

Tracing the Evolution of Community Empowerment Models in Development Planning

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Abstract

This study examines community empowerment models in development planning to identify the most effective and relevant across various socio-political contexts. It examines central themes, research trends, and challenges in community empowerment through a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. The article search was conducted comprehensively using the Scopus database, focusing on publications from 2014 to 2024 to ensure a focus on the most recent developments in the field. The results indicate that the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Community-Led Development (CLD) models are the most effective approaches for empowering communities when supported by robust institutional frameworks and adapted to local contexts. This study also highlights the importance of institutional support and a deep understanding of external power structures in enhancing the resilience and sustainability of community empowerment initiatives. These findings suggest the need for further exploration of the interactions between these empowerment models and external factors, such as economic pressures and social hierarchies, to develop more adaptive and contextually appropriate strategies. Further research is also needed on the scalability and long-term sustainability of these models, particularly in diverse and evolving development settings, to ensure that community empowerment efforts can effectively address the complexities of modern development challenges.

Keywords:

community empowerment; development planning; systematic literature review;
bibliometric analysis; empowerment models

Introduction

Community empowerment has emerged as a fundamental pillar in the discourse of sustainable development, particularly as it relates to the involvement of local communities in shaping their development trajectories (Singh et al., 2017). This concept is rooted in the belief that sustainable development is most effective when it is inclusive, participatory, and aligned with the specific needs and aspirations of the communities involved (Szetey et al., 2021). Community empowerment is not merely about providing resources or knowledge; it is about fostering the capacity of communities

to make informed decisions, take collective action, and engage actively in the development processes that affect their lives (Ponsford et al., 2021). As global attention on sustainable development intensifies, mainly through frameworks such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the role of community empowerment in achieving these goals has become increasingly significant (Annan-Aggrey et al., 2022).

Despite the emphasis on community empowerment, aligning development planning with community-based approaches remains challenging (London et al., 2020).

Development planning often prioritises macro-level goals, overlooking localised socio-economic challenges and a need for community participation (Maclure, 2023). For example, top-down planning mechanisms can lead to the misallocation of resources, ineffective program implementation, and a lack of community ownership, ultimately undermining sustainable development efforts (Zhou et al., 2023). These limitations highlight the need to explore how community empowerment can address these gaps by providing a framework for more inclusive, participatory, and effective development planning. This research adopts community empowerment to bridge these gaps and promote development planning that resonates with the lived realities of local communities.

Recent studies have contributed significantly to understanding community empowerment, highlighting various models and approaches employed across different contexts. For instance, C. Zhang et al. (2020) explored the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model, emphasising its focus on leveraging existing community assets rather than external resources. This model has been shown to enhance community resilience by fostering a sense of ownership and self-reliance among community members. Similarly, Omondi (2020) examined the Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) approach, which integrates local knowledge into participatory decision-making processes, making development initiatives more contextually relevant and sustainable.

Furthermore, the correlation between development planning and community empowerment is increasingly evident, particularly in contexts where conventional planning approaches have failed to deliver sustainable outcomes (S. Kumar et al., 2022). For instance, inadequate stakeholder engagement and insufficient incorporation of local perspectives in planning processes

have contributed to persistent socio-economic inequalities, environmental degradation, and ineffective public service delivery (Goodman et al., 2023). These challenges underscore the necessity of adopting community-based approaches as a corrective measure to enhance the relevance and impact of development planning.

More recent research (Maclure, 2023) has examined the impact of external power structures, such as neoliberal policies, on the effectiveness of community empowerment efforts, revealing that these structures can often undermine local initiatives by imposing external priorities misaligned with community needs. Additionally, studies by Goodman et al. (2023) have shown that while community-led development (CLD) models have been effective in specific contexts, they often struggle with scalability and sustainability due to the lack of institutional support and the presence of entrenched power dynamics that hinder authentic community leadership.

Despite these valuable contributions, significant gaps remain in the literature, particularly regarding the comparative effectiveness of different community empowerment models across varying contexts. Much of the existing research has been case-specific, focusing on individual models without providing a broader synthesis that can inform policymakers and practitioners on the best practices for different settings (Wallerstein et al., 2019). Additionally, the dynamic interaction between community empowerment and external power structures, such as governmental policies, economic pressures, and social hierarchies, has yet to be fully explored.

This research addresses these gaps by situating community empowerment as a central approach to addressing the limitations of traditional development planning. By examining how empowerment models can overcome issues such as resource misallocation,

lack of inclusivity, and marginalisation, this study highlights the potential of these models to transform development planning into a more participatory and effective process (A. Kumar, 2019). The research questions guiding this study are: What are the most influential community empowerment models for sustainable development planning across diverse contexts? How do these models interact with and are influenced by external power structures? What role does institutional support play in the success of these empowerment efforts?

The study adopts a dual methodological approach to respond to these inquiries, combining a systematic literature review with bibliometric analysis. The systematic literature review provides a qualitative synthesis of the existing research, identifying key themes, trends, and gaps in the literature (Siddaway et al., 2019). Conversely, the bibliometric analysis quantitatively maps the research landscape, highlighting the most influential studies, authors, and institutions in community empowerment (Tyagi, 2024). By integrating these two approaches, the study aims to thoroughly understand the current state of community empowerment research while highlighting areas that warrant further investigation. The findings of this study are expected to contribute significantly to the academic discourse on sustainable development and community empowerment, offering practical insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers in designing more effective and contextually appropriate empowerment strategies.

Methods

Bibliometric analysis quantitatively measures the production of literature and the interactions among researchers in a specific field (Donthu et al., 2021). Meanwhile, the Systematic Literature Review aims to identify, evaluate, and synthesise the key findings

from relevant literature (Alsalamy, 2022). This study utilises a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis to examine community empowerment models within the context of development planning. The research process follows standard protocols to ensure comprehensive and rigorous analysis (Baas et al., 2020). Literature searches were conducted in the Scopus academic database using the keywords "*community empowerment*" and "*planning development*," yielding 1,178 documents. A restriction was applied to articles published in the last ten years (2014-2024), resulting in 685 documents. Focusing on the field of social sciences narrowed the selection to 308 documents, which were further filtered to 236 articles. Additional selection based on the English language yielded 277 documents, and restrictions on open access resulted in 99 documents.

The articles were selected from the Scopus database based on pre-determined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Figure 1 shows the database search process conducted on August 5, 2024, with the final query as follows: (TITLE-ABS-KEY(communitY AND empowerment) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY(development AND planning)) AND PUBYEAR > 2013 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO(SUBJAREA, "S.O.C.I.") AND (LIMIT-TO(DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND (LIMIT-TO(PUBSTAGE, "final")) AND (LIMIT-TO(S.R.C.T.Y.P.E., "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO(LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO(O.A., "all")). After screening, 99 documents were selected for full-text review and further analysis.

Data visualisation using VOSviewer facilitated the presentation of findings from the bibliometric analysis through visual maps of citation networks, co-citation clusters, and thematic trends (J. Zhang et al., 2024). These visual representations simplify the interpretation of complex data and provide a clear overview of the research landscape (Han et al., 2023). The data synthesis integrates

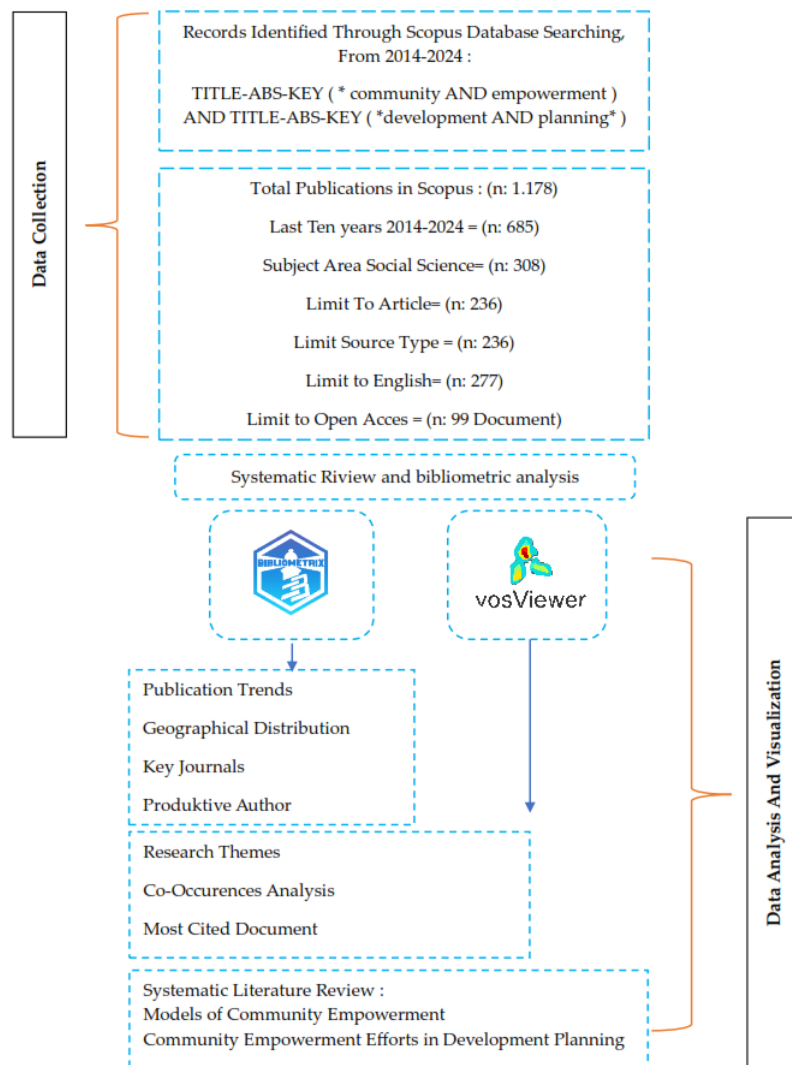


Figure 1. Workflow for Systematic Review and Bibliometric Analysis through Scopus Database

