

PERCEPTION LEVEL OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS TOWARDS THE ROLES OF LOCAL LEADERS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DECISION-MAKING IN BAMYAN, AFGHANISTAN

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Abstract

The study determines the perception level of community members in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan, regarding the internal roles of the local leaders in decision-making processes related to community development. In the ongoing effort to rebuild the nation recovering from decades-long civil war, the effectiveness of governance in driving development is crucial to deliver success. A self-administered questionnaire was designed and subsequently distributed among community members. Descriptive analysis was performed to determine the perception level, and the findings revealed that community members held a moderate perception of the internal roles played by local leaders in community development decision-making. Consequently, it is imperative to institute training programmes not only for the community members but also for local leaders to enhance their capabilities in decision-making and competency in project implementation. By investing in such initiatives, stakeholders can empower both community members and local leaders, fostering more effective and inclusive development practices.

Keywords: Community Members' Perception, Local Leader, Community Development Decision-Making, Bamyan, Afghanistan.

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Introduction

The aftermath of the war has left much of Afghanistan's villages' infrastructure in a dire state of disrepair. The country's instability, combined with the lack of governance and poverty, has inflicted substantial damage to human, physical, and institutional infrastructure (Hanif et al., 2023; Syed & Mujtaba, 2013; Wardak, 2011). Man et al. (2013) stressed the urgency to modernise agricultural systems as a cornerstone of rural development planning. This is because poverty is cited as one of the most daunting challenges confronting farmers worldwide (Man & Sadiya, 2012; Man, 2009; Mech et al., 2017). Reflecting on Afghanistan's century-long history, top-down reform planning has consistently faltered (Murtazashvili, 2020; Man et al., 2021; Devas & Grant, 2003). In its essence, sustainable and socially responsive improvement requires the participation of stakeholders, both men and women, to foster capacity-building and fulfil their roles for development (Nijat, 2014; Majnoui-Toutakhane et al., 2020). Drawing from their research on local leaders' perspectives, Man et al. (2017) concluded that factors such as age and income significantly influence fishermen's perceptions of their roles within their communities.

Nijat (2014), Zakhilwal and Thomas (2006), and Barai (2019) highlight the significant roles of communities, local leaders, and government agents in shaping development decision-making. However, they also criticise the prevalent top-down approach in Afghanistan, where centralised planning often fails to predict and address the needs of rural communities. This disconnect is partly attributed to a lack of research focus on these communities' specific challenges (Capler, 2020; Hanif et al., 2022). Currently, our understanding of how community members perceive the role of a local leader in community development decision-making remains limited (Aref & Ma'rof, 2009; Aref & Redzuan, 2010; Singh & Gupta, 2018).

The transformation of the decision-making approach from top-down to bottom-up requires active participation from all stakeholders in decision-making for development purposes. This means that local leaders should establish a network

between community members and government agents. This identified research gap serves as the impetus for the present study, which aims to address the following question: What is the perception level of the community members towards the internal roles of local leaders in community development decision-making in the Bamyān Province, Afghanistan?

Therefore, this study was conducted to determine the perceived level of respondents regarding the internal roles of local leaders in community development decision-making. The study suggests possible explanations for the relationship between community members and community development decision-making.

Literature Review

Local leadership plays a crucial role in shaping the social, economic, and political landscape of communities. Aref and Redzuan (2010) highlight the importance of a strong leadership in fostering community development. Vora and Kainzbauer (2020) identified five key roles of local leaders in Thailand: guiding, bridging, emotionally supporting, socialising, and indirectly communicating. Consequently, studies focusing on local leadership often centre around the concepts of control and influence. Hanif et al. (2023) reveal community involvement in various programme aspects, including the establishment of Community Development Councils (CDCs), elections, and project implementation.

