



FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS' COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY ON FOOD SECURITY AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

¹Damaris K. Muthusi, ²Daniel M. Kitonga, ³Robert Arasa

¹PhD Candidate

²DVC Academics, Research and Student Affairs, Tangaza University

³School of Business & Economics, Machakos University

¹Institute for Social Transformation

¹Tangaza University, Nairobi, Kenya

Abstract: This article provides a systematic review of how Faith-Based Organizations' Community Involvement Strategy enhances food security in Arid and Semi-Arids Lands (ASALs). Key variables of community involvement such as community meetings, representation, feedback systems and effective feedback management guided the study. IMRAD format of research was used in the study where concepts were introduced, highlighting the methods, presenting the results from the literature and discussions. Stakeholder Theory, which calls organizations recognize and engage all groups affected by their activities, not only primary beneficiaries informed the discussions. The results demonstrated that community-led approaches strengthen local capacities, promote equity, and build resilient food systems while promoting social transformation. It highlights that higher-order involvement where communities co-design and lead initiatives, yields more transformative outcomes, improving food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and stability of food within households and communities in ASALs. However the findings show that FBOs' seem not to have integrated the key aspects of community involvement in ASALs leaving the communities at the receiving end hence failing to tap the communities capability in responding to food insecurity within their localities. The article advocates shifting from transactional to transformative community engagement models, offering practical guidance for researchers, policymakers, and development professionals like FBOs to prioritize community involvement as a vital strategy in food security and social change programs in ASALs.

Key Words: Community Involvement, Food Security, Transactional, Social Transformation

Introduction

Food security is a human right, protecting the right of individuals and communities to feed themselves in dignity. Thus, all people require access to enough nutritious food at all times for an active and healthy life. However, today, food insecurity has become a global challenge despite the world prioritizing it in the 2030 agenda on Sustainable Development Goals (FAO, 2020). Community involvement is therefore critical in enhancing food security as it fosters collective action, knowledge sharing, and sustainable solutions. Key indicators of community involvement such as community meetings, representation, feedback systems and effective feedback management play pivotal roles in ensuring effective participation and social transformation in food security initiatives in Arid and Semi-Arids Lands (ASALs) (Affre et al., 2024). Stakeholders who are actively involved in food security space in ASALs communities have to act smart to ensure sustainable solutions to food insecurity. This article presents a review of both theoretical and empirical literature on the influence of FBOs' community involvement strategy on food security and social transformation in ASALs.

Methodology

This study employed IMRAD format of research. IMRAD involves introducing the concepts, highlighting the methods, presenting the results from literature review and discussions (Yang, Ding, Wang, and Yang, 2025). In this study, the concept of 'community involvement strategy', has been widely elaborated to capture its meaning and application in responding to the challenge of food insecurity in ASALs.

The Theoretical Review

Stakeholder Theory argues that organizations must recognize and engage all groups affected by their activities, not only primary beneficiaries (Freeman, 1984). For Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) addressing food insecurity in ASALs, this implies that communities are not passive recipients but critical stakeholders whose involvement is essential for legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability. Community involvement ensures that interventions reflect local priorities, cultural contexts, and indigenous knowledge, thereby improving relevance and impact. It also fosters trust, accountability, and shared ownership, which are vital in fragile settings where external aid alone cannot guarantee resilience (Costumado and Chemane, 2024).. By applying Stakeholder Theory, FBOs can strengthen food security initiatives through inclusive decision-making and co-creation, ultimately promoting both ethical responsibility and long-term transformation.

The Empirical Review

Based on the review of literature, social capital positively influences food security by enhancing food availability, access, and sharing among community members, as noted by Nosratabadi et al. (2020). Similarly, FonteFrancesco (2020) acknowledged the role of food drives in addressing hunger and raising awareness of food inequities.

Further, Soma and Shulman (2024) explored food justice through community food-asset-mapping, focusing on values such as belonging and cultural knowledge. Though the study did not examine FBOs' community involvement's strategic role in achieving food security; the findings were clear that asset-mapping cannot be done without the involvement of the community. According to Affre et al. (2024) study on factors influencing citizen participation in local food systems; emphasizing the importance of inclusive and transparent mechanisms came out very strongly. Though the study does not specifically address community meetings, representation, or feedback systems in ASALs, it highlights governance committees, citizen working groups, and participatory workshops as effective structures for community involvement. Proper organization and facilitation by local organizations like FBOs are then crucial for successful citizen involvement, and can lead to social transformation in food security initiatives.

