

Defensive Pessimism and Assertiveness as Predictors of Civic Engagement Among Rural Dwellers: A Behavioral Study

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of Defensive Pessimism and Assertiveness on Civic Engagement among rural dwellers in AkwaIbom State. Four hundred and thirty two (432) participants were randomly selected from five local government in AkwaIbom State (Abak, Itu, OrukAnam, IkotEKpene and Oron local government areas) consisting of 217 males and 215 females. Their age range range were from 18- 65 and their mean age was 41.5. A 2x2 factorial design was adopted for the study. Three instruments were used in the study: Defensive Pessimism Questionnaire (DPQ) developed by Norem and Canton (1986), Rathus Assertiveness Schedule developed by Spencer Rathus (1973) and Civic Engagement Scale (CES) developed by Doolittle and Faul (2013). A two way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyse the data. The result showed that there is no significant influence of defensive pessimism on civic engagement among rural dwellers. The result also revealed that there is a significant influence of assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers [$F(1, 428) = 7.00, p < .05$]. The result also revealed that there is no interaction influence between defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers. It was therefore concluded that assertiveness is a predictor of civic engagement among rural dwellers. Implications and recommendations for future study were made.

Keywords: *Assertiveness, Civic Engagement, Defensive pessimism.*



INTRODUCTION

Over the years there has been lack of interest and motivation in civic participation by rural dwellers in AkwaIbom State especially among the youths and older adults. Some of them who engaged civically in the community's work have ulterior motives behind it; they no longer exercise voluntary activities by way of aiding the community to fix things in places. They show non-challant attitude towards their civil right and liberty to the community and the governments. Also the continued failure of older adults to participate in community-driven development is unhealthy for the overall growth and development of the rural economy. In the community, they live in deplorable conditions and there are no institutional provisions for them. Since their involvement in rural projects has reduced, their quality of life is negatively affected.

The surge in research on adult civic engagement can be attributed in part to the belief by some scholars that the participation of youth in society has decreased compared to previous generations [1]. However, other lines of research indicate a steady increase in youth volunteering since the 1970s and a recent increase in political activities such as voting and making political donations. Observation in a number of rural areas revealed that older adults and youths are losing faith in community driven development and policy planning. This implies that development planning at the community level is not socially inclusive. The experience of older adults today has been that of their complete severance from the process of local development. This is a negation of United Nation that governance in the public interest cannot be realized without the participation of all citizens. Citizens must be active participants in policy planning if their rights are to be realized.

The continued failure of older adults to participate in community-driven development is unhealthy for the overall growth and development of the rural economy. In the community, they live in deplorable conditions and there are no institutional provisions for them. Since their involvement in rural projects has reduced, their quality of life is negatively affected. Development measures in the community do not take into consideration the engagement of adult since they have no control over key project decisions. The consequences of this poor support of community-driven projects are socio-economic disempowerment and non-strengthening of community governance.

Civic engagement refers to the process whereby citizens participate in the governance of their political entity [2].

fabric and therefore considers social problems to be at least partly his or her own; such an individual is willing to see the moral and civic dimensions of issues, to make and justify informed moral and civic judgments, and to take action when appropriate.

—Civic engagement [is] an individual's duty to embrace the responsibilities of citizenship with the obligation to actively participate, alone or in concert with others, in volunteer service activities that strengthen the local community.

In other words civic engagement has many elements, but in its most basic sense it is about decision making, or governance over who, how, and by whom a community's resources will be allocated. The principle of civic engagement underscores the most basic principle of democratic governance, i.e. that sovereignty resides ultimately in the people (the citizenry). It is defined here as —individual and collective actions designed to identify and address issues of public concern.

In the case of Nigeria, such political entity could refer to the federation, a state or a local government. At whatever level of governance, civic engagement ensures that citizens are carried along in the governing process community development. This term civic engagement in past few years, involved a new movement to promote greater civic engagement by older adults but nowadays it has been used primarily in the context of younger people. Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.

Discussing civic engagement's intrinsic tie with democracy, Adler and Goggin [2] note that it denotes civic cooperation in an atmosphere of equal rights. They maintain that civic engagement is about the right of the people to define the public good, determine the policies by which they will seek the good, and reform or replace institutions that do not serve that good.

