



Advancing Social Justice through Community-Based Social Work Interventions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

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Abstract

Original Research Article

Social justice remains an essential pursuit in the Niger Delta, where inequality, marginalization, and environmental exploitation persist. This paper examines the role of community-based social work interventions in advancing social justice in Bayelsa State, Nigeria. The study was premised on exploring the challenges facing community-driven initiatives, such as weak institutional capacity, gender bias, and political interference, while highlighting the prospects for strengthening grassroots interventions. The study adopted the descriptive survey design. A sample of 300 respondents, comprising 60 community leaders, 60 youth/women group representatives, 60 community development committee (CDC) members, and 120 social workers (trainee and professionals), participated in the study. Data were collected using a 30-item structured instrument titled "Challenges and Prospects of Advancing Social Justice through Community-based Social Work Intervention Scale" (CPASJCSWIS). Mean, standard deviation, and Analysis of Variance were used to analyze the data. The findings revealed that community-based organizations, when properly supported, provide effective platforms for promoting inclusion, resilience, and empowerment. Also, the study found that patronage, elite capture, and socio-economic pressures limit social work effectiveness in mobilizing grassroots networks to advance social justice in Bayelsa State. The paper concludes that strengthening grassroots networks, collaboration, policy advocacy, and institutional support for social workers to advance the pursuit of social justice for equity and sustainable development in Bayelsa State. The study recommended that the government and stakeholders should address systemic barriers such as underfunding, political interference, and weak institutional support by providing adequate resources and creating enabling environments for social work practice. Alongside, the social workers should focus efforts on infrastructural investment, governance reforms, and capacity building to enhance the long-term impact of social work in fostering equity and sustainable development.

Keywords: Advancing, social justice, community-based social work interventions, challenges, prospects, Bayelsa State.

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Introduction

Social justice remains a central concern in Nigeria, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where issues of inequality, exclusion, and poverty are deeply entrenched. In Bayelsa State, a resource-rich but underdeveloped area, community-based social work interventions have emerged as important mechanisms for addressing these injustices and promoting grassroots empowerment. Community-based approaches are grounded in participatory engagement, drawing on the knowledge, resilience, and networks within local communities to drive social change (Zubairu & Ibenegbu, 2025). Such interventions provide platforms for vulnerable populations, including women, youth, and displaced persons, to access essential services, voice concerns, and participate in decisions that shape their lives.

Despite these potentials, significant challenges hinder the effectiveness of community-based social work in advancing social justice in Bayelsa. A key challenge is the fragmented governance environment, where weak institutional capacity and political interference limit the sustainability of local initiatives (Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2025). Many community programs rely heavily on external funding or ad hoc volunteerism, creating gaps in consistency and accountability. In addition, entrenched patronage systems and gender biases often exclude the most marginalized, such as women and persons with disabilities, from meaningful participation (Ukoh, 2024). The socio-economic realities of the Niger Delta, including high unemployment and persistent environmental degradation from oil exploitation, further exacerbate vulnerabilities and reduce the impact of well-meaning interventions.

However, the prospects remain promising. Strengthening social work practice at the community level offers an avenue for deepening equity, inclusion, and resilience. Community-based associations, such as cooperative groups, women's networks, and faith-based organizations, have demonstrated resilience in supporting livelihoods, mediating conflicts, and providing social safety nets where

formal systems fail. Leveraging these networks through formal recognition and partnership can amplify their reach and impact. Moreover, enhancing the advocacy capacity of social workers to influence policy can help integrate local concerns into broader development planning (Okoh & Effiong, 2022). With targeted training, stronger institutional frameworks, and improved collaboration between state agencies, NGOs, and community actors, social work can play a transformative role in building a just society in Bayelsa.

In a nutshell, the concept of social justice centers on fairness, equity, and the protection of human rights within society (Zubairu & Ibenegbu, 2025). In Nigeria, particularly in Bayelsa State, social justice has been undermined by economic marginalization, environmental degradation, and entrenched poverty. Despite the region's wealth in natural resources, local communities experience systemic exclusion from the benefits of oil exploitation and weak representation in governance processes. Hence, Community-based social work interventions provide alternative platforms to challenge inequality by addressing the immediate needs of vulnerable populations and amplifying local voices in governance (Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2025). In summary, advancing social justice through community-based social work in Bayelsa requires a dual focus on addressing current challenges and maximizing emerging opportunities. By reinforcing grassroots capacities, fostering inclusive participation, and linking local interventions to wider governance structures, community-based social work can contribute meaningfully to sustainable peace, equity, and development in Nigeria's Niger Delta. This is the crux of the study.