Multiple studies in Nigeria such as Mukaila et al. (2024); Nuruddeen (2020); Abimbola (2021) analyzed food security using socioeconomic indicators like income, household size, and education. These studies identified significant food insecurity rates but failed to consider FBOs' community involvement as a strategy for sustainable food security in ASALs. However, in Delta State, Nigeria, Akarue and Bakporhe (2019) found a high prevalence of food insecurity and noted that male-headed households were more affected, the reason being the challenge of engagement in sharing important information in response to food insecurity. Olagunju et al. (2021) emphasized cooperative membership as positive a contributor to food security because of the effectiveness of feedback management in cooperatives a key aspect which FBOs should consider in their role of accompanying communities to enhance food availability, food accessibility, food utilization, and stability.

A Research in Zimbabwe by Muhoyi et al. (2020) identified farmland size, quality, and climate adaptation as key factors influencing food security. Nevertheless, the study noted limited community involvement by FBOs though such portrays a transformative potential. In the Northern Nigeria, a study by Oyewo (2024) identified key research gaps in community engagement, emphasizing the need for robust metrics to measure participation, which can include indicators like community meetings, representation, and feedback systems. The author highlights that effective feedback management is crucial for enhancing community involvement in development initiatives. By proposing strategies for inclusive participation practices the article underscores the importance of these indicators in fostering sustainable development and social transformation in ASALs.

According to Costumado and Chemane (2024) study; the importance of stakeholder engagement and community participation through open communication channels and partnerships in sustainable development is vital. The study notes key indicators of community involvement, such as community meetings, representation, and feedback systems, as crucial for fostering effective participation. By adopting inclusive strategies that prioritize ethical cooperation and transparency, the authors emphasize that these elements can significantly enhance social transformation particularly in initiatives, that focus on food security in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs) in Southern Africa.

In Kenya Wangu et al. (2020) recommended inclusive policies for food security in Kenya but did not identify whether FBOs' community involvement as a strategic approach which is a provision in Kenya's constitution played any role. In the discussion on community food security indicators and without mentioning community meetings or feedback systems; the role of community social workers in leading and evaluating community food security strategies, which include mechanisms for community involvement and representation are highly upheld. This is because these elements are crucial for fostering effective participation and driving social transformation in food security initiatives, particularly in areas facing food insecurity challenges like in ASALs (Kaiser, 2017). Therefore, the importance of community involvement in food security initiatives, particularly by FBOs in the ASALs should not be overlooked. Establishing relationships among community members, local NGOs and FBOs, and development organizations enhances participation and fosters transformative change, addressing issues of poverty, gender inequity, and food insecurity in rural subsistence families (Brown and Gabrys, 2025).

The Discussion

The literature review indicates that in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs), community involvement strategies have a significant impact on social transformation and food security outcomes. Research highlights the significance of cooperative structures (Olagunju et al., 2021), social capital (Nosratabadi et al., 2020), and participatory governance mechanisms (Affre et al., 2024) in improving food availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. According to research, inclusive and transparent community engagement structures are essential for the success of asset mapping and citizen participation (Soma and Shulman, 2024; Oyewo, 2024). Despite being recognized as potentially transformative actors, faith-based organizations (FBOs) are still not well studied in a number of settings, and on community involvement in enhancing food security (Mukaila et al., 2024; Wangu et al., 2020). According to Kaiser (2017) and Brown and Gabrys (2025), FBOs' communication, facilitation, and partnership-building are essential roles for overcoming systemic obstacles like poverty, gender inequality, and limited access to resources. Additionally, Costumado and Chemane (2024) emphasize that partnerships, ethical cooperation, and open lines of communication are essential prerequisites for long-term community involvement and social change. The discussion concludes that, while numerous studies have analyzed food security determinants, there is limited exploration of community involvement as a strategic driver on food security and social transformation in ASALs.

Conclusion

For food security initiatives to be inclusive and accountable, community feedback mechanisms must be strengthened. This can be accomplished by putting in place regular procedures that let communities express their concerns and participate in decision-making, like community meetings, participatory workshops, and representation platforms. It is recommended that FBOs be positioned as catalysts in this framework, actively facilitating partnerships, encouraging participation, and cultivating culturally grounded engagement in ASALs.