Source: Created by Authors

quantitative and qualitative approaches, with bibliometric analysis offering insights into publication trends and research collaboration. In contrast, thematic analysis identifies standard models, best practices, challenges, and gaps in the literature (Perrier et al., 2016).

Results

Publication Trends

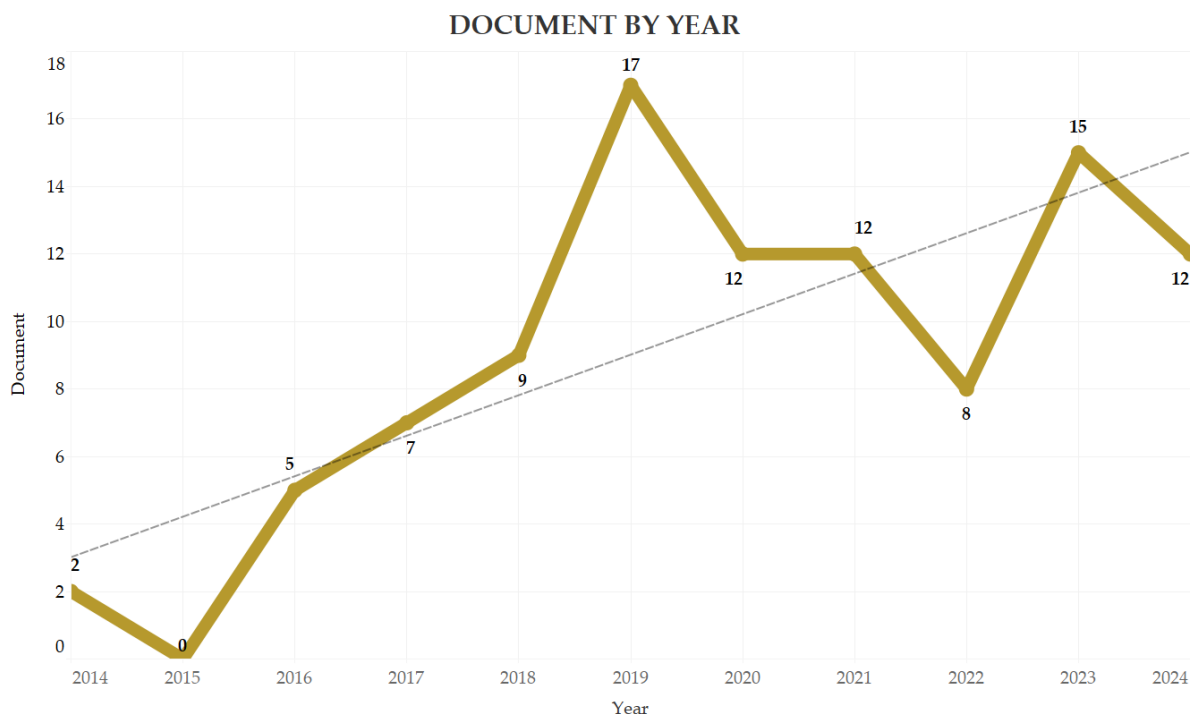
The annual distribution of scientific publications is crucial for assessing research activity, trends, and advancements within a discipline (García-Villar, 2021). The graph

analysis reveals a notable increase in published documents over the years (Feifei & Abdullah, 2021). Figure 2 illustrates annual publication trends from 2014 to 2024, showing significant fluctuations in scholarly output. The initial count of two documents in 2014 decreased to zero in 2015, followed by a steady growth in 2016, reaching a peak of 17 documents in 2019. This peak suggests a surge in research activities due to increased funding or institutional focus. Post-2019, publication numbers fluctuated, stabilising at 12 documents in 2020 and 2021, decreasing to 8 in 2022, then rising to 15 in

2023, before declining to 12 in 2024. The trend, depicted by the dotted regression line, shows a positive long-term increase in publications despite annual variations. These fluctuations may result from various internal and external factors influencing academic output. The 2019 peak could reflect strategic initiatives or collaborations that temporarily enhanced productivity. Recent data underscore the academic community's resilience in maintaining stable output amid challenges (Zammarchi et al., 2024). This analysis offers insights into publication trends, which can guide strategic planning to sustain and improve research productivity in community empowerment and development planning. Further exploration of these fluctuations and targeted interventions may help achieve more consistent and elevated scientific output (F. Zhang & Wu, 2020).

Geographical Distribution and Productive Country

The geographical distribution of scholarly publications is a critical metric in bibliometric studies as it reflects scientific research's global dissemination and impact (Guerrero-Bote et al., 2020). Analysing the spatial patterns of research output provides insights into regional strengths, collaborative networks, and the flow of knowledge across borders (Huang et al., 2023). This dimension of bibliometrics highlights the contributions of various countries and institutions and reveals disparities in research productivity and access to scientific resources (Asubiaro et al., 2024). By examining the geographical distribution of scientific literature, we can identify trends and gaps that inform policy decisions, funding allocations, and strategic initiatives to foster equitable growth in global research capacity (Baas et al., 2020). Figure 3 shows the geographical distribution of scientific publications on community empowerment in development planning over the past ten years.



The trend of sum of Document for Year.

Figure 2. Trends in Academic Publications on Community Empowerment in Development Planning from 2014 to 2024