Statement of the Problem

Despite Bayelsa State's resource endowments, communities continue to grapple with deep-seated inequalities, marginalization, and social exclusion. Community-based social work interventions have emerged as platforms

for promoting social justice, particularly in addressing poverty, environmental displacement, and gender inequality. However, these interventions are often constrained by weak institutional frameworks, limited funding, and political interference. Moreover, the lack of empirical evidence on the effectiveness of community-based social work in advancing equity and inclusion in Bayelsa presents a knowledge gap. Without systematic research, it is difficult to assess the challenges these interventions face, as well as their prospects for transforming marginalized communities and strengthening social justice in the Niger Delta.

Objectives of the Study

Specifically, the study seeks to:

1. ascertain how community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State.
2. identify the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work in Bayelsa State.
3. examine the prospects for strengthening social justice through community-based social work initiatives in Bayelsa State.
4. provide evidence-based recommendations for improving community-driven approaches to social justice in Bayelsa State.

Research Questions

The research questions guided the study.

1. How does community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State?
2. What are the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State?
3. What prospects exist for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State?

4. How can community-driven initiatives be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State?

Hypotheses

The formulated hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on community-based social work interventions promoting social justice in Bayelsa State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the challenges, such as weak institutional support, political interference, and cultural biases, affecting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

H₀₃: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the prospects for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Significance of the Study

This study was significant in several ways.

- i. First, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the role of social work in advancing social justice within marginalized communities in the Niger Delta.
- ii. Second, the findings provided policymakers, NGOs, and community leaders with evidence-based insights for improving interventions aimed at reducing inequality and promoting inclusion.
- iii. Third, the research was relevant for professional social workers and students, as it highlights practical pathways for strengthening community-based approaches in Nigeria.
- iv. Finally, the study has societal significance, as it seeks to influence reforms that can lead to more equitable distribution of resources,

enhanced participation of vulnerable groups, and sustainable peace in Bayelsa State.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, with particular emphasis on their role in advancing social justice. Geographically, the scope covers selected communities across different local government areas where community-based organizations, cooperatives, and social work initiatives are active. Thematically, the research is limited to assessing the challenges and prospects of social work interventions in addressing issues such as poverty, gender inequality, displacement, and marginalization. The temporal scope spans from 2020 to 2025, reflecting the most recent period of intensified social work activities in the state.

Literature Review

Community-based social work emphasizes grassroots involvement, local ownership, and participatory problem-solving. Scholars argue that it provides culturally sensitive solutions to structural inequalities in Nigeria (Yusuf & Adeyemi, 2025). In Bayelsa, social workers engage through informal associations, cooperatives, and faith-based organizations to fill the gaps left by weak state institutions (Ukoh, 2024). These networks provide livelihood support, conflict resolution, and psychosocial care for marginalized groups.

Persistent challenges, such as weak institutional frameworks, underfunding, and lack of professional recognition for social work limit efficacy of community-based social interventions (Zubairu & Ibenegbu, 2025). Gender biases and cultural hierarchies often restrict women and disadvantaged groups from full participation (Ukoh, 2024). Furthermore, political patronage and corruption compromise accountability in community-based programs (Okoh & Effiong, 2022). Despite these challenges, community-based interventions offer prospects for advancing justice through advocacy, policy engagement, and partnerships

with state and non-state actors.

Theoretical Framework

Empowerment Theory

Empowerment Theory provides a strong, practice-oriented theoretical frame for a study on advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State. At its core, empowerment theory explains how individuals and communities gain control over the decisions, resources, and institutions that shape their lives, a process that is both psychological (changes in beliefs about personal competence), interactional (understanding and negotiating social systems), and behavioural (collective action and participation in civic life). This tripartite formulation makes the theory especially useful for community-based social work because it links micro-level changes in self-efficacy and critical awareness to meso- and macro-level shifts in power and resource distribution that are necessary for social justice outcomes (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). In summary, empowerment Theory provides a foundation for advancing social justice in Bayelsa State by enabling communities to claim rights, reshape power, and pursue equity through measurable domains, guiding interventions, research, and evaluation toward overcoming barriers and fostering sustainable capacity.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design: This study adopts a quantitative research design, specifically a descriptive survey method, to collect numerical data on the challenges and prospects of community-based social work interventions in advancing social justice in Bayelsa State.