Civic engagement has an interrelated relationship within the various entities of the state. Through the values, knowledge, liberties, skills, ideas, attitudes and beliefs the population holds, civic engagement cultivates and shapes the state to be a representation of vast cultural, social, and economic identities.

Civic engagement applied within the state is not possible without local civic engagement. As in a democratic society, citizens are the source to give life to a representative democracy. Application of this principle can be found within programs and laws that states have implemented based in a variety of areas concerns for that particular state. Health, education, equality, immigration are a few examples of entities that civic engagement can shape within a state.

Hope and Jagers in 2014 studied civic engagement among Black youth using data acquired from the Youth Culture Survey from the Black Youth Project. The assumption is that Black youth who experience racial discrimination are fueled to be aware and participate in politics [4].

Another study described the effect of the association of development and environmental factors among a group of at-risk youth such as African-Americans and Latino participants who come from low-income families that dwell in inner-city neighborhoods. Their research resulted in variations according to their participants as the racial minority youth were motivated and had aspiring goals for their futures due to early participation in civic engagement activities, but there was no sufficient evidence that this type of mindset will follow them into their adulthood [5].

Shah writes that Putnam found that the more TV a person watches, the less they are active in outside activities. This is shown with the rise of TV in the 60s and the fall of civic engagements. They found that though news and educational programming can actually aide in a citizen's knowledge, but the lack of engaging in outside activities and social events hurts civic engagement in general [6].

Bowman's [7] meta-analysis examined the relationship of collegiate diversity experiences and civic engagement, specifically leadership skills and civic action. Bowman [7] investigated whether a relationship between college diversity experiences and civic engagement exists, if there is variation across studies, and what study characteristics, such as type of civic outcome or type of diversity experience, are associated with the magnitude of this proposed relationship. For the meta-analysis 27 studies were included in the sample. Bowman found diversity experiences are related to increased civic engagement. These diversity experiences were specifically related to civic skills, attitudes, and behaviors as well as a variety of diversity experiences. Interpersonal interactions with racial diversity appear to have the strongest relationship with promoting civic engagement. The relationship between diversity experiences and civic engagement did vary based on the type of civic outcome. Diversity experiences have a stronger relationship with civic outcomes when those civic outcomes are diversity related.

Interestingly, the concept of defensive pessimism would be correlated with civic engagement to examine if there is an influence of the former on the later. Defensive pessimism is a cognitive strategy that anxious individuals use in the face of challenging situations [8]. The defensive pessimists think of all possible negative outcomes, sets low expectations and plans through the potential bad outcomes. This bracing against the impact of impending failure by dwelling on the possibility of lack of success helps them gain control over their anxiety and mobilizes them for the desired goal as explained by Norem and Cantor in 1986. Indeed, a range of laboratory studies have demonstrated that people who expect the worst do not underperform relative to their optimistic counterparts. Expecting to receive a bad grade on an exam or a low score in a laboratory task does not actually lead to low scores and this is applied in every situation in a man's life. Studies have linked pessimism to depression [9], suicide [10], poor coping and physical illness [11]. A defensive pessimist, despite of a history of good performance in the past in a specific domain calculates the possibility of negative outcomes in the face of difficult situation. The dissipation hypothesis suggests that –negative reflections are essential for the defensive pessimists to be able to remove potential distraction during performance, and concentrate on the task at hand. Perry and Skitka [12] found that women high on defensive pessimism performed better on the mathematics test under conditions of high stereotype threat than the low stereotype threat. These participants showed a decreased anxiety on psycho-physiological measures when they were allowed to prepare for the worst compared to when they were distracted and therefore unable to ruminate.