Source: Visualisation using Tableau by Authors

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

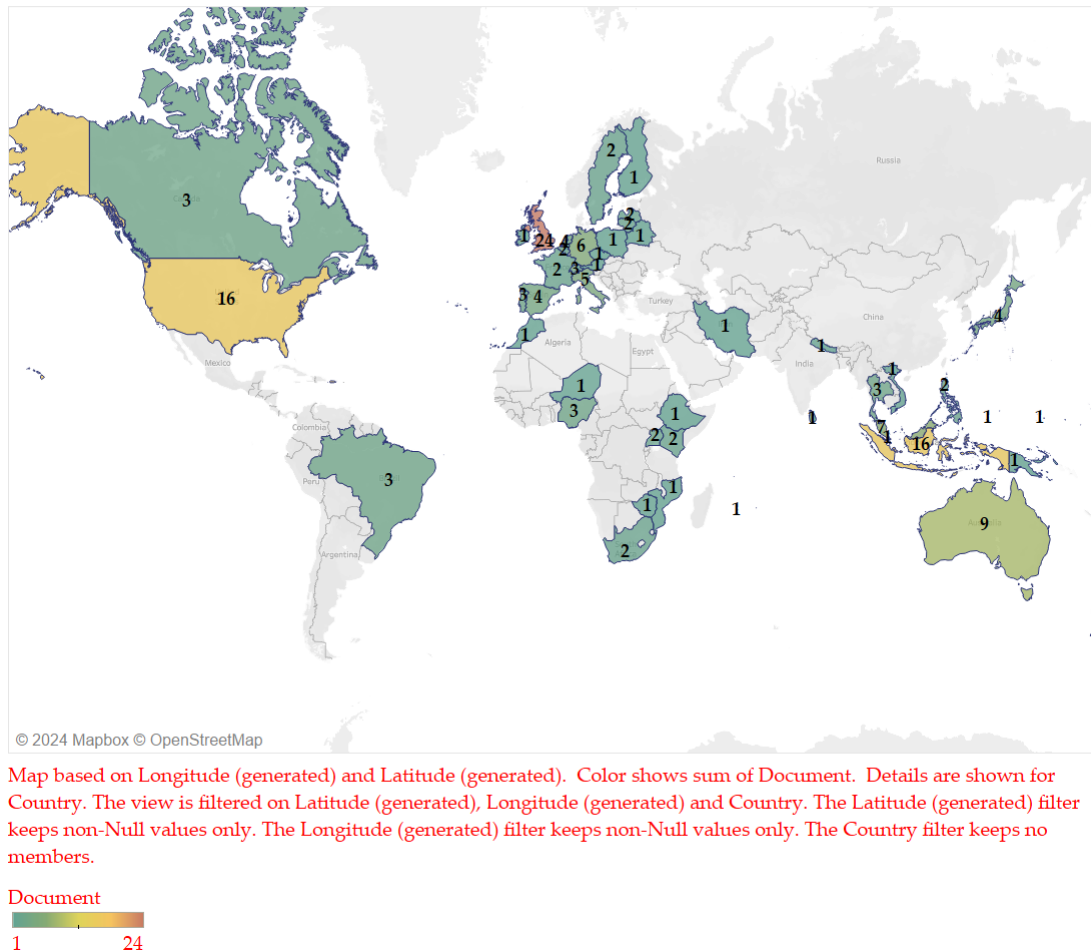


Figure 3. Global Distribution of Published Documents by Country

Source: Created by Authors using Tableau

Table 1 showcases the top 15 most productive countries over a decade, as measured by the number of documents, citations, Total Link Strength (TLS), and the most influential studies within this timeframe. Leading the list is the United Kingdom, with 24 documents garnering 689 citations and a TLS of 1896, highlighting its significant impact and collaborative strength in scholarly research (Shiel et al., 2016). The United States follows, contributing 17 documents with 391 citations and a TLS of 1338, underscoring its robust research output and influence, with Karp et al. (2020) being particularly notable. Indonesia ranks third, producing 16 documents with 84 citations and a TLS of 216, with Akbar and Edelenbos (2021) marking a critical

study. Australia, Malaysia, and Germany also demonstrate solid academic contributions, with influential works by Mann et al. (2020), Zeldin et al. (2017), and Ngo and Creutz (2022). Other countries such as Italy, New Zealand, and Japan also contribute to the body of literature, although with varying citations and TLS. Brazil, Canada, Nigeria, and Portugal in the latter part of the list indicate a diverse and widespread distribution of academic productivity across continents.

These studies collectively underline that community empowerment is a multifaceted and crucial component of successful development planning. It can improve sustainability, effectiveness, and resilience while delivering socio-economic benefits and

Table 1.
Top 15 Most Productive Countries in A Decade

No	Country	Documents	Citations	TLS	Most Influential Studies
1	United Kingdom	24	689	1896	(Shiel et al., 2016)
2	United States	17	391	1338	(Karp et al., 2020)
3	Indonesia	16	84	216	(Akbar & Edelenbos, 2021)
4	Australia	9	253	927	(Mann et al., 2020)
5	Malaysia	7	73	180	(Zeldin et al., 2017)
6	Germany	6	106	339	(Ngo & Creutz, 2022)
7	Italy	5	85	22	(Di Napoli et al., 2019)
8	New Zealand	5	103	320	(McEwan et al., 2017)
9	Japan	4	18	65	(Hettiarachchi et al., 2022)
10	Netherlands	4	67	491	(Pálsdóttir et al., 2016)
11	Spain	4	9	557	(Quiroz-Ninõ & Blanco-Encomienda, 2019)
12	Brazil	3	93	116	(Faxina et al., 2021)
13	Canada	3	49	390	(W. Zhang et al., 2023)
14	Nigeria	3	83	421	(Karp et al., 2020)
15	Portugal	3	120	258	(Gregório et al., 2014)

Source: Scopus, processed by Authors

promoting inclusive governance (Surya et al., 2021). Community empowerment requires institutional support, the integration of local knowledge, and the use of technology, all of which contribute to a more adaptive and responsive development strategy (Pandey & Kumar, 2019).

Key Journals and Productive Authors

Identifying key journals and productive authors is essential for understanding any research field (Baas et al., 2020). Key journals publish important research and set standards for quality and relevance (De Silva & K. Vance, 2017). The relationship between these journals and productive authors supports academic work and scientific progress (Osare & Keshvari, 2023). Understanding this relationship helps researchers contribute by identifying quality standards and key developments (Thelwall et al., 2023). The bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer, a tool for creating and visualising bibliometric networks (Kirby, 2023). This review explains the stages of the analysis, from data preparation to final visualisation, to understand the methodology and results (Omoregie et al., 2024).

The analysis revealed key insights.

Sustainability (Switzerland) was the most prolific source, with 12 documents and 90 citations, showing its significant role in the field. Other important sources included the International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning and Planning Malaysia, which have four and three documents. The American Journal of Community Psychology had a high citation impact, with 22 citations from just two documents, indicating its publications' high quality and influence. The total link strength metric showed the interconnectedness of sources, with Sustainability (Switzerland) having a total link strength of 38, reflecting its central role in the research network. Other sources, like Urban Planning, with a link strength of 12, also showed significant influence. Figure 4 shows the visualisation of key journals using VOSviewer.

Figure 5 provides a visualisation of author productivity in recent academic publications that reveal the significant contributions of a select group of researchers. Zukri, T.M.T.S., Zimmerman, M., Tiberghien, G., Syahid, A.M.A., Sulaiman, A.I., Masuda, Y.J., and Handoko, W. have each published two documents. This productivity indicates high scientific activity and engagement in their