Area of the Study: The study was conducted in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, comprising eight Local Government Areas in Bayelsa State. The traditional occupations of the people of Bayelsa (nicknamed Bayelsans) that belong to the Ijaw ethnic nationality include fishing, lumbering, raffia palm tapping, boat carving, and gin production, with cultural dance, wrestling, and

masquerade festivals as the traditions. However, the issue of urbanization and its attendant population influx and developments in the study area have led to the transition from the traditional occupation to modern occupations like civil service, public service, brokerage, maritime, health worker, trading, artisan, etc.

Population of the Study: The target population consists of community-based social workers, members of grassroots organizations, and beneficiaries of social work interventions across selected local government areas in Bayelsa State.

Sample and Sampling Techniques: A sample of 300 respondents, comprising 60 community leaders, 60 youth/women group representatives, 60 community development committee (CDC) members, and 120 social workers (trainee and professionals), participated in the study using a five-phase multistage sampling procedure. Firstly, 4 Local Government Areas (representing 50%) were randomly selected from the 8 Local Government Areas in Bayelsa State. The 4 selected Local Government Areas include: Yenagoa, Brass, Sagbama, and Ogbia. Secondly, a random sampling technique was used to select 15 community leaders in each of the selected Local Government Areas. In the third phase, 15 youth/women group representatives were selected from each of the 4 Local Government Areas. Fourthly, 15 community development committee (CDC) members were selected from each of the 4 local government Areas using a random sampling technique. In the fifth and final phase, the quota sampling technique was used to allocate 30 social workers, cutting across the trainee (categorized as undergraduate university students studying social work) and professional social workers (categorized as postgraduate and practicing social workers) in Bayelsa State, Nigeria.

Instrument for Data Collection: A 30-item structured instrument titled “Challenges and Prospects of Advancing Social Justice through Community-based Social Work Intervention Scale” (CPASJCSWIS) was used to collect data for the study. The CPASJCSWIS instrument was patterned after a four-point rating scale of “Strongly Agree” (SA, 4 Points), “Agree” (A, 3 Points), “Disagree” (D, 2 Points), and “Strongly

Disagree” (SD, 1 Point). Also, the CPASJCSWIS instrument was divided into three sections. Section A elicited the demographic characteristics of the respondents, Section B comprised 20 items that elicited items on the effectiveness of social justice through social work interventions: challenges, and prospects. Section C comprises 10 items that elicited responses on community-based social work interventions.

Validity of the Instrument: The face and content validity of the CPASJCSWIS instrument was determined by two Social Work experts at the University of Port Harcourt. The informed comments and suggestions, including recommendations expressed by these validators, were integrated to modify and improve the quality, accuracy, correctness, and eligibility of the CPASJCSWIS instrument to accurately and reliably measure what it purports to measure in line with effectively actualizing the objectives that are stated in this study.

Reliability of the Instrument: The reliability or internal consistency of the CPASJCSWIS instrument was ascertained using the Cronbach Alpha (r_a) method. Given this, 50 copies of the CPASJCSWIS instrument were administered to 40 respondents (comprising 10 community leaders, 10 youth/women group representatives, 10 community development committee (CDC) members, and 10 social workers) in Rivers State (which was not used for the study) for reliability or pilot study. The responses of the respondents used for the pilot study were retrieved, coded, and analyzed using the Cronbach Alpha (r_a) method to obtain a reliability coefficient of 0.841. This necessitated the use of the CPASJCSWIS instrument for the actual administration.

Method of Data Collection: Data was obtained through primary and secondary sources. The secondary data source was obtained from textbooks, journals, articles, public documents, newspapers, magazines, lecture notes, internet materials/publications, blogs, and maps, among other sources. Whereas the primary sources of data comprised responses extracted from the structured questionnaire (i.e., CPASJCSWIS instrument) that was administered to the

respondents. Given this, the face-to-face direct delivery technique was the method of data collection in this study. Out of the 300 copies of the CPASJCSWIS instrument that were administered to the respondents, only 279 (representing approximately 93% return rate) were validly filled copies that were retrieved and subsequently used for the resulting data analysis in this study.

Method of Data Analysis: Collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean and standard deviation, were used to answer the research questions, while inferential tests, such

as regression analysis, were used to test the hypotheses. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 will be employed for analysis.