However, one particular line of research has challenged established, prevailing notions of optimism and pessimism: research conducted on what has been termed –defensive pessimism [13], [14]. Defensive pessimism is a coping strategy used by certain individuals in preparation for important situations that hold the potential for either success or failure. Defensive pessimists set low expectations for themselves in such situations in order to both motivate themselves to work hard to prevent failure and to protect themselves from undue distress should failure actually occur. Perhaps the classic example of a defensive pessimist is a farmer who convinces himself that he will not have what to cultivate in the next farming season in order to motivate him to cultivate more harder and to cushion the negative emotions lack of seed may cause. Unlike realistic pessimists, whose negative expectations are justified by poor past performance, defensive pessimists are individuals who have previously performed well in similar situations. The defensively pessimistic student has usually received high marks on examinations; her negative expectations are not based on prior experience, but rather adopted for motivational and protective purposes. These findings were established by Norem and Cantor in 1986 when they were investigating the influence of defensive pessimism on academic performance.

The strategy of defensive pessimism is often contrasted with that of strategic optimism. Quite contrary to defensive pessimists, strategic optimists are people who motivate themselves to expect positive outcomes in similar self-relevant situations: a student who convinces herself she will do well on an upcoming exam and who does not think about the chance that she may receive a low grade [15]. What is unusual about research on defensive pessimism is that it represents the first time a type of pessimism has been deemed adaptive and beneficial for those who employ it [14]. Firstly, defensive pessimism does not appear to hamper an individual's performance. In a range of both laboratory tasks and academic situations or in a natural situation, defensive pessimists have been found to perform quite well despite their negative expectations, perhaps due to the motivational aspects of their preferred strategy [16]. Moreover, strategic optimists do not outperform defensive pessimists on any of these tasks. Finally, when defensive pessimists are forced to abandon their negative expectations and think optimistically, their performance suffers. It seems tempting to conclude, then, that modern research has identified a form of pessimism that challenges the widely-accepted notion that pessimism is bad and optimism is good: defensive pessimism appears to be a positive, adaptive, and effective sub-set of pessimism. However, from the researches done by Cantor and others on defensive pessimism in academic situations, one may suggest that the defensive pessimists despite their negative expectations would be more likely to be civically engaged in the community so as to reduce their fears and negative expectations in the community. Although there is no empirical evidence to back this up, this research is interested in determining the possibility of significant difference between defensive pessimism and civic engagement among the rural dwellers.

Furthermore, the curiosity on the concept of assertiveness on both psychological and social variables is in increase. Questions like, how does assertive individual behave in the community? Do they contribute to the community growth and development actually? And other rhetorical questions have been asked among youths and members of communities. However, this research is also interested in determining if assertiveness has influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers.

Assertiveness is defined as behavior that enables one to –stand up for one's rights without infringing on the rights of others [17]. It can be used as an instrument for initiating and maintaining socially supportive relationships and hence enjoying better emotional wellbeing [18]. Alberti and Emmons in 1970 added that assertive individuals are capable of acting in their own best interest without experiencing excessive anxiety or disregarding the rights of others. Conversely, non-assertiveness is said to be characterized by communicating one's viewpoints and feelings in such an over-apologetic,

timid, self-deprecating fashion, that it leads others to easily ignore or dismiss them. Being assertive therefore represents a balance between being aggressive and being submissive, which in turn encourages self-respect, respect for others, and cooperation. This behavior may be described as protective of health. In response to a diagnosis of a serious illness, individuals may display increased assertiveness as a coping strategy [19]. DeMarco in 1998 proposed that in women, this may involve rejecting gender-specific norms that often silence their voices. Individuals from diverse groups may also use assertiveness as a coping strategy to combat racism and prejudice in health care interactions. Assertive communication skills can be important to meet health care needs, especially when the assertiveness promotes cooperation from others.

Bouvard in 1999 explained assertiveness as a social skill is a construct which has a number of different dimensions, including the ability to express oneself without anxiety or aggression in different situations. Assertiveness is about effective communication and this does not just mean choosing the right words to say in a given situation. Tone of voice, intonation, volume, facial expression, gesture and body language all play a part in the message you are sending to the other person, and unless all parts of the equation match, you will be sending a garbled message. According to Galassi and Galassi in 1978, –assertion is the direct and appropriate communication of a person’s needs, wants and opinions without punishing, threatening, putting down others, and doing this without fear during the process. Galassi, DeLo, Galassi, and Bastien in 1974 emphasized the multidimensional nature of assertiveness by defining it in terms of three response classes, which include positive assertiveness, negative assertiveness, and self-denial.