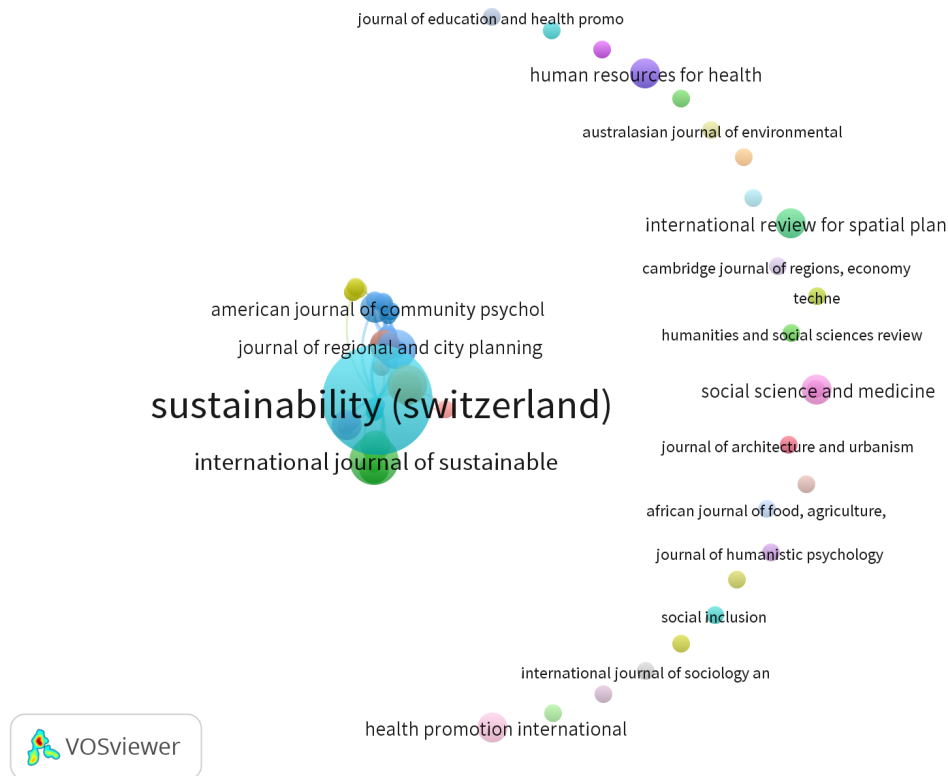


Figure 4. Key Journals Publishing Important Research

Source: Data Processed by The Author with VOSviewer

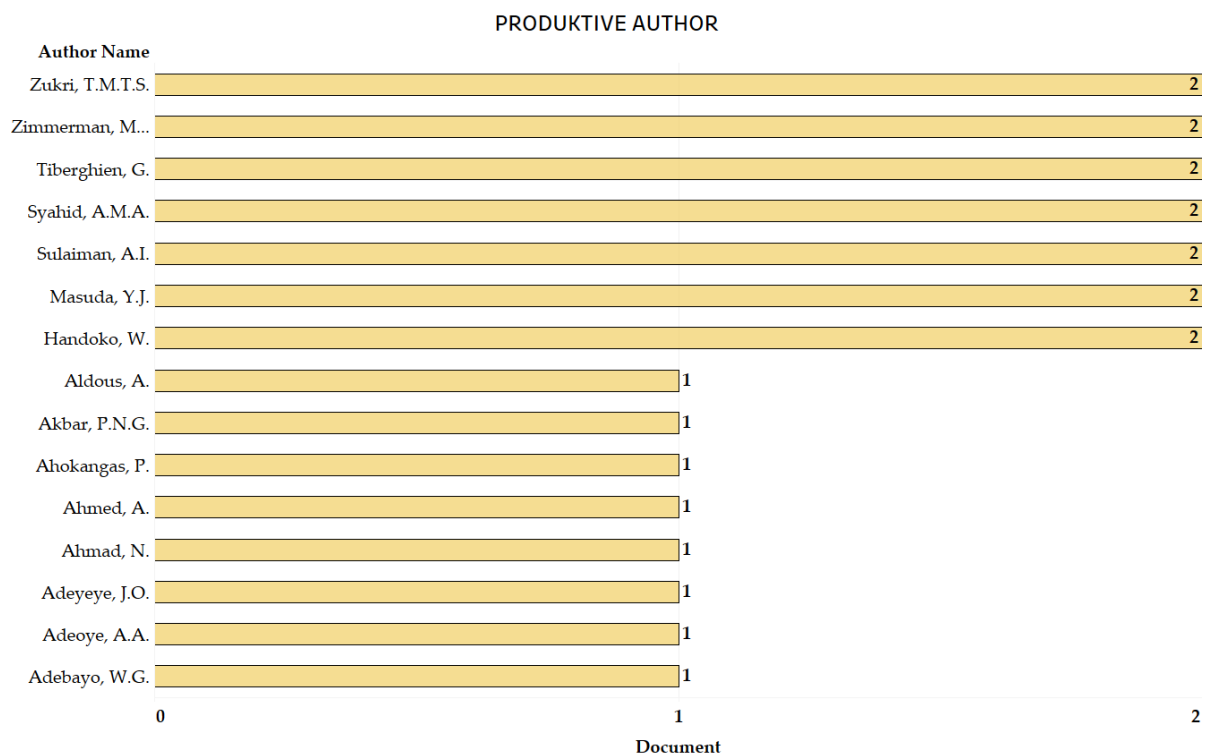


Figure 5. Top 15 Prolific Authors

Source: Processed by Authors using Tableau

respective fields. In addition, authors such as Aldoss, A., Akbar, P.N.G., Ahokangas, P., Ahmed, A., Ahmad, N., Adeyeye, J.O., Adeoye, A.A., and Adebayo, W.G., have each contributed one document, indicating broad participation and diverse representation in the academic discourse around empowerment and development planning. The equal number of publications among the top seven authors suggests a competitive yet collaborative research environment. This finding may reflect strategic research initiatives, funding opportunities, or institutional support to improve publication outcomes. Further examination of these publications' content, impact, and collaborative networks will provide deeper insights into the dynamics that drive research productivity and their implications for advancing knowledge in community empowerment and development.

Dominant Themes and Latest Research

Identifying dominant themes and emerging research is essential for advancing scholarly discourse in any field (Watson et al., 2022). Recognising key themes that shape current knowledge and uncovering new insights are crucial for fostering innovation and maintaining academic rigor (Gulumbe et al., 2024). Analysis of Scopus metadata using VOSviewer revealed significant terms and their relevance in the research domain (Kirby, 2023). This Analysis utilised a full-count methodology based on 3663 terms meeting the minimum occurrence threshold.

The term "*community*" appears 132 times with a relevance score of 0.0925, indicating its substantial presence. It is followed by "*empowerment*" and "*development*," occurring 47 and 43 times, with relevance scores of 0.1985 and 0.1745, respectively. Notable terms such as "*approach*," "*research*," and "*planning*" also contribute significantly to the thematic

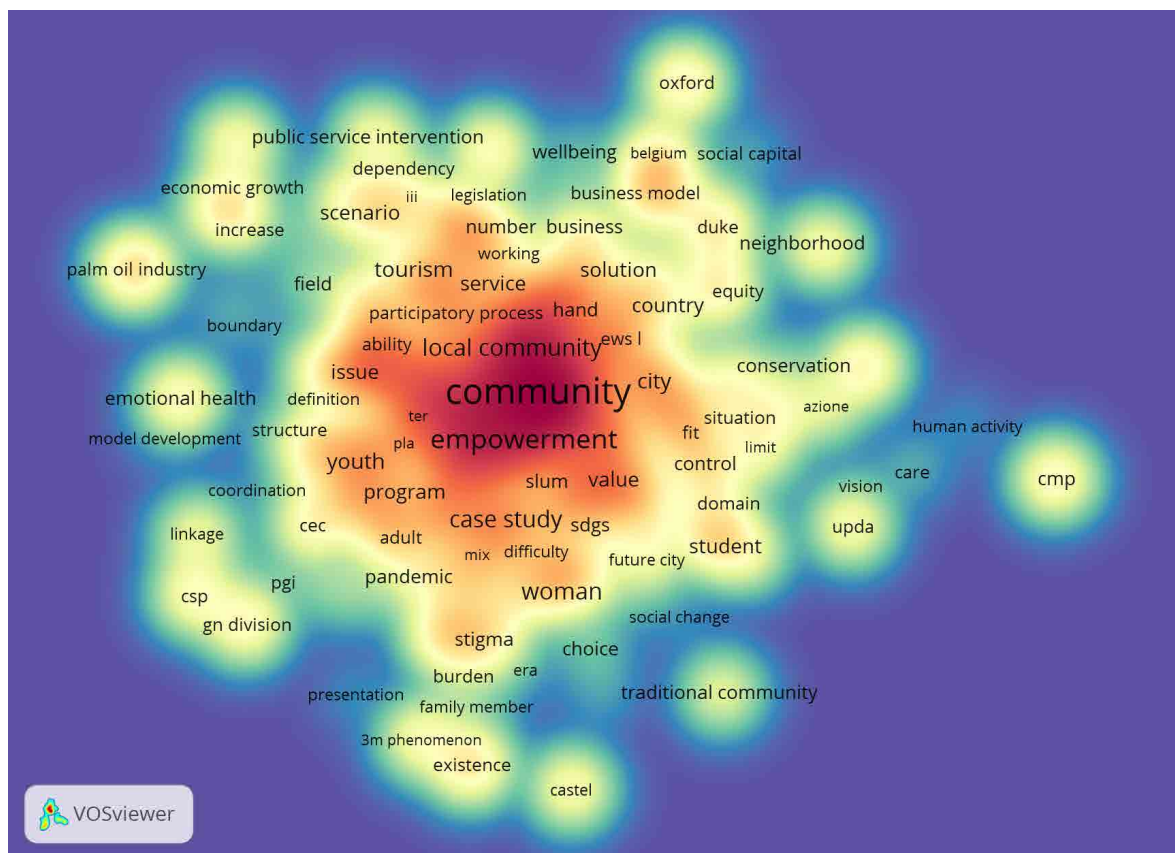


Figure 6. Dominant Themes in Community Empowerment and Development Research

Source: Data analysed by Authors using VOSviewer

Table 2.
Top 10 Recent Research and Key Findings

No	Themes	O.C.	Latest Research and Findings
1	Community	132	(Ma et al., 2024), The findings revealed the importance of structured, sustainable, and tailored CSP programs, highlighting patterns like Thematic CSP and CSP-PPM. The study emphasised the need for continuous planning, program stability, and a sustained impact to ensure long-lasting community benefits. The proposed model integrates collaboration, asset building, and problem-solving within the 4D framework, which is essential for impactful service learning.
2	Empowerment	47	(Saptenno & Timisela, 2024), Findings revealed that Sasi embodies significant philosophical values, including trust, a mutual collaboration between village government, religious institutions, and society, and moral and ethical principles to sustain natural resources and prevent theft. The Analysis showed moderate R2 values of 0.408, 0.616, and 0.564 for different parameters. Significant coefficients were found for the variables of BS to EP, BS to CEI, and SM to EP (p-value < 0.05), while SM to CEI and EP to CEI showed no significant effect (p-value > 0.05).
3	Development	43	(Sulaiman et al., 2024), Employing a mixed-methods approach incorporating a questionnaire survey alongside a qualitative case study, the findings demonstrate that DPD promotes democratic decision-making by empowering stakeholders to articulate their aspirations and make decisions informed by community needs and concerns.
4	Approach	29	(Tingey-Holyoak et al., 2024), The findings suggest that prioritising spiritual and cultural values alongside utilitarian needs can lead to more sustainable outcomes, enhance institutional design, foster social cohesion, and help resolve conflicts related to dams, a common issue globally.
5	Research	27	(Li & Lange, 2023), Drawing from participatory action research, the author, as a project director, developed a six-step cycle principle: (1) collective action commitments, (2) local values and resource identification, (3) carbon footprint inventory, (4) optimised integration of environment, economy, and energy action plans, (5) flexible strategic energy system plans, and (6) digital performance monitoring. These steps aim to enhance end-user involvement at various planning stages and support policymakers and planners, ultimately fostering community engagement to achieve zero net carbon emissions.