The perception of community members holds paramount importance in rural development, and their understanding can galvanise community support (Aref & Redzuan, 2010; Barakat et al., 2018) and foster stakeholder participation (Asnarulkadi & Aref, 2009). Recently, Hanif et al. (2022) identified poverty, deinstitutionalised CDCs, low literacy levels, a lack of volunteering culture, male dominance in decision-making, and flaws in citizen charter national priority programmes as challenges. Engaging residents and stakeholders with local leaders is crucial for developing future programmes and achieving community goals. Man

(2009) suggests governmental and NGO support for income-generating activities in rural areas. According to Capler (2020), six themes crucial for effective decision-making are: a) reflecting on past experiences, b) fostering communication and respect, c) stimulating economic growth, d) ensuring fairness, e) addressing emotions and biases, and f) enforcing accountability.

Beyond the public benefits, participating folks reap personal rewards through social interaction, enhanced self-esteem, and increased productivity, all while reducing feelings of isolation and empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives. Ultimately, community development and enhancement are about empowering individuals to pursue the lifestyles they aspire to and equipping them with the resources and opportunities to realise these choices (Abungu, 2011).

Rural development constitutes a deliberate and resolute endeavour aimed at significantly enhancing human well-being by elevating the lives of community members. Its core objectives involve alleviating rural poverty and improving the overall standard of living in rural areas (Wardak, 2011). According to Ali and Man et al. (2019), a crucial aspect involves improving the knowledge of community members through governmental and non-governmental organisations or agricultural extension agencies. Najafizada et al. (2017) and Wardak (2011) further highlighted that the main thrust of rural improvement programmes is to bolster the socio-economic infrastructure of rural settings and combat rural poverty. These programmes typically entail the construction of rural roads, small bridges and culverts, along with the provision of essential services such as water supply and sanitation facilities, as well as the enhancement and renovation of minor irrigation tanks. While the significance of involving community members in decision-making processes, along with the support of NGOs and governmental organisations, has been highlighted, the specific roles of local leaders, as perceived by community members, need to be clarified.

Strong social relationships are the lifeblood of rural communities, enabling access to resources,

meeting basic requirements, and fostering shared services. These connections bind families, groups, communities, and organisations within and beyond village boundaries (Avant et al., 2013). Consequently, the nature of rural leadership is intricately tied to the social relationship structure that mirrors the community's fabric. Such social structure represents the entire responsibility and network of interpersonal relationships among the residents, embodying the diverse roles within social action networks that define community dynamics. Leadership, therefore, becomes integrated into the community's framework, as leaders are tasked with addressing the collective needs and aspirations of society inherently embedded within its structure. Devas and Grant (2003) emphasised the significance of committed rural leadership, articulate civil society organisation, centralised performance monitoring, and accessible information in driving community development decision-making. Majnoui-Toutakhane et al. (2020) stressed the importance of effective stakeholder participation and expert human resources in rural development efforts.

Theoretical Framework

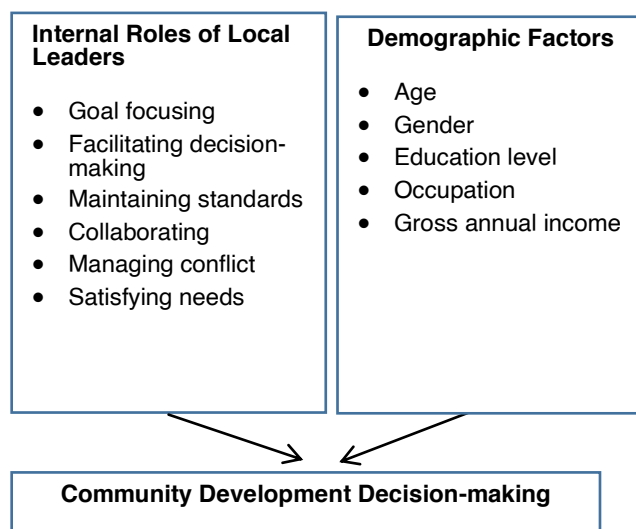
Northouse (2018) characterises Hill's model as a framework of rules and resources that defines the characteristics of team leadership decisions. This model emphasises that understanding team decision-making depends on the team's internal and external leadership roles. Furthermore, it acknowledges the reciprocal relationships and influences between leadership and team processes (Zaccaro et al., 2001). Further supporting this notion, Mukua-Marua et al. (2023) found that leadership collaboration significantly impacts team effectiveness by fostering open communication, stakeholder engagement, and efficient decision-making. Figure 1 illustrates the framework of the study, highlighting the gap between the ambiguous roles expected of local leaders and the community's desire for participation in decision-making of community development. This ambiguity in role interpretation may ultimately impact the effectiveness of rural leaders in driving community