Positive assertiveness is said to consist of the expression of positive feelings such as agreement, affection, and admiration. Negative assertiveness, on the other hand, is defined as the expression of negative feelings such as anger, annoyance, and disagreement. Self-denial includes excessive interpersonal anxiety, unnecessary apologizing, and exaggerated worry about the feelings of others. These separate response classes demonstrate that assertive behavior may be intended to achieve a variety of goals and that the content of an assertive response may be positive or negative. For the purpose of the current study, the construct of assertiveness is defined as follows: the ability to openly, confidently, and sincerely express positive or negative emotions, opinions, and needs in interpersonal contexts, while respecting the personal boundaries of others even when such expression may result in disapproval or the possibility of conflict.

Since its early introduction in the 1970s, assertiveness training continues to be a popular intervention technique offered at university counseling centers, psychology practices, and in various other mental health environments across the US. The quantity of current self-help literature such as *Develop your assertiveness: change your behavior; be more confident; get what you want* further demonstrates modern-day recognition of assertiveness as a beneficial social skill. Assertive behavior is commonly associated with the ability to initiate and maintain rewarding interpersonal relationships in the business world and personal life. According to Lange and Jakubowski in 1976, people high in assertiveness are more self-actualized than people low in assertiveness because assertive behavior leads to one’s needs being respected and fulfilled. Also Galassi in 1974, suggested that assertive people are communicative, free-spirited, secure, self-assured, and able to influence and guide others.

Various studies employing diverse measures have supported the hypothesis of differences in personality characteristics between assertive and non-assertive individuals. For instance, Ramanaiah, Heerboth, and Jinkerson in 2000 found that non-assertive students are more approval seeking, defensive, submissive, and self-projecting, as well as less expressive, adaptable, socially sensitive, and rational, than are assertive students. A study by Bouchard, Lalonde and Gagnon in 1988 explored correlations between assertiveness and personality factors in undergraduate students, which revealed a significant positive correlation between overall assertiveness and extraversion. Furthermore, Bouchard et al., in 1988 studies revealed that high scores on the positive assertion response class were related to high scores on the agreeableness and culture (artistically refined, polished, and imaginative) personality factors. Refusal behavior was found to be negatively correlated to agreeableness. Additionally, the results showed a positive relationship between negative assertion and conscientiousness. Surprisingly, no significant relationship was found between assertiveness and emotional stability.

Interestingly, there are no researches on the influence and correlation of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement thereby creating a vacuum for this present research. In that manner, this research would be investigating the influence of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers in AkwaIbom state. To ascertain the notion that defensive pessimism and assertiveness are critical variables of civic engagement the following research questions would serve as a guide for the researcher in this study;

1. To what extent would participants have high defensive pessimism be more civically engaged than those who have low defensive pessimism?
2. To what extents would participants who are positively assertive be more civically engaged than those who are negatively assertive?

METHOD

Participants

A subset of four hundred and thirty two (432) participants consisting of two hundred and seventeen (217) males and two hundred and thirteen (213) females were randomly selected from 5 local government (Abak, Itu, OrukAnam, IkotEkpene and Oron) out of the 31 local government areas that are in AkwaIbom State specifically in the rural areas. The ages of the participants ranges from 18 years to 65 years and their mean ages were 41.5.

Location of the study

This study was carried out in AkwaIbom state specifically in rural areas around Abak, Itu, OrukAnam, IkotEKPene and Oron local government areas. AkwaIbom state is in Nigeria. It is located in the coastal southern part of the country, lying between latitudes 4⁰32¹N and 5⁰33¹N, and longitudes 7⁰25¹E and 8⁰25¹E. The state is located in the south-South geographical zone, and is bordered on the east by Cross River State, on the west by Rivers State, and on the south by Atlantic Ocean and the southmost tip of Cross Rivers State.

Design

The design that was used in this study was a 2 x 2 factorial design and this was due to the fact that each of the independent has two levels.