Source: Scopus metadata, processed by Authors

landscape. "Participation" appears 23 times but has a higher relevance score of 0.3302, suggesting its critical importance. "Case study" and "community empowerment," each occurring 21 times, have relevance scores of 0.3386 and 0.2539, respectively, reflecting their contextual significance. Terms like "local community," "implementation," "sustainability," "management," "health," and "sustainable development" also appear frequently, with relevance scores ranging from 0.3073 to 0.3997. Figure 6 illustrates the dominant themes in community empowerment and development planning over the past decade.

This thorough analysis offers significant insights into the prevailing themes and focal points within the research, directing future investigations and highlighting key areas of interest (Ofosu-Ampong, 2024). The high relevance scores of terms related to community

and empowerment suggest a strong focus on these aspects, which are pivotal for developing and implementing effective strategies in the relevant fields. Recent research in a particular field can provide many benefits, significantly advancing knowledge and practice within that domain (Bonn & Pinxten, 2021). It often leads to improved methodologies and techniques, enhancing efficiency and accuracy (Barone et al., 2021). New findings can uncover previously unknown aspects, leading to ground-breaking discoveries that shift existing paradigms (Barone et al., 2021). Research also fosters innovation, driving the development of new technologies and applications. Furthermore, it informs policy and practice, providing evidence-based insights that shape better decision-making processes (Rakas & Hain, 2019). Table 2 displays the top 5 recent studies

and their findings on community empowerment in development planning.

Co-Occurrences Analysis

The co-occurrences analysis presented in this article thoroughly explores the interrelations between critical concepts within the research domain (Lin et al., 2022). The study effectively maps out the frequency and proximity of specific terms using advanced bibliometric tools, thereby illuminating underlying patterns and thematic clusters (Armenta-Medina et al., 2020). The methodological rigour demonstrated in selecting and applying co-occurrence metrics ensures the reliability of the findings (Chen et al., 2021). Figure 7 shows that the VOSviewer analysis of Scopus bibliographic data, using co-occurrence analysis of 890 keywords with a complete counting method, reveals the intricate interrelationships and clustering of critical concepts within the research field. This method highlights prominent research themes and emerging areas, offering insights into the multidisciplinary nature of the domain (Dalton et al., 2021). A dense network of keyword co-occurrences provides a valuable guide to identifying research gaps, fostering

collaboration, and strategically advancing the field of community empowerment in development planning by pinpointing influential keywords and their associations.

Table 3 shows the analysis of the top 15 keywords by occurrence in recent studies, which provides a robust insight into the prevailing themes in the domain of community development, sustainability, and participatory approaches. The term "*empowerment*," with the highest occurrence of 42 and a substantial total link strength of 773, indicates its centrality in contemporary academic discourse, e.g., Shiel et al. (2016). "*Community development*" and "*sustainability*," both showing significant occurrences (17 and 16, respectively), along with their strong linkage to other themes, reflect the growing emphasis on sustainable practices within community-centric initiatives, as highlighted by Lennon et al. (2019) and (Katre et al., 2019). Furthermore, "*sustainable development*" also frequently occurs (16), aligning closely with the broader sustainability discourse, emphasising the integration of long-term ecological considerations into development practices (Marango et al., 2021). The noteworthy presence of keywords like

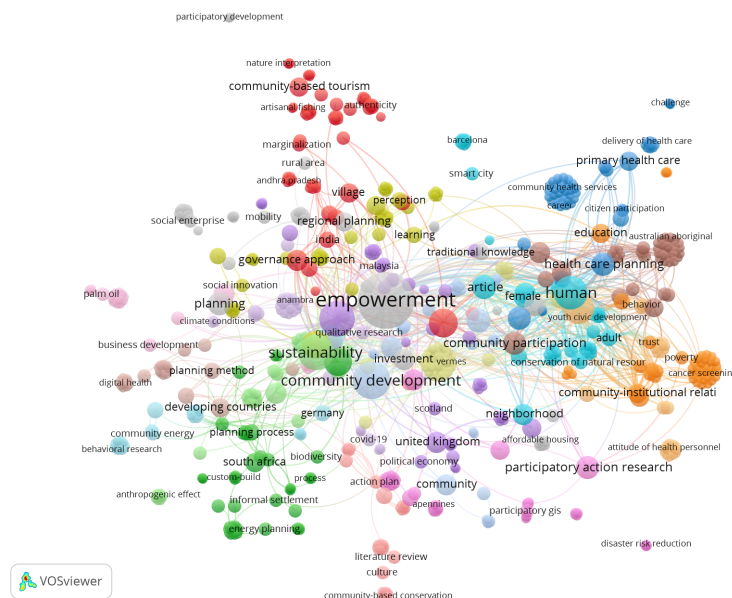


Figure 7. Co-occurrence Analysis by All Keywords

Source: Visualisation by Authors using VOSviewer

"human," "local participation," and "participatory approach" (14, 10, and 9 occurrences, respectively) indicates a sustained focus on human-centric and inclusive methodologies in development planning, aligned with past studies by Karp et al. (2020) and McEwan et al. (2017). Additionally, the occurrence of terms like "urban planning" and "decision making" suggests a continued interest in optimising urban development strategies through participatory and inclusive decision-making processes, exemplified by Hettiarachchi et al. (2022) and Khair et al. (2020). Including "stakeholder" further reinforces the importance of multi-stakeholder engagement in development initiatives. Keywords such as "community empowerment," "community engagement," and "community participation" collectively emphasise the critical role of community-centric approaches in development, as shown in studies by Tiberghien (2019), Pálsdóttir et al. (2016) and Haynes et al. (2019). Lastly, the emerging focus on "health care planning" and "participatory action research" suggests an evolving interest in integrating participatory methodologies within health care and research paradigms, as demonstrated by Gregório et al. (2014) and Haynes et al. (2019). The analysis

highlights how participatory, sustainable, and community-driven approaches shape current interdisciplinary research and contribute to the field.

Most Cited Document

The most cited document section offers a critical analysis of the article or study with the highest citation count in the relevant field, emphasising its research originality, methodological rigour, and relevance to ongoing scholarly discourse (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019). However, a deeper look at the document's broader academic and practical implications would be useful (Hardy et al., 2019). While high citation numbers reflect the document's recognition, the review should also consider the context of these citations, including whether they are positive or critical and the types of research influenced (Schweiger & Thiermeyer, 2023).

Figure 8 shows the VOSviewer analysis on the Scopus data, providing a visualisation of citation relationships among the 99 selected documents, using a zero-threshold approach to document occurrence. This allows an examination of their citation impact, highlighting the most influential works and identifying

Table 3.
Top 15 Keywords by Occurrence and Exemplary Studies

No	Keyword	Occurrences	Total Link Strength	Exemplary Studies
1	empowerment	42	773	(Shiel et al., 2016)
2	community development	17	238	(Lennon et al., 2019)
3	sustainability	16	279	(Katre et al., 2019)
4	sustainable development	16	306	(Marango et al., 2021)
5	human	14	421	(Karp et al., 2020)
6	local participation	10	188	(Di Napoli et al., 2019)
7	participatory approach	9	115	(McEwan et al., 2017)
8	urban planning	9	110	(Hettiarachchi et al., 2022)
9	decision making	8	136	(Khair et al., 2020)
10	stakeholder	8	176	(Yrjölä et al., 2020)
11	community empowerment	7	62	(Tiberghien, 2019)
12	community engagement	6	82	(Pálsdóttir et al., 2016)
13	community participation	6	158	(Haynes et al., 2019)
14	health care planning	6	233	(Gregório et al., 2014)
15	participatory action research	6	102	(Haynes et al., 2019)

Source: Processed by the Author from Scopus Metadata

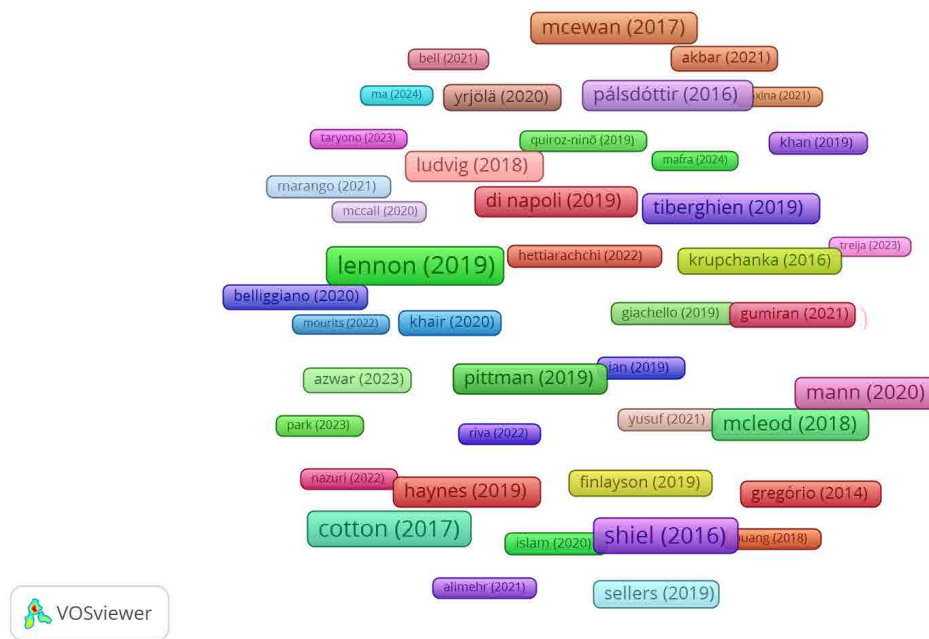


Figure 8. Citation Network Visualisation of Key Academic Publications (2014-2024)