Consequently, future initiatives must create strong participation metrics in order to increase the efficacy of these initiatives. It will be feasible to monitor and assess the level of engagement and its quality given the frequency of community meetings, the extent of representation, and participant satisfaction levels. Results related to food security can also be further reinforced by encouraging cooperative structures and reinforcing social capital, which can give communities chances for information sharing, group efforts, and resilience building. It is also necessary to take an integrated approach, placing food security within the larger issues of gender inequality, poverty, and climate adaptation. When these interrelated problems are approached holistically, interventions are guaranteed to be both short-term fixes and long-term game-changers.

Aligning policies is still crucial; governments should make sure that national and local frameworks adhere to participatory principles and that constitutional provisions for community involvement are carried out efficiently. Lastly, as literature demonstrates, strategies that are inclusive, participatory, and ethically motivated are essential to attaining social transformation and sustainable food security hence have the potential to bring about long-lasting change in ASAL communities when backed by the local legitimacy and mobilizing strength of FBOs.

References

- [1] Abimbola, O. A. 2021. Understanding the factors influencing loan repayment performance of Nigerian microfinance banks. *Journal of Management Sciences*, 4(3).
- [2] Affre, L., Guillaumie, L., Dupéré, S., Mercille, G., & Fortin-Guay, M. 2024. Citizen participation practices in the governance of local food systems: A literature review. *Sustainability*, 16(14), 5990. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16145990>
- [3] Akarue, A., & Bakporhe, O. 2019. Determinants of food insecurity among arable farmers in Delta State, Nigeria. *Journal of Basic and Applied Research International*. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jobari/2022/v28i37803>
- [4] Brown, D., & Gabrys, J. 2025. Community-led landscape regeneration: A review of and framework for engagement in restoration initiatives. *Ambio*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-025-02236-3>
- [5] Costumado, M. G. S., & Chemane, J. A. D. 2024. Stakeholder engagement and community participation in sustainable development in Southern Africa. In *Democratization of Africa and its impact on the global economy* (Advances in Finance, Accounting, and Economics book series, pp. 48–72). IGI Global. <https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-0477-8.ch004>
- [6] Fontefrancesco, M. F. 2020. Food donation and food drive: Strategies to achieve zero hunger. In *Zero hunger* (pp. 312–320). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-37427-9_31
- [7] Food and Agriculture Organization. 2020. *The state of food security and nutrition in the world: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. FAO. <https://www.fao.org/publications/sofi/2020/en/>
- [8] Kaiser, M. L. 2017. Redefining food security in a community context: An exploration of community food security indicators and social worker roles in community food strategies. *Journal of Community Practice*, 25(2), 213–234. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2017.1308897>
- [9] Muhoyi, E., Tamuka, J., Mukura, D., Makova, T., & Munamati, O. 2020. The determinants of household food security in Murehwa district, Zimbabwe. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 10(5), 61–82.
- [10] Mukaila, R., Falola, A., Omotosho, A., Akanbi, S., Aidi, H., & Egwue, L. 2024. Effects of COVID-19 on the food security status of rural farming households: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Sciences, Belgrade*. <https://doi.org/10.2298/jas2401077m>
- [11] Nosratabadi, S., Khazami, N., Abdallah, M. B., Lackner, Z., Band, S., Mosavi, A., & Mako, C. 2020. Social capital contributions to food security: A comprehensive literature review. *Foods*, 9(11), 1650. <https://doi.org/10.3390/foods9111650>
- [12] Nuruddeen. 2020. Food security and vulnerability in drought-prone northern state of Nigeria.
- [13] Olagunju, F. I., Oke, J. T. O., Babatunde, R. O., & Ajiboye, A. 2021. Determinants of food insecurity in Ogbomosho Metropolis of Oyo State, Nigeria. *Production Agriculture and Technology*, 8(1), 111–124.
- [14] Oyewo, H. T. 2024. A stake in their future: Advancing local community engagement in Northeast Nigerian development initiatives. *Journal of Community Safety & Well-Being*, 9(2), 87–93. <https://doi.org/10.35502/jcswb.363>
- [15] Soma, T., Li, B., & Shulman, T. 2024. A citizen science and photovoice approach to food asset mapping and food system planning. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 44(3), 1503–1515.
- [16] Wangu, J., Mangnus, E., & van Westen, A. C. M. 2020. Limitations of inclusive agribusiness in contributing to food and nutrition security in a smallholder community: A case of mango initiative in Makeni County, Kenya. *Sustainability*, 12(14), 5521.
- [17] Yang, X., Ding, L., Wang, W., & Yang, J. 2025. Identification of interdisciplinary research patterns based on the functional structures of IMRaD. *Information Processing & Management*, 62(3), 104063. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ipm.2025.104063>