Statistics

Data were subjected to analysis of variance (ANOVA). The reason behind the used of these two statistics is to enable the researcher find the significance influence of each of the independent variable on dependent variable by using and secondly finding the interaction effect of both the independents variables on the dependent variable.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in this study. The questionnaires distributed were divided into four sections, A, B, C, and D. Section A connotes information on the demographic variables such as age, gender, ethnic group, religion and marital status. Section B is The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule developed by Spencer Rathus [20]. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) has 30 items in all and the scoring was based on a 4-point likert type format ranging from 0-never, 1- sometimes, 2- usually, 3-always. Item 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28 and 29 were positive worded items and were directly scored while item 1,2, 4,5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26 and 30 were negatively worded items and were reversed scored. Its original cronbach alpha was .82. Section C is Defensive Pessimism Questionnaire (DPQ) developed by Norem and Canton, [21] a 17 items scale design to measure defensive pessimism. Each time is measured on a 7-point likert type ranging 1-strongly agree, 2-disagree, 3-somewhat disagree, 4- neither agree nor disagree, 5-somewhat agree, 6-agree and 7-strongly agree. All items were directly scored except item 2 and 16 which were reversed scored. The cronbach alpha for DPQ was .78. Section D is the Civic Engagement Scale (CES) developed by Doolittle A. and Faul, A., (2013). This scale consist of 14 items in all with 8 items design to measure the attitude that indicate a level of civic engagement and is measured on a 7-point likert type format ranging from 1-strongly agree, 2-disagree, 3-somewhat disagree, 4-neither agree or disagree, 5-somewhat agree, 6-agree and 7- strongly agree. The second part of the scale are 6 items that are design to measure the behavior that indicate a level of civic engagement and are measured on a 4-point likert type format ranging from 0-never, 1- sometimes, 2- usually, 3- always. All the items are positively worded items and was directly scored and having a cronbach alpha with the range from .80 - .91. For this study all the 14 items were merged together to avoid creating confusion for the participants.

Procedures

At first since all the instrument were not validated in Nigeria, a pilot was done to revalidate the scales used in this study so as to examine if the items and scoring format suit the population that is used in this study and also to determine the reliability of these scales since all these scales were not developed in AkwaIbom state, Nigeria where the study was conducted. Prior to the pilot study, the defensive pessimism questionnaire (DPQ) developed by Norem and Canton [21] had 17 items measuring defensive pessimism. This scale is rated on 7- point likert format ranging from 1—not at all true of me, 2—not true of me, 3—somewhat true of me, 4---- undecided, 5--- somewhat true of me, 6--- true of me, 7 very true of me. All items were directly scored except item 2 and 16 which were reversed scored. The cronbach alpha for DPQ was .78. After considering the current population in which this scale would be used some things was changed on the scale to suit the population of interest as suggested by my supervisor. Firstly, the scoring format was reduced from 7 points to 5- point likert scale; that is 1 – not at all true of me, 2 – not true of me, 3 – undecided, 4 – true of me, 5 – very true of me. This was done to enable the participants in the present study to have a clue on what to answer. Secondly since the initial scale was designed to measure defensive pessimism on only academic situations, some changes were made on the items; for instance, where the original authors used _ ‘ Academic situations‘ it was change to _ ‘ Any situation‘, this was done to enable participants on the present study to be able to fit themselves in any profession each of them are doing and not basically in academic situations. After some of this edition on the scale, a total of 50 participants aged from 16 years to 65 years with age mean of 40.5 gotten from rural areas in EtimEkpo local government was used to determine the reliability of the scale and the result shows a cronbach alpha of .78 showing the internal consistency of the scale. Moreso, from the corrected item-total correlation, items from .30 and above would be considered valid and would be retain while

items below .30 would be discarded (in this case item 2, 5, 11, 16 and 17). For the norm, participants who score below 60.00 would be regarded as having low defensive pessimism and participants who score above 60.00 would be regarded as having high defensive pessimism.