Source: Processed by Authors Using VOSviewer

key publications that have shaped the field of community empowerment in development planning. The citation map also reveals clusters of interconnected documents, offering insights into thematic structures and intellectual relationships within the research landscape (Mora et al., 2019). This kind of analysis is crucial for researchers to identify trends, foundational studies, and gaps in the literature, thus advancing scientific knowledge and guiding future research (Majumdar et al., 2023).

Models of Community Empowerment

The past decade has witnessed significant advancements in the conceptualisation and implementation of community empowerment models, each tailored to distinct facets of community engagement and development (Coy et al., 2021). Among these, the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) model has garnered considerable attention for its emphasis on harnessing existing community assets, rather than focusing on deficits, to drive sustainable development (Maclure, 2023). ABCD has effectively mobilised local resources

and fostered a sense of ownership among community members, thereby enhancing community resilience and self-sufficiency (Forrester et al., 2020). The diagram presented in Figure 9 elucidates the corrupting influence of external power systems on the ABCD process. The figure includes examples of such power structures, including poverty and neoliberalism, with arrows depicting the resulting forms of oppression. While the ABCD framework presupposes the possibility of community development operating autonomously, the pervasive nature of external power systems' oppression invariably infiltrates and undermines the ABCD process. Although a superficial assessment might suggest improvements resulting from an ABCD initiative, the underlying external systems continue to subtly but persistently erode the intended community outcomes.

Complementing this approach, Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) prioritises integrating local knowledge and participatory decision-making processes (Mustanir et al., 2020). PRA has been instrumental in enabling

Table 4.
Top 5 Most Cited Documents and Findings

No	Author (Year)	Citations	Title and Findings
1	(Lennon et al., 2019)	106	Title: "Community acceptability and the energy transition: a citizens' perspective." Findings: The findings of this study underscore the critical need for more inclusive governance structures in the ongoing energy transition, highlighting the social and economic disparities that arise when local communities are excluded from decision-making processes.
2	(Shiel et al., 2016)	92	Title: "Evaluating the engagement of universities in capacity building for sustainable development in local communities." Findings: The study argues that sustainable communities are not spontaneous but require structured facilitation, ongoing community learning, and strategic capacity-building initiatives that empower communities to tackle sustainable development challenges effectively.
3	(Cotton, 2017)	83	Title: "Fair fracking? Ethics and environmental justice in the United Kingdom shale gas policy and planning." Findings: The study concludes that to rectify these injustices, there is a pressing need to "re-localise" the governance of fracking activities. The study argues that by restoring greater decision-making power to local communities, political equality can be better ensured, and the procedural and distributive injustices currently embedded in the UK's fracking policy can be ameliorated. This re-localisation is necessary for achieving a more just and equitable approach to shale gas development that respects the rights and interests of all stakeholders involved.
4	(Mann et al., 2020)	64	Title: "#BlockSidewalk to Barcelona: Technological sovereignty and the social license to operate smart cities." Findings: The research posits that technological sovereignty offers a promising pathway toward more significant equity and empowerment in intelligent cities, but its implementation is challenging. The study calls for a more nuanced understanding of how technological sovereignty can be operationalized in diverse urban contexts and for ongoing critical engagement with how technology can be leveraged to promote more just and democratic urban futures.
5	(Karp et al., 2020)	59	Title: "'I am the master key that opens and locks': Presentation and application of a conceptual framework for women's and girls' empowerment in reproductive health." Findings: The study concludes that the WGE-SRH framework is an effective tool for exploring S.R.H. empowerment, particularly in its ability to capture its multilevel and evolving aspects. The framework's emphasis on distinguishing between the existence and exercise of choices offers valuable insights for future research and programs to promote the health and wellbeing of women and girls. By recognizing and addressing the various barriers to both the existence and exercise of reproductive choices, interventions can be better tailored to support the empowerment of women and girls in achieving their S.R.H. goals.

Source: Scopus Metadata Processed by Authors

communities, particularly in rural areas, to actively participate in the planning and implementation of development initiatives, leading to more contextually appropriate and sustainable outcomes (Omondi, 2020). Figure 10 shows the interaction cycle between the various components of PRA (inputs) used for problem analysis, development prioritisation, and community empowerment (outputs).

Similarly, the Community-Led Development (CLD) model underscores the importance of community-driven initiatives

and leadership (McCordic et al., 2020). This approach has been recognised for empowering communities by fostering leadership capacities and ensuring that development projects align closely with local needs and priorities (McCordic et al., 2020). Rather than a service model, community-led development (CLD) is a way of thinking underpinned by five principles (Loha, 2023). Inspiring communities has crafted these principles by working with communities (Ferreira & Carbonatto, 2015). Community-led development strengthens

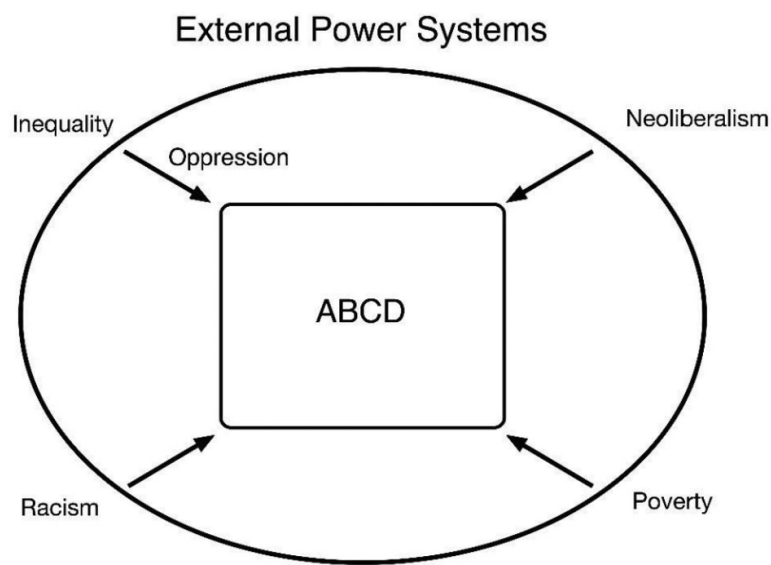


Figure 9. The Original ABCD Model and Its Interaction with External Power Systems

Source: Original ABCD Model (Maclure, 2023)

