward more inclusive, bottom-up approaches, where communities are empowered to shape their development trajectories.

Policy Implications

Insights drawn from this study may inform the efforts of policymakers and local stakeholders working to strengthen rural development initiatives. While the findings are context-specific, they offer considerations that may apply to similar settings. The following recommendations are proposed:

Integrate Community Participation (CP) as a Foundational Element in Rural Development Processes

Acknowledging the importance of community participation in the sustainability and effectiveness of rural development outcomes, the CP should not be just symbolic and superficial. CP should be considered beyond the token involvement to a genuine partnership. Firstly, the system, such as the establishment of formal platforms such as Village Development Committees (VDC), Participatory Planning Forums (PPF), and Local Monitoring

Cells (LMC), ensures community members' voices are heard and integrated into decision-making. If such initiatives already exist, strengthening and empowering them is critical. Secondly, Chiwog Zomdu and Gewog Tshogde must be adequately monitored, and a proper assessment may be undertaken on whether such a platform has empowered people in decision-making. Thirdly, regulatory frameworks and policy guidelines should also make participatory mechanisms mandatory and prerequisites for project sanctioning and resource allocation.

Strengthening Sensitization and Monitoring of Local Government (LG) Functionaries for Enhanced Community Participation

To institutionalize community participation as a core development approach, local government officials must be systematically sensitized to the mandatory requirements of participatory governance as outlined in existing laws and frameworks. To ensure accountability, a monitoring framework may be developed. Such a framework must be based on an online portal to monitor how much and how the community was involved meaningfully in the projects. Therefore, effective monitoring will enhance transparency and ensure that LG functionaries adhere to participatory guidelines and uphold inclusive development practices at the grassroots level.

Develop the Capacity of Community Members

Community participation in every phase of the rural development project may not yield good outcomes. The skills and knowledge of participants should complement it. The community's relevant skills, such as monitoring, evaluation, and decision-making, must be developed. Therefore, policymakers may reconsider the decision in the annual budget appropriation act to allocate a specific budget for community capacity development.

Promote Inclusive Participation Across all Demographics

The study indicates that demographic factors do not significantly influence development outcomes when participation levels are high. In this regard, local government functionaries should prioritize mechanisms that encourage and facilitate participation regardless of social or economic status. Inclusive frameworks should be developed by paying special attention to removing barriers that hinder participation, such as literacy challenges or time constraints due to livelihood activities.

Limitations of the Study

- **Extraneous External Factors:** External factors such as the attitude of local government functionaries, government funding policies, natural disasters, and political interference are beyond the control of both the community and the researcher and could have significantly influenced the outcomes of rural development. These variables were difficult to measure and control, and thus may have acted as extraneous or even confounding variables within the study.

- **Measurement of Abstract Constructs:** In the absence of concrete constructs to measure community participation in rural development effectiveness in the literature, the researcher adapted validated themes and indicators identified by Panakaje et al. (2025). Although these adapted indicators were carefully incorporated into the five-point Likert scale instrument, these tools may not have fully captured the nuanced dimensions of the constructs. This limitation may have implications for the study's construct validity.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The study on the impact of community (CP) on Rural Development Effectiveness (RDE) yielded a strong positive relationship between the levels of community participation and rural development effectiveness in Langchenphu Gewog. This indicates that CP is a fundamental driver of the RDE. Therefore, the development project must be community-driven to enhance ownership, accountability, and transparency. Furthermore, moderate levels of community participation in different stages of development projects lead to a moderate perception and awareness of the project performance. Similarly, the levels of community participation also affect the community's satisfaction with the development project. Moreover, socio-economic outcomes of rural development have been perceived as high, although there are moderate levels of community participation in Langchenphu Gewog. Therefore, CP is critical to improving project performance, community satisfaction, and socio-economic outcomes in Langchenphu.

The findings revealed that demographic characteristics, including household location, gender, age, occupation, and education level, did not significantly predict development success in Langchenphu Gewog. Therefore, community participation is a universally important factor that transcends these variables. This finding may be attributed to the relative socio-economic homogeneity and the culturally embedded communal decision-making practices in Langchenphu Gewog. Therefore, any rural development project must be grounded in meaningful participation from all community segments, regardless of their demographic characteristics. Based on these conclusions, several practical recommendations are proposed for both policy and ground-level implementation. Firstly, integrate community participation as a foundational element in rural development processes. Second, strengthen sensitization and monitoring of local government (LG) functionaries to enhance community participation. Third, develop the capacity of community members. Finally, promote inclusive participation across all demographics. On the ground, local government officials should focus on promoting inclusive participation that removes barriers to involvement. Awareness campaigns can help overcome challenges related to literacy, social norms, or livelihood commitments. Moreover, LG functionaries must create an enabling environment that motivates the community to intervene in every project phase.

For further research, a qualitative research design is recommended to gain deeper insights into the motivation of individuals and groups for participation. Secondly, comparative studies across different regions are recommended to understand and examine the contextual factors that influence participation effectiveness. Finally, in this digital era, it is crucial to explore digital tools and technology to facilitate participation in rural areas and enhance community engagement in rural development.

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