Also the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) developed by Rathus [20] was one of the scales that were used in the current study to measure assertiveness. The Rathus Assertiveness Schedule (RAS) has 30 items in all and the scoring was based on a 6-point likert type format ranging from 0-very much unlike me, 1- rather unlike me, 2- slightly unlike me, 3 – slightly like me, 4 – rather like me, 5 – very much like me. Item 3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 18, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28 and 29 were positive worded items and were directly scored while item 1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 23, 24, 26 and 30 were negatively worded items and were reversed scored. Its original cronbach alpha was .82. Likewise the first scale, the scoring format was also adjusted from 6 point to 5 point, that is 1 – unlike me, 2 – slightly like me, 3 – undecided, 4 – slightly like me and 5 – like me. This was also done to help the participants understand on which option to choose since most of them are not educated. The same population considered above was also used to revalidate this scale and after the analysis the cronbach alpha was .69 showing that the scale is reliable. Item 1, 3, 4, 5, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 20, 24, 26 and 30 would be removed in that there do not meet the standard for item inclusion in of .30. Here participants who score below 99.32 would be regarded as being negatively assertive and participants who score above 99.32 would be regarded as being positively assertive.

Lastly, Civic Engagement Scale (CES) developed by Doolittle and Faul used to measure civic engagement was also revalidated. This scale consist of 14 items in all with 8 items design to measure the attitude that indicate a level of civic engagement and is measured on a 7-point likert type format ranging from 1-strongly agree, 2-disagree, 3-somewhat disagree, 4-neither agree or disagree, 5-somewhat agree, 6-agree and 7-strongly agree. The second part of the scale is 6 items that are design to measure the behavior that indicate a level of civic engagement. All the items are positively worded items and was directly scored and having a cronbach alpha with the range from .80 - .91. During the revalidation, the scoring format was reduced from 7 point likert format to 5 point likert format and this was suggested by my supervisor, that is 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – undecided, 4 – agree, 5 – strongly agree; this was done to avoid causing confusion to the participant since it is not all of them that are vastly educated. The same 50 participants with same age range, mean and locality mentioned above were also used for the revalidation and the cronbach alpha was 0.92 showing that the scale is reliable and is fit for the population of interest in the current study. For this scale all the items were face valid and also met the standard for item inclusion. For this scale, participants who score below 55.64 would be regarded as low in civic engagement and those who score above 55.64 would be regarded as high in civic engagement.

Thereafter, the researcher wrote all the names of the 31 local government that are in AkwaIbom State on pieces of paper fold and throw them to the floor and then 5 persons were asked to pick any piece of paper of their choice on the floor and the pieces picked from these five persons were the local governments the researcher would carry out the research to represent AkwaIbom State as a whole. Abak, Itu, OrukAnam, IkotEkpene and Oron were randomly picked by this five persons and this was where the research carryout his study.

Afterwards, the researcher accorded with four assistants went around the 5 local government areas that were randomly selected earlier to distribute the questionnaires. A total of five hundred copies of questionnaires were printed. The questionnaires were accidentally distributed to the participants. For a questionnaire to be given to participants, he/she were asked if they want to participate in the research and only those who agree to participate were given the questionnaire to fill. Also, participants who were not able to read and write were excluded from the study. Each participant was given a maximum of 20minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the distribution, a total of 450 questionnaires were collected out of the 500 questionnaires that was printed and out of these 450 questionnaires, seventeen were not completely filled leaving the researcher with a total of four hundred and thirty two (432) questionnaires which was used for the study. The valid questionnaires gotten from the participants were then scored and analyzed using SPSS specifically model 20.

RESULT

Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for the social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and the result are presented below.

Table 1 below is a table of mean (X) showing influence of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement.

		Defensive pessimism		
Assertiv eness		High (A1)	Low (A2)	Sum X
		Positive	N =22	N =41
		X =51.27	X =50.76	50.94

		SD=8.58	SD =9.65	8.42
	Negative	N =131 X =56.42 SD =9.56	N =238 X =52.77 SD =9.66	N =369 54.07 9.77
	Sum N	N =153	N =279	N =432
	X	55.68	52.47	53.61
	SD	9.57	9.50	9.64

Table 1 above shows that participants with high defensive pessimism had a mean score of 51.27 (SD= 8.58) which was almost similar to those with low defensive had a mean score of 50.76 (SD=9.65) on civic engagement.

Furthermore, table 1 above also shows that participants that are positively assertive had a high mean score of 56.42 (SD= 9.56) while those that are negatively assertive had a mean score of 52.77 (SD=9.66) on civic engagement. The overall mean score of participants on civic engagement was 53.61.