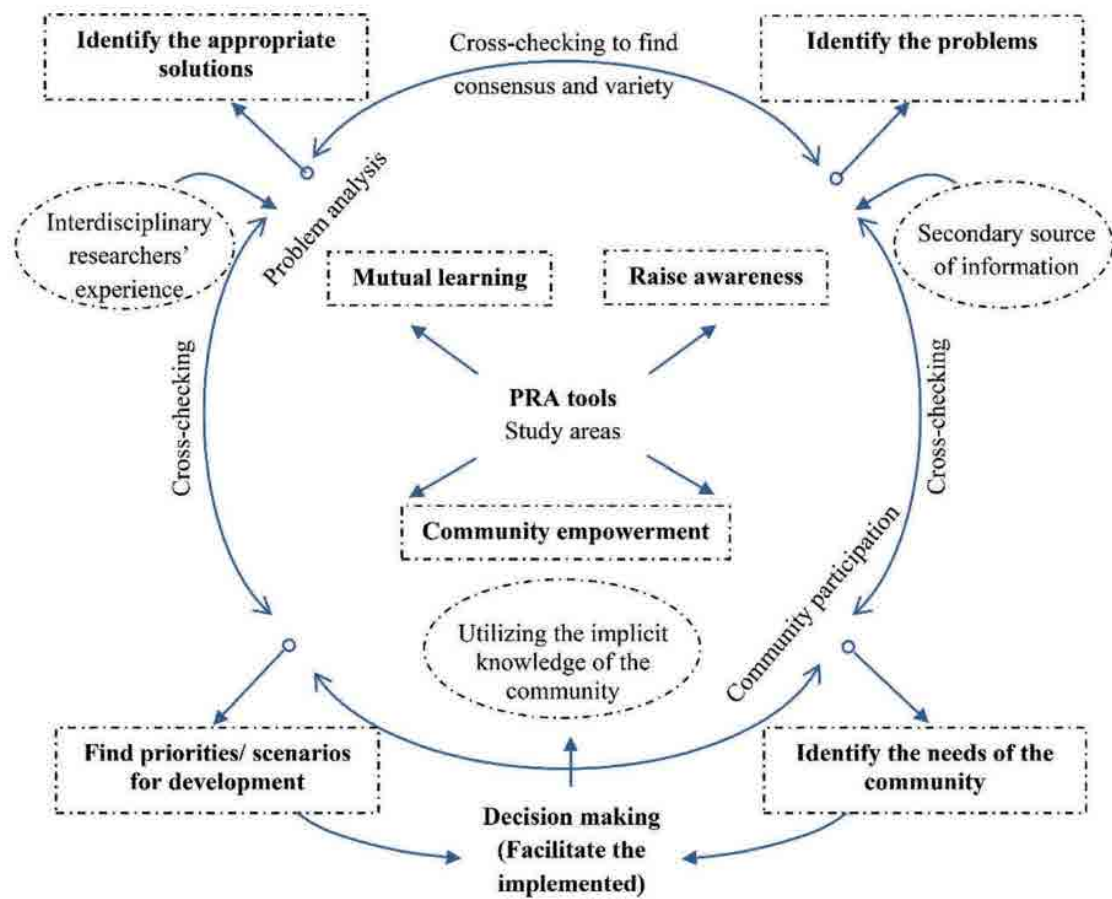


Figure 10. PRA interaction model

Source: Adopted from Al-Qubatee et al. (2017)

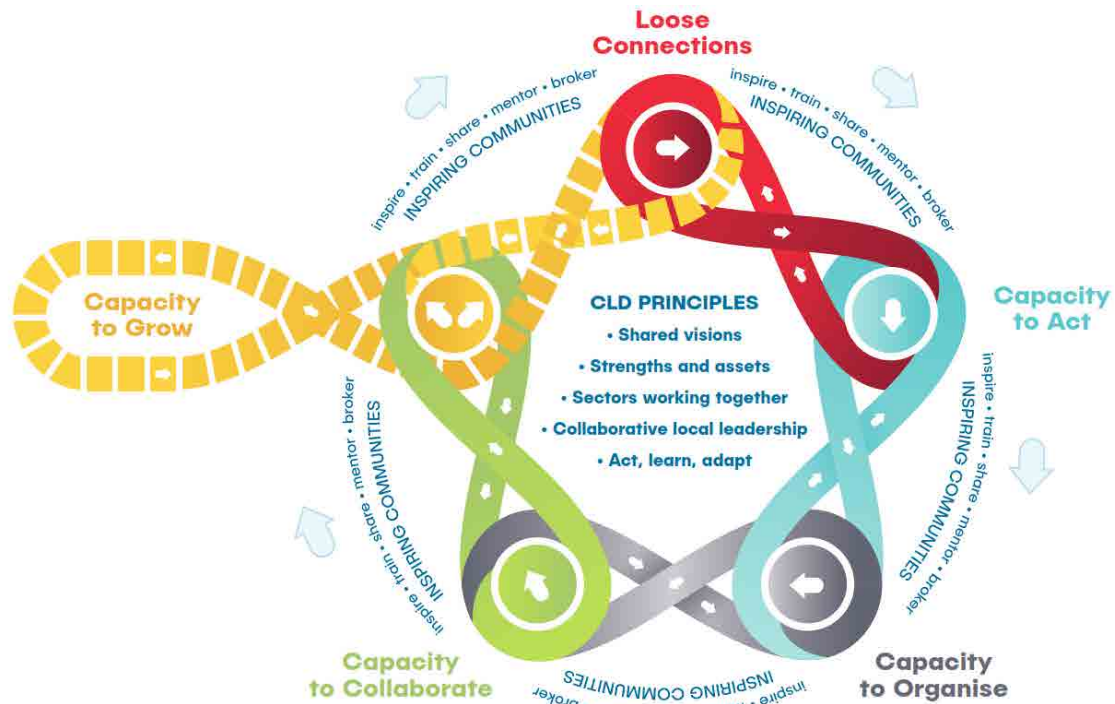


Figure 11. Theory of Community-led development

Source: Adapted from Loha (2023)

social relationships so that people are at the centre of creating and implementing change to improve their lives (Warfield et al., 2022). By building on local strengths and successes, communities become organised, expanding their influence and engagement with other allies beyond their immediate environment (Egan et al., 2021). Local collaboration and leadership help accelerate change. Our theory of change illustrates how we see sustainable change using a community-based development approach (Munro, 2020).

Together, these models reflect a shift toward approaches that prioritise inclusion, participation, and sustainability by drawing on local strengths, knowledge, and leadership in the pursuit of community development.

Community Empowerment Efforts in Development Planning

Community empowerment has become a vital aspect of development planning, particularly in efforts aimed at poverty

alleviation and sustainable development (Mustanir & Barisan, 2017). Over the past decade, various studies have emphasised the importance of inclusive, bottom-up approaches that prioritise the voices and needs of local communities (Bonsu et al., 2020). Empowerment is seen as a critical mechanism to enhance community capacity for active participation in development, ensuring that the outcomes are both sustainable and beneficial to all stakeholders (Rwebugisa & Usinger, 2021). Research by Ahmad and Abu Talib (2015) highlights the significance of community participation in decentralised frameworks. Their study in Pakistan revealed that community-driven initiatives can enhance local capacity and project sustainability, although challenges such as elite control over resources remain significant obstacles. This finding aligns with the work of Sadat et al. (2015), who developed a comprehensive model for rural community empowerment in health reform. Their model highlights the need for

structured approaches to ensure effective and sustained health services in rural areas.

Further contributions to the understanding of community empowerment come from Steiner and Farmer (2017), who proposed the Engagement-Participation-Empowerment Model, which emphasises the gradual transfer of power from external actors to local communities in disadvantaged rural settings. Similarly, Carrick-Hagenbarth (2021) critically examined community-driven development projects in Brazil. It was found

that these initiatives often fail to address internal power imbalances, risking reinforcing existing inequalities. In addition to these theoretical and empirical insights, practical applications of community empowerment have been explored in various contexts. Carrick-Hagenbarth (2021) demonstrated how creative economy initiatives in Indonesia can significantly improve community welfare by fostering economic progress and productivity. This practical approach to empowerment is further supported by Halliday et al. (2015), who