Ethical Considerations: Throughout the study, ethical considerations, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly adhered to.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: How do community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation on how community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State

S/N	How community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State include:	N = 279		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa promote fairness and justice in resource allocation	3.61	.66	SA
2	Social work initiatives have improved access to education and health services for vulnerable groups	3.62	.59	SA
3	Social workers play a significant role in addressing poverty and inequality in communities	3.56	.61	SA
4	Community-based social work projects enhance the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making	3.60	.63	SA
5	Social work interventions have improved peaceful coexistence among different community groups	3.67	.57	SA
Grand Mean		3.61	0.61	SA

SA (Strongly Agree) = ≥ 2.50 while SD (Strongly Disagree) < 2.50.

Table 1 shows that the mean rating and standard deviation on how community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State include: social work interventions have improved peaceful coexistence among different community groups (\bar{x} =3.67) in item 6, social work initiatives have improved access to education and health services for vulnerable groups (\bar{x} =3.62) in item 2, community-based social work interventions in

Bayelsa promote fairness and justice in resource allocation (\bar{x} =3.61) in item 1, community-based social work projects enhance the participation of marginalized groups in decision-making (\bar{x} =3.60) in item 5, while the least was that social workers play a significant role in addressing poverty and inequality in communities (\bar{x} =3.56) in item 4. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 3.61 indicates that items 1-5 relate to how

community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 2: What are the major

challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation on the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State

S/N	The major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions include:	N = 279		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Weak institutional support limits the effectiveness of community-based social work in Bayelsa State	3.63	.57	SA
2	Political interference undermines the independence of social work interventions	3.68	.51	SA
3	Cultural beliefs and practices hinder the acceptance of some social justice initiatives	3.65	.48	SA
4	Lack of adequate funding reduces the impact of community-based projects	3.69	.48	SA
5	Inadequate training and capacity of social workers limit their effectiveness in promoting social justice	3.66	.50	SA
Grand Mean		3.66	0.51	SA

SA (Strongly Agree) = ≥ 2.50 while SD (Strongly Disagree) < 2.50.

Table 2 shows that the mean rating and standard deviation on the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State include: lack of adequate funding reduces the impact of community-based projects (\bar{x} = 3.69) in item 5, political interference undermines the independence of social work interventions (\bar{x} = 3.68) in item 2, inadequate training and capacity of social workers limit their effectiveness in promoting social justice (\bar{x} = 3.66) in item 5, cultural beliefs and practices hinder the acceptance of some social justice

initiatives (\bar{x} = 3.65) in item 3, while the least was weak institutional support limits the effectiveness of community-based social work in Bayelsa State (\bar{x} = 3.63) in item 1. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 3.66 indicates that items 1-5 relate to the major challenges limiting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 3: What prospects exist for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation on the prospects existing for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State

S/N	The prospects for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions include:	N = 279		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Community-based social work has the potential to expand access to social services in Bayelsa State	3.64	.49	SA
2	Strengthening grassroots social work organizations will improve equity and inclusion	3.59	.53	SA
3	Collaboration between the government and social workers will enhance the promotion of social justice	3.65	.48	SA
4	Increased funding and resources will boost the sustainability of social work interventions	3.60	.54	SA
5	Community members are willing to support social workers in advancing social justice	3.61	.52	SA
Grand Mean		3.62	0.51	SA

Table 3 shows that the mean rating and standard deviation on the prospects existing for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State include: collaboration between government and social workers will enhance the promotion of social justice (\bar{x} = 3.65) in item 3, community-based social work has the potential to expand access to social services in Bayelsa State (\bar{x} = 3.64) in item 1, community members are willing to support social workers in advancing social justice (\bar{x} = 3.61) in item 5, increased funding and resources will boost the

sustainability of social work interventions (\bar{x} = 3.60) in item 4, while the least was strengthening grassroots social work organizations will improve equity and inclusion (\bar{x} = 3.59) in item 2. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 3.62 indicates that items 1-5 relate to the prospects existing for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Research Question 4: How can community-driven initiatives be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State?

Table 4: Mean and Standard Deviation on how community-driven initiatives can be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State

S/N	How community-driven initiatives can be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State includes:	N = 279		Decision
		Mean	SD	
1	Establishing stronger governance frameworks will improve the delivery of community-based social work	3.65	.50	SA
2	Infrastructural investment will strengthen social work initiatives in Bayelsa State	3.69	.50	SA
3	Training and capacity building for social workers will increase their effectiveness	3.64	.51	SA

4	Inclusive community participation will foster trust and the sustainability of interventions	3.66	.50	SA
5	Partnerships with NGOs and international agencies will strengthen social justice outcomes	3.63	.49	SA
Grand Mean		3.65	0.50	SA

SA (Strongly Agree) = ≥ 2.50 while SD (Strongly Disagree) < 2.50 .