development initiatives. In this study, the dependent variable is 'Community Development Decision making,' which indicates the effectiveness of a local leader in driving community development initiatives. As Hanif et al. (2023) emphasised, recognising Community Development Councils as

integral parts of the political system is crucial for their sustainable operation in Afghanistan. The model was further refined by iteratively deleting and adding new factors, ensuring it captured the nuances of effective leadership in this context.

Figure 1

Internal Roles of Local Leaders in Community Development



Source: Hill's Model.

The framework analyses leadership effectiveness through two key pillars. The first one considers demographic factors such as age, gender, education level, occupation, and gross annual income. The second part focuses on the internal roles of local leaders, which involve goal-focusing, facilitating decision-making, maintaining standards, collaborating, managing conflict, and satisfying needs within the community. These internal roles are reflected in the performance of local leaders, particularly in their involvement in decision-making processes and the initiation of development programmes within the community. By examining how local leaders navigate situations and spearhead community initiatives, their effectiveness in fulfilling these internal roles becomes apparent within the framework.

Study Area

The study was conducted in the Bamyan province, which is located in the central part of Afghanistan. The province consists of six (6) districts comprising five tribes (Hazara¹, Tajik², Sayed³, Ismaili⁴, and Pashtun⁵) and three sects (Suni⁶, Shia⁷, and Ismaili). The Hazara and Tajik communities make up the majority in Bamyan province. Therefore, this research focuses on Hazara, Tajik, and Sayed as the main tribes. Bamyan province experiences cold weather and four seasons. Some areas endure over six months of winter, making travel challenging due to heavy snowfall. Each season spans three months: December to February marks winter, March to May is spring, June to August brings summer, and September to November is the autumn season.

Climatic conditions in the province are ideal for horticultural crops such as potato and wheat, which are also the main produce in the province. The most popular fruits are apples, grapes, almonds, and apricots.

The security situation in the province is good compared to other parts of Afghanistan, and the three major tribes of the country call this province home. Despite the differences in customs and religious practices, these communities co-exist peacefully, and all demonstrate a strong commitment to the province's development. Each village boasts its own community development councils (CDCs), actively involving leaders and residents in shaping their futures (MAIL, 2018).

The study focused on the centre of Bamyan province, which has a total population of 100,104. Participants were drawn from five villages within Bamyan, namely Tolwara, Zargaran, Foladi, Tayboti, and Sayed Abad.

The criteria for selecting the tribes in these five villages are based on the following considerations:

- i. Tribal representation: Each village is primarily associated with a specific tribe, and two villages out of the total five (5) were chosen (except Sadat, which no longer functions as a village).
- ii. Community governance: Each community operates under its own council, overseen by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- iii. Development status: All five villages are classified as developing communities⁸ within the Bamyan province.

Methodology

The questionnaire was developed based on the objectives of the study and following an extensive literature review. Five questionnaires were distributed to Afghan lecturers specialised in the field of rural development for validation. A total of 30 questionnaires were then distributed randomly to the community members in Bamyan province. Following the pilot test, a reliability test was performed. For primary data collection, a

quantitative approach was chosen, targeting 384 respondents. Three major tribes across five CDCs were selected through randomised sampling, with the sample size determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula for populations of 100,104, which is 384 in this case. The community members⁹ were presented with a close-ended structured questionnaire centred on the 5-point Likert scale. The research instrument was translated from English to the Persian language to facilitate understanding among the community members (identified through geographic location within the target area). The self-administered questionnaires were then subjected to quantitative analysis using SPSS (version 22.0, IBM, Armonk, NY, USA).