Table 2 below is a 2x2 ANOVA summary table showing the influence of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement.

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects					
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Pessimism	212.642	1	212.642	2.372	.124
Assertiveness	627.627	1	627.627	7.000	.008
pessimism * Assertiveness	120.273	1	120.273	1.341	.247
Error	38374.123	428	89.659		
Total	1281557.000	432			
Corrected Total	40030.887				

Table 2 shows the result of a 2x2 ANOVA which tested for the independent and joint interaction of the variables of this study.

The result as shown in table 2 indicates that defensive pessimism has no significant influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers [F (1, 428) = 2.37, p > .05]. An observation of the table 1 indicates that participants with high defensive pessimism had a similar mean score with participants with low defensive pessimism, (M= 51.27, SD= 8.58) and (M=50.76, SD=9.65) on civic engagement. This result rejects the first hypothesis which stated that participants who have high defensive pessimism are more civically engaged than those who have low defensive pessimism.

Table 2 also revealed that assertiveness has a significant influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers [F (1, 428) = 1.253, p < .05]. An observation of the table 1 indicates that participants who are positively assertive had a high mean score than those who were negatively assertive (M= 56.42, SD= 9.56) and (M=52.77, SD=9.66) respectively. This result supported the second hypothesis which stated that participants who are positively assertive are more civically engaged than those who are negatively assertive.

Furthermore, table 2 revealed that there is no interaction influence between defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers, [F (1, 428) = .958 p > .05]. This indicated that defensive pessimism and assertiveness do not jointly influence civic engagement among rural dwellers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study revealed that defensive pessimism did not exert any significant influence on civic engagement meaning that participants that has high defensive pessimism were not seen to be civically engaged than participants that has low defensive pessimism thus the first hypothesis which state that that participants that have high defensive pessimism are more civically engaged than those who have low defensive pessimism was rejected. The result was also revealed in the mean score in which participants with high defensive pessimism had almost the same mean score with participants with low defensive pessimism. This finding was in-line with the work of Norem [22] and Suarez and Fernadex [23] which explained that defensive pessimism decreases anxiety thereby enabling engagement in activities and effort in tasks usually in the achievement of high performance standard. As explained in chapter of this study, empirical findings directly on the influence of defensive pessimism on civic engagement are limited thereby leading to scarcity of work to reject or confirm the present findings. The reason why there may be no influence is due to the fact that people who are defensive pessimists in the real sense always see the negative perspective and due this cognitive strategy, they would not want to engage civically on the development and sustenance of the community like their

opposite counter (that is the optimist) who always positive and expect good outcomes from future preferences. Also, another reason why there was no significant influence of defensive pessimism on civic engagement maybe due to skewed responses of the participants which later affects the outcome of the study.

Also, the findings of the study revealed that assertiveness had influence civic engagement among rural dwellers thereby supporting the second hypothesis which state that participants who are positively assertive are more civically engaged than those who are negatively assertive. This finding is in-line with the assertion of Abbassi and Razhu [24] which purport that assertiveness is contingent for the functioning in various roles in the society and interaction with other members of the community. The reason behind the outcome of the finding is that assertive people apart from standing up for his/her right or exercising his/her right also seek for the interest of others and this involve positively participation or engagement in civic activities. More so, people who are positively assertive know their right and because they know and understand what rights are, they would do anything to aggravate the development and sustenance of the community. As explained by Ames [25] that non-assertive person tends to internalize tensions and feelings and tends to experience such emotions as fear, fatigue and nervousness. This is a different case for an assertive person as he or she is always ready to seek for his/her right and is never nervous or afraid of engaging in civic activities as it is their right to do so. As explained in chapter two of this research, there was no research study work directly on the influence of assertiveness on civic engagement and this is what leads to scarcity on the confirmation and rejection of the present study.

Lastly, the findings of the study also reveal that there is no interaction effect of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement. This implies that rural dweller's civic engagement do not depend on defensive pessimism and assertiveness. The researcher could not find any empirical work to back up or oppose this finding. However, the reason for this outcome is simply because both concepts are antagonist with each other in that one cannot be assertive and at the same time be nervous or anxious as defensive pessimist would be. So invariably an assertive individual cannot be a defensive pessimist and vice versa.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted to investigate the influence of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement. Four hundred and thirty two (432) participants consisting of 217 males and 215 females sampled from rural dwellers (Abak, Itu, OrukAnam, IkotEkpene and Oron local governments areas) all in Akwalbom state.

The Defensive PermissismQuestionnaire (DPQ) developed by Norem and Canton [21], Rathus Assertiveness Schedule developed by Spencer Rathus [20] and Civic Engagement Scale (CES) developed by Doolittle and Faul , were the instrument used in the study. The study utilized a 2x2 factorial design and the statistics used in analyzing the result in the study was two way Analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Two hypothesis were tested, the first which state that participants who have high defensive pessimism would be more civically engaged more than participants who have low defensive pessimism was not significant thus rejecting the first hypothesis. The second hypothesis which states that participants who are positively assertive would be more civically engaged more than participants who are negatively assertive thus accepted. Also, there was no significant interaction effect of defensive pessimism and assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers.

Furthermore, in addition to the main concern of the present research, it was also found that gender has no significant influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers. Religion did not have significant influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers. But on the contrast marital status and educational status were found to have significant influence on civic engagement among rural dwellers both independently and interactively.

Conclusively, assertiveness is a significant determinant of civic engagement among rural dwellers; whereas defensive pessimism is not a significant determinant of civic engagement.

Implications and Recommendation

The findings of this study had very crucial implications to political leaders, village heads, the government of Akwalbom state, social psychologists, researchers and the general public.

Firstly, the finding of the study showed that there is no significant influence of defensive pessimism on civic engagement among rural dwellers. This implies that an individual's level of defensive pessimism (which is defined as a coping strategy used by certain individuals in preparation for important situations that hold the potential for either success or failure) do not influences how people engaged in civic activities and as such even though previous literature especially that of Norem and Cantor [8] has it that people who are defensive pessimists are people who performed well academically, it does not means that they participate in civic activities but rather their opposite counterpart (optimists) in they have positive view over things.

Secondly, the findings of the study showed that there is significant influence of assertiveness on civic engagement among rural dwellers. This implies that depending on how assertive an individual or members of a community are can influence their level of participation or engagement in civic activities. As a result of these findings people who act on anxiety to avoid failure or harmful situations (defensive pessimists) should not be discouraged or discriminated but rather should be encouraged as a factor for defining civic engagement in the rural areas; also assertiveness should be accepted and promoted as a factor for determining civic engagement in the rural areas and this can be achieved by acknowledging the importance of assertive training in secondary schools.

Thus, the following recommendations are made based on the findings of the study;

- The government of AkwaIbom state should always acknowledge members of the community in the rural dwellers who participate in the civic activities by creating incentives for them and by so doing others who had no intentions of participating would become afraid that if there do not participate in the activities that they would not be encouraged.
- The government should also ensure that social amenities are created in rural area who engaged consistently in civic activities of the state.
- Teachers and parents in the rural areas should inculcate the importance of assertiveness in the younger children and adolescents as they are the leaders of tomorrow. By doing so when they grow up they would stand up for their right in the community without infringing on other people's right.

Limitations of the study

It is not unusual for a systematic research at this level to be associated with some limitations. Therefore the following limitations were encountered;

- A study of this nature and importance should have been carried out on a vast population but due to limited resources and other logistics considerations, the study had to make use of smaller sample size.
- Most of the participants from the population of this study were of lower academic status which leads to their inability to read the questionnaire and responded by themselves; they however depended on the researcher explanation and this could influence their responses.
- More so, some participants were reluctant to participate in the study because they feel the research has nothing to do with their economic status and also with the reason that they cannot read nor write.

All these limitations however, did not affect the importance and validity of the findings of the study

Suggestions for further Research

The researcher wishes to suggest the following areas for further research on this topic;

- A replication of the study should try to examine if there exist a difference between the rural dweller's engagement in civic activities and cities dwellers.
- A replication of the study should use another area with different cultural setting: for example, the northern or eastern part of Nigeria.

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