Table 4 shows that the mean rating and standard deviation on how community-driven initiatives can be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State include: infrastructural investment will strengthen social work initiatives in Bayelsa State. ($\bar{x} = 3.69$) in item 2, inclusive community participation will foster trust and the sustainability of interventions ($\bar{x} = 3.66$) in item 4, establishing stronger governance frameworks will improve the delivery of community-based social work ($\bar{x} = 3.65$) in item 1, training and capacity building for social workers will increase

their effectiveness ($\bar{x} = 3.64$) in item 3, while the least was partnerships with NGOs and international agencies will strengthen social justice outcomes ($\bar{x} = 3.63$) in item 5. Furthermore, the grand mean score of 3.65 indicates that items 1-5 relate to how community-driven initiatives can be strengthened to foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on community-based social work interventions promoting social justice in Bayelsa State.

Table 5: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference in the respondents' mean response on the community-based social work interventions promoting social justice in Bayelsa State

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	1.572	2	.751	10.138	.005	S
Within Groups	19.481	276	.084			
Total	21.053	278				

Decision Rule: if $p < .05$, reject H_0 , else retain H_0 . NS= Not Significant, $p > .05$, S= significant, $p < .05$

Table 5 shows that the category of the respondents (community leaders, youth/women group representatives, community development committee (CDC) members, and social workers) has a significant influence on community-based social work interventions promoting social justice in Bayelsa State ($F_{2, 276} = .005$, $p < .05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated

that the category of the respondents influenced their rating of the community-based social work interventions, promoting social justice in Bayelsa State. Hence, community-based social work interventions promoted social justice in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the

challenges, such as weak institutional support, political interference, and cultural biases

affecting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Table 6: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference in the respondents' mean response on the challenges affecting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	2.607	2	.963	9.392	.004	S
Within Groups	18.896	276	.047			
Total	21.503	278				

Decision Rule: if $p < .05$, reject H_0 , else retain H_0 . NS= Not Significant, $p > .05$, S= significant, $p < .05$

Table 6 shows that category of the respondents (community leaders, youth/women group representatives, community development committee (CDC) members, and social workers) has significant influence on the challenges such as weak institutional support, political interference, and cultural biases affecting the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State ($F_{2, 276} = .004$, $p < .05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that the category of the respondents influenced their rating of the challenges affecting

the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State. Hence, the challenges such as weak institutional support, political interference, and cultural biases affected the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the mean response of the respondents on the prospects for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State.

Table 7: Summary of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the difference in the respondents' mean response on how the prospects for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Between Groups	2.094	2	.828	10.539	.000	S
Within Groups	20.948	276	.075			
Total	23.042	278				

Decision Rule: if $p < .05$ reject H_0 , else retain H_0 . NS= Not Significant, $p > .05$, S= significant, $p < .05$

Source: SPSS Output, 2025.

Table 7 shows that the category of the respondents (community leaders, youth/women group representatives, community development

committee (CDC) members and social workers) has a significant influence on the prospects for advancing social justice through community-

based social work interventions in Bayelsa State ($F_2, 276 = .000, p < .05$). The null hypothesis was rejected. This indicated that the category of the respondents influenced their rating of the prospects for advancing social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State. Hence, community-based social work interventions have prospects for advancing social justice in Bayelsa State.

Discussion of Findings

The result in Table 1 revealed a grand mean score of grand mean score of 3.61, indicating that community-based social work interventions promote social justice in Bayelsa State. This finding is consistent with the studies (Collins et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2022) that community-anchored social interventions (including community health, education outreach, and participatory development projects) frequently yield perceived gains in access and inclusion when local structures and actors are effectively engaged. This finding agrees with (Wong & Guggenheim, 2018; World Bank, 2025) that community-driven models emphasize precisely this type of locally validated impact: when communities are meaningfully involved, interventions are more likely to reach vulnerable groups and to be experienced as fair and legitimate.

The result in Table 2 revealed a grand mean score of 3.66, indicating that major challenges limited the effectiveness of community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State. This finding aligns with documented challenges across Nigeria's social services sector: corruption and weak accountability mechanisms can blunt the reach of programs, while unstable funding and political intrusion reduce operational independence and sustainability (Onwujekwe et al., 2019; Agwu et al., 2023). Similarly, recent reviews and field studies in Nigeria emphasize that inadequate professional recognition, unclear institutional mandates, and low training investment constrain social work practice and reduce the sector's ability to pursue social justice systematically (Isangha, 2021; Alamu, 2022).