Descriptive analysis was conducted to transform the data into the simplest form to facilitate the interpretation and description of the population (Mann, 2007). Data were expressed as frequency and percentage to describe the demographic profile of the respondents. Scoring and analysis were used on items measured using the Likert Scale. In this study, the Likert scale was applied to identify the level of perception of community members toward the internal roles of a local leader in community development decision-making. The scale designed on a 5-point Likert scale ranges from 1 Almost Never True, 2 Seldom True, 3 Occasionally True, 4 Frequently True, and 5 Almost Always True. Mean scores for each item and variable were then categorised into three levels: low (1.00-2.33), moderate (2.34-3.67), and high (3.68-5.00).

Discussion and Result

A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 450 community members in Bamyan, Afghanistan, to determine their perception of local leaders' internal roles in community development decision-making. Following data cleaning, only 384 responses were deemed valid. The respondents of the study are largely composed of males (65.4 per cent) and females (34.6 per cent), with an average age of 28 years old. The youngest respondent was 18 years old, and the oldest was 63 years old. In

terms of education, 15.4 per cent had no formal education¹⁰, and 6.8 per cent attended religious education. The majority (47.1 per cent) of respondents had attended school, and 30.7 per cent had tertiary education. In terms of occupation, 5.2 per cent (20 respondents) are government employees, whereas 3.4 per cent (13 respondents) are non-government employees. The majority of respondents (46.6 per cent; 179 respondents) are students in universities or schools, followed by 20.3 per cent (78 respondents) farmers, 16.7 per cent (64 respondents) are self-employed, and 7.8 per cent (30 respondents) are unemployed. Annual mean income was AFG 84,376, with 20.3 per cent earning less than AFG 50,000 and 22.1 per cent earning between AFG 50,000 and AFG 79,999.

The highest annual income earned among the community members was between AFG 200,000 and AFG 1000,000 per year, which accounted for 9.6 per cent of the respondents.

Table 1 summarises the six attributes (Goal Focusing, Facilitating Decision-Making, Maintaining Standards, Collaborating, Managing Conflict, and Satisfying Needs) that local leaders lay in community development decision-making. In this study, the overall mean score was categorised into three levels: low (1.00-2.33), moderate (2.33-3.66), and high (3.67-5.00). Among the attributes, "Managing conflict" scored the highest mean ($M = 3.05$), while "Goal focusing" scored the lowest ($M = 2.77$).

Table 1

Respondents' Perceptions towards the Internal Roles of Local Leaders in Community Development Decision-Making

Internal Roles	Level	Mean	S.D.
Goal Focusing	Moderate	2.77	1.39
Facilitating Decision-Making	Moderate	2.83	1.34
Maintaining Standards	Moderate	2.78	1.38
Collaborating	Moderate	2.86	1.40
Managing Conflict	Moderate	3.05	1.45
Satisfying needs	Moderate	2.82	1.39
Total Average Mean		2.85	1.39

Source: Field Survey

Table 1 reveals four internal roles for local leaders that garnered moderate scores: facilitating decision-making, maintaining standards, collaborating, and satisfying needs. While the attributes received moderate scores, it is imperative to highlight the significance of community development. This aligns with Martiskainen (2017) and Nemat and Werner (2016), who argue that both local authorities¹¹ and leaders act as intermediaries in bridging the gap between

community concerns and political decision-making. They also actively encourage community participation, fostering accountability and good relationships, both crucial aspects of local leadership.