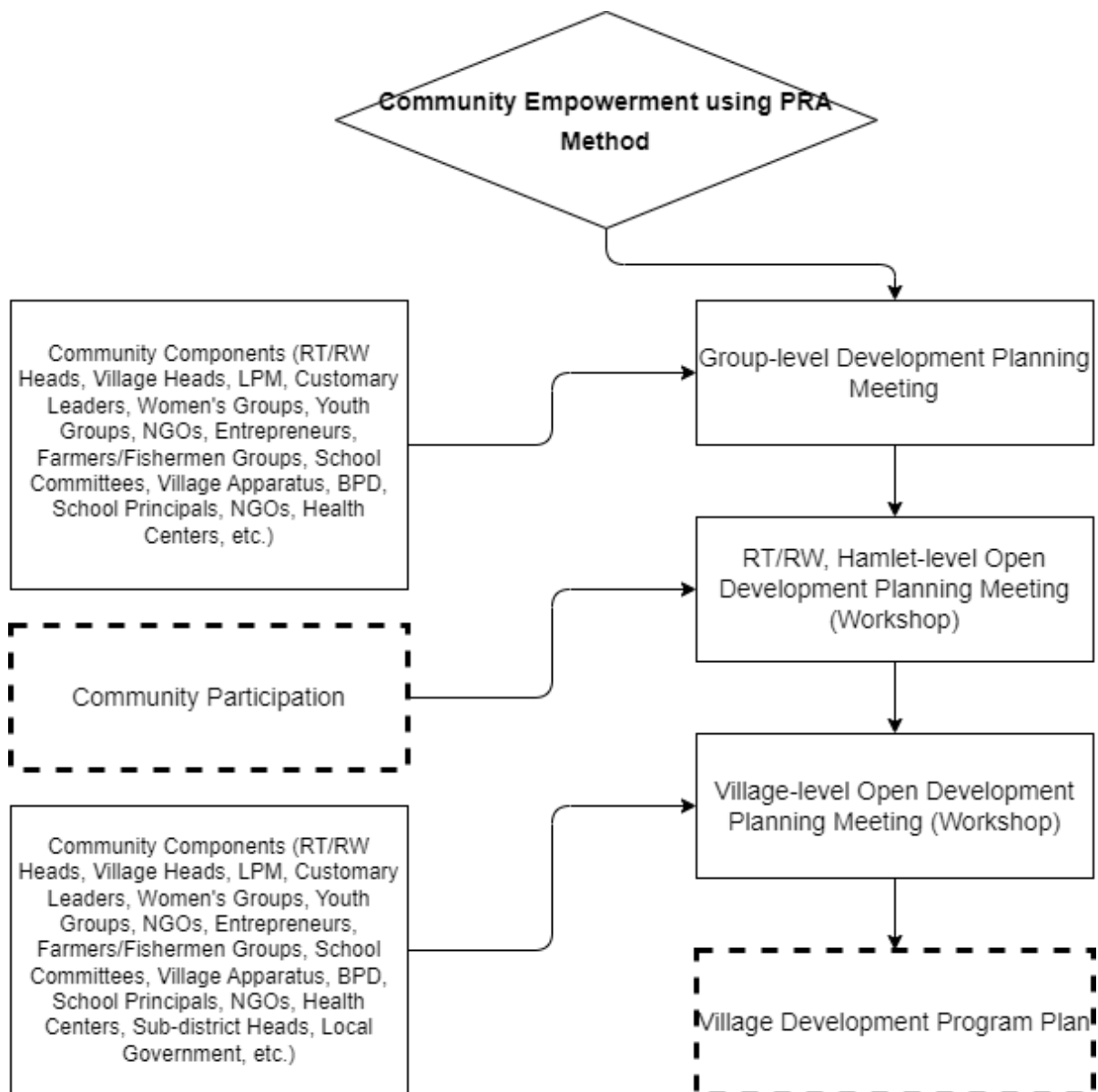


Figure 12. Hypothetical Model of Community Empowerment in Development Planning

Source: Proposed model created by Authors using Draw.io diagrams

studied community empowerment initiatives in England, focusing on their impact on health inequalities. Their findings suggest that while such initiatives can lead to positive social outcomes, the diversity in implementation strategies can result in varying degrees of success.

The following study by Mustanir and Lubis (2017) explored the role of cooperatives in community empowerment in rural Indonesia. Their study found that applying social compass strategies, which include resource management, technology, and leadership, significantly contributes to building independent communities capable of sustaining themselves economically and socially. Research by Taleshi et al. (2020) shows that government investment in village community empowerment contributes significantly to sustainable development, provided it is managed with an institutionalised approach. A future recommendation for community empowerment models in village development is the need for institutional transformation to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of the empowerment initiatives. This includes strengthening the capacity of village institutions, implementing transparent monitoring systems, and increasing community participation through continuous education and training. For example, Taleshi et al. (2020) emphasise the importance of participatory-based collective action and strong policy support to improve social and economic infrastructure in less developed rural areas. Figure 12 proposes a hypothetical model of community empowerment in village development planning.

As illustrated in the diagram, the hypothetical model of community empowerment in development planning provides a structured approach to ensuring broad-based participation and collaboration across various community components. The model utilises Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) as a guiding method to facilitate inclusive

development planning processes (JEET et al., 2020). The model is characterised by a multi-tiered approach that begins with group-level development planning meetings, where diverse community components—including RT/RW heads, village heads, LPM, customary leaders, women's groups, youth groups, NGOs, entrepreneurs, and others—contribute their insights and needs. This inclusivity is crucial for fostering collective ownership of the development process.

The following stages involve progressively broader forums, including RT/RW and hamlet-level open development planning meetings and village-level workshops. Each stage serves as a platform for refining the development priorities identified at earlier levels, ensuring that the planning process is both iterative and responsive to the community's evolving needs. This approach ensures that the final village development program plan comprehensively reflects the entire community's aspirations, supported by active participation and collaboration across different community strata.

The model emphasises the significance of community participation at every stage, reinforcing that successful development planning is not merely a top-down directive but a collaborative process (Liu et al., 2020). This model is particularly relevant in rural settings where diverse stakeholder involvement can lead to more sustainable and culturally appropriate development outcomes. By integrating PRA into the planning process, the model aligns with contemporary best practices in community-driven development, ensuring that empowerment is not just a goal but a foundational element of the planning process.

In summary, the literature on community empowerment in development planning underscores the need for participatory, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches (Liu et al., 2020). Addressing power dynamics, ensuring active participation, and fostering

local ownership are essential to successful empowerment efforts (Richardson-Ngwenya et al., 2019). Integrating these elements into development planning can significantly enhance the sustainability and effectiveness of community empowerment initiatives, ultimately leading to more equitable development outcomes (Haldane et al., 2019).

Discussion

This study provides an overview of community empowerment models in development planning, using a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis. The quantitative bibliometric analysis provides insights into publication trends, geographical distribution, and the most productive countries and authors in community empowerment from 2014 to 2024. The analysis reveals a significant increase in scholarly output, peaking in 2019, with the United Kingdom, the United States, and Indonesia emerging as leading contributors. These trends underscore the global recognition of community empowerment as a pivotal aspect of sustainable development planning. The geographical distribution also highlights disparities in research productivity, with countries like the United Kingdom and the United States demonstrating significant influence through high Total Link Strength (TLS) and citation metrics, reflecting their central roles in the global research network.

The systematic literature review further enhances this understanding by synthesising critical findings from the selected literature, identifying dominant themes, emerging research areas, and critical journals. The identification of "*empowerment*," "*community development*," and "*sustainability*" as recurring themes reinforces the centrality of these concepts in contemporary development planning discourse. This thematic analysis, supported by VOSviewer visualisations, maps the research landscape, showing how key themes shape community empowerment strategies. The review of

core journals and active authors identifies the main sources and contributors driving the discourse. Journals like *Sustainability* (Switzerland) and the *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Planning* emerge as significant platforms for disseminating research in this field, with high citation impacts and TLS, indicating their influence and centrality in the academic network. The identification of prolific authors further emphasises the collaborative and competitive nature of research in this domain, with a select group of researchers contributing significantly to advancing knowledge on community empowerment.

The examination of recent research reveals the evolving nature of community empowerment models, with studies highlighting the importance of structured, sustainable, and context-specific approaches. The emergence of models like Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Community-Led Development (CLD) reflects a paradigm shift towards more inclusive and participatory approaches in development planning. These models emphasise the importance of leveraging local assets, knowledge, and leadership, offering practical frameworks for empowering communities and ensuring sustainable development outcomes. The co-occurrence analysis of keywords provides further insights into the thematic structure of the research domain, revealing key terms like "*empowerment*," "*sustainability*," and "*community development*." This analysis highlights the interdisciplinary nature of community empowerment research and its use of human-centred, participatory methods in development planning. The presence of terms like "*urban planning*" and "*decision making*" suggests a continued focus on optimising development strategies through inclusive and participatory processes.

The most cited documents section

highlights seminal works that have significantly influenced the discourse on community empowerment. Studies like Lennon et al. (2019) on energy transition and community acceptability and Shiel et al. (2016) on capacity building for sustainable development provide insights into the role of community engagement in achieving sustainable outcomes. These works highlight the need for inclusive governance and capacity-building, reinforcing the role of community participation in development planning. In conclusion, this study offers insight into community empowerment in development planning by combining quantitative and qualitative analyses to map the research landscape. The findings highlight the importance of structured, sustainable, and participatory approaches in empowering communities and ensuring effective development outcomes. Integrating bibliometric analysis with systematic literature review offers a robust methodology for exploring complex research domains, providing valuable insights that can guide future research and policy-making in community empowerment and development planning.

Conclusion

This study examines community empowerment models in the context of development planning, addressing significant gaps in the literature by synthesising key themes, trends, and challenges. The research findings show that effective community empowerment is linked to participatory, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches, which are critical for achieving sustainable development outcomes. By mapping community empowerment studies through a systematic literature review and bibliometric analysis, the study identifies the most effective models, such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD), Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), and Community-Led Development (CLD). It

emphasises their relevance across diverse socio-political contexts. The study employed a rigorous search process, filtering articles published between 2014 and 2024 to ensure a focus on recent advancements and trends in the field. This approach included the most relevant and up-to-date research, providing a robust foundation for Analysis. The research further reveals the necessity of institutional support and a nuanced understanding of external power structures in enhancing the resilience and sustainability of empowerment initiatives. Future research should explore the interactions between these empowerment models and external factors, such as economic pressures and social hierarchies, to develop more adaptive and contextually appropriate strategies. Additionally, there is a need to investigate the scalability and long-term sustainability of these models, particularly in diverse and evolving development settings, to ensure that community empowerment efforts can effectively address the complexities of modern development challenges.

Originality of Work

The authors declare that the scientific article entitled "Exploring Models of Community Empowerment in Development Planning: A Literature and Bibliometric Analysis" is our original work and has never been published elsewhere.

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