The result in Table 3 revealed a grand mean score of 3.62, indicating that the prospects exist for the advancement of social justice through community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State. This finding is in agreement with the position of Obi et al. (2024) that sustainable community development and civil society strengthening in Nigeria and sub-Saharan Africa holds prospects for capacity building for local NGOs and community committees, institutionalized partnerships between social workers and health/community systems, and predictable financing mechanisms are repeatedly identified as the levers that convert short-term projects into lasting social change. Also, Barsky (2024) states that social work practitioners emphasize principles of equity, community participation, and accountability when designing interventions for governance and reforms.

The result in Table 4 revealed a grand mean score of 3.65, indicating that strengthening community-driven initiatives can foster equity, inclusion, and sustainable development in Bayelsa State. This finding is consistent with Onwujekwe et al. (2019) that weak governance and underdeveloped institutional frameworks often undermine social programs in Nigeria, whereas strong accountability structures improve delivery and legitimacy. Similarly, this finding aligns with Obi et al. (2024) that infrastructural investments, particularly in health, education, and community facilities, are known to enhance the reach and impact of social work interventions.

The ANOVA results in Tables 5-7 demonstrate statistically significant differences across respondent groups regarding perceptions of impact ($F = 10.138, p = .005$), challenges ($F = 9.392, p = .004$), and prospects ($F = 10.539, p < .001$). This suggests that perspectives on social work interventions vary across different subgroups, possibly shaped by professional roles, educational backgrounds, or lived experiences. Prior studies have shown that stakeholders interpret the effectiveness of social interventions differently depending on their positionality and degree of engagement in project delivery (Robinson et al., 2022). Such

diversity of perception calls for targeted approaches to training, communication, and partnership-building to ensure inclusivity in policy formulation and implementation.

Conclusion

Community-based social interventions were found to be a positive force for social justice, yet they also identify structural barriers, funding shortfalls, political interference, capacity gaps, and cultural friction that limit impact. The statistically significant between-group differences underscore the need for targeted, context-sensitive reforms. This underscores the institution of policies that combine predictable funding, professional capacity building, strengthened governance, and participatory, community-led models are likely to convert the positive perceptions recorded here into deeper, measurable social justice gains. These observations align with recent empirical and practice guidance for effective, accountable, and community-centered social work in Nigeria and comparable settings.

Overall, the findings suggest that community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa are perceived as effective in promoting social justice, particularly through fairness, equity, and peaceful coexistence. Hence, community-based social work interventions in Bayelsa State are vital tools for advancing social justice in a context marked by inequality and exclusion. Their prospects lie in stronger collaboration, advocacy, and institutional recognition of social work as a professional force for equity. Hence, for the attainment of maximum impact, policies should address systemic barriers, institutionalize social work practice, and leverage community partnerships to advance equity and sustainable development in Bayelsa State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were proffered.

1. The government should institutionalize community-based social work intervention

policies that prioritize fairness in resource allocation and inclusive decision-making processes that would eradicate the political interferences, cultural beliefs, and practices that affect the acceptance of some social justice initiatives and social work interventions

2. The government and stakeholders should address systemic barriers such as underfunding, political interference, and weak institutional support by providing adequate resources and creating enabling environments for social work practice.
3. Social workers should advocate for the expansion of grassroots organizations that will foster government-community–corporate-non-governmental organizations or agencies partnerships that will strengthen inclusion and ensure sustainability of social work interventions.
4. Social workers should focus efforts on infrastructural investment, governance reforms, and capacity building to enhance the long-term impact of social work in fostering equity and sustainable development.

Contribution to Social Work Practice

This study has contributions for social work practice in Bayelsa State, Nigeria, and the globe.

1. These interventions have contributed significantly to reducing inequality by improving access to education, health, and peaceful coexistence in Bayelsa communities.
2. The reality that social workers' efforts entrench structural challenges that limit the effectiveness of the integrated community-based social interventions underscores the need for capacity development and stronger professional autonomy in practice in Bayelsa State.
3. The prospects, such as community willingness and collaboration, provide a strong foundation for advancing equity and social justice in Bayelsa State.
4. Community-driven approaches have contributed to building trust, strengthening partnerships with NGOs and international

agencies, and promoting social justice outcomes in Bayelsa State.

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