Overall, the internal roles of local leaders average a 2.85 score, reflecting a moderate level. Similarly, Table 2 reveals a moderate average score for community members' perceptions

Table 2

Overall Level of Respondents' Perceptions towards the Internal Roles of Local Leaders in Community Development Decision-Making (n=384)

Level	Mean	S.D.
High (3.67-5.0)		
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	2.85	1.39
Low (1-2.33)		

Source: Field Survey

Afghanistan's four-decade war has left the entire country's infrastructure in ruins. This stark reality also reflects the historical failure of top-down decision-making in the nation's century-long struggle (Murtazashvili, 2020). Hanif et al. (2023) identified key roadblocks to community engagement: the need for more volunteering culture, lack of trust, and high illiteracy rates. These findings echo a broader call for development initiatives to prioritise local agencies. By empowering communities from the ground up, projects become more relevant and sustainable, allowing residents to demonstrate their capabilities and ownership. This bottom-up approach fosters participation and collaboration, crucial skills for community members, particularly in developing countries, to gain independence in project implementation and competence in developing society.

To address the challenges and complexities faced by the village, collaboration among various stakeholders, including community members, local leaders, agricultural agents, governmental representatives, and non-governmental agents, is essential. Drawing from insights gleaned from reviews of community development, particularly involving agricultural and social developments, the active involvement of local leaders emerges as pivotal as their engagement is integral to resolving the complexities, intensities, and various challenges in project development within the community. Terbish and Rawsthorne (2020) assert that citizens' groups or community organisations are key to realising the state's commitment to building social economy, social capital, and social innovation. However, considerable efforts are still

required to expand citizen participation, promote a democratic political culture, and strengthen cooperation between the government and civil society. Therefore, it falls upon local leaders in the community to make informed and sustainable decisions. More importantly, the local leader must lead and mobilise all community members, especially those in disadvantaged circumstances, towards the trajectory of development while advocating for governmental support.

The relationship between communities is vital for information exchange, meeting basic requirements, mutual assistance, and fostering connections among families, groups, and organisations to drive development. This inclusive approach, with an emphasis on bottom-up decision-making, is key to Malaysia's success (Asnarulkadi & Aref, 2009). Effective community development also requires skilled local leaders and engaged community members who can plan, mobilise, and create a safe and sound work environment for collaboration. This includes men and women working together, local people with government agencies cooperating, NGOs partnering with government and local leaders, and even religious leaders engaging with warlords for the common good. Recent research by Zhu et al. (2024) in Afghanistan demonstrates the vital role of women in families, contributing significantly to household income and supporting men in providing food and education for their children. Based on these findings, the Afghan government must support local communities actively (both men and women) through education, employment opportunities, and inclusive decision-making processes for sustainable development.

Table 3*Perception Score of Goal Focusing (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader ensures that community members agree on the goals and objectives of community development set for them.	86 (22.4)	70 (18.2)	84 (21.9)	64 (16.7)	80 (20.8)	2.95	1.44
Local leader ensures that all assistance from the government/non-government agencies reaches the targeted people in the community.	132 (34.4)	80 (20.8)	77 (20.1)	44 (11.5)	51 (13.3)	2.48	1.40
Local leader coordinates all rural development projects and ensures that results are achieved.	85 (22.1)	96 (25.0)	78 (20.3)	73 (19.0)	52 (13.5)	2.77	1.34
Local leader ensures that community has meaningful and shared purposes.	90 (23.4)	85 (22.1)	83 (21.6)	80 (20.8)	46 (12.0)	2.76	1.33
Local leader develops community members that clearly understand their roles.	112 (29.2)	88 (22.9)	70 (18.2)	53 (13.8)	61 (15.9)	2.64	1.43
Local leader ensures that community members embrace continuous improvement as a way of life.	72 (18.8)	80 (20.8)	87 (22.7)	60 (15.6)	85 (22.1)	3.02	1.41
Overall Mean						2.77	1.39

Source: Field Survey*Note:* 1: Almost Never True, 2: Seldom True, 3: Occasionally True, 4: Frequently True, 5: Almost Always True**Table 4***Perception Level of Goal Focusing (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	99	25.8	2.77	1.39
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	148	38.5		
Low (1-2.33)	137	35.7		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Survey

Table 5*Perception Score of Facilitating Decision-Making (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader facilitates the community members to make decisions on different issues that affect the community that require an integrated approach.	90 (23.4)	85 (22.1)	86 (22.4)	63 (16.4)	60 (15.6)	2.79	1.38
Local leader acts as a liaison between governmental and non-governmental agencies and the community for financial and technical assistance.	80 (20.8)	94 (24.5)	88 (22.9)	52 (13.5)	70 (18.2)	2.84	1.38
Local leader makes decisions and is able to decide in a timely manner.	83 (21.6)	85 (22.1)	100 (26.0)	66 (17.2)	50 (13.0)	2.78	1.31
Local leader ensures that community members communicate with each other openly and honestly.	76 (19.8)	96 (25.0)	89 (23.2)	58 (15.1)	65 (16.9)	2.84	1.36
Local leader ensures that community members trust one another.	72 (18.8)	104 (27.1)	88 (22.9)	75 (19.5)	45 (11.7)	2.78	1.28
Local leader ensures that community members choose consensus decision-making effectively.	69 (18.0)	96 (25.0)	87 (22.7)	76 (19.8)	56 (14.6)	2.88	1.31
Local leader ensures that the community members are using best-practice methods.	70 (18.2)	89 (23.2)	92 (24.0)	55 (14.3)	78 (20.3)	2.95	1.38
Overall Mean						2.83	1.34

Source: Field Survey**Table 6***Perception Level of Facilitating Decision-Making (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	97	25.3	2.83	1.34
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	168	43.8		
Low (1-2.33)	119	31.0		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Survey

Table 7*Perception Score of Maintaining Standards (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader ensures that development standards are high and applied fairly to all community members.	114 (29.7)	89 (23.2)	67 (17.4)	52 (13.5)	62 (16.1)	2.63	1.43
Local leader legitimises the development projects in the community.	78 (20.3)	81 (21.1)	86 (22.4)	55 (14.3)	84 (21.9)	2.96	1.43
Local leader monitors and evaluates the projects for proper implementation.	92 (24.0)	97 (25.3)	86 (22.4)	59 (15.4)	50 (13.0)	2.68	1.33
Local leader ensures that the development standards are applied according to community members' expectations.	77 (20.1)	100 (26.0)	80 (20.8)	65 (16.9)	62 (16.1)	2.83	1.36
Local leader ensures that everyone values what each member contributes to the community.	72 (18.8)	92 (24.0)	86 (22.4)	66 (17.2)	68 (17.7)	2.91	1.36
Local leader ensures that all factors such as land tenure, communication, etc. that may impede developmental processes are removed.	102 (26.6)	86 (22.4)	75 (19.5)	59 (15.4)	62 (16.1)	2.72	1.41
Overall Mean						2.78	1.38

Source: Field Survey**Table 8***Perception Level of Maintaining Standards (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	91	23.7	2.78	1.38
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	142	37.0		
Low (1-2.33)	151	39.3		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Survey**Table 9***Perception Score of Collaborating (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader collaborates by sharing ideas to ensure that the social responsibilities of the community members are performed effectively and efficiently.	100 (26.0)	91 (23.7)	75 (19.5)	49 (12.8)	69 (18.0)	2.73	1.43
Local leader makes a cordial relationship among the localities for effective and efficient participation in community development programmes.	69 (18.0)	79 (20.6)	80 (20.8)	85 (22.1)	71 (18.5)	3.03	1.37
Local leader works in the community to inspire people to do their best.	87 (22.7)	70 (18.2)	94 (24.5)	55 (14.3)	78 (20.3)	2.91	1.42
Local leader sets and meets with community members to find out the best solution for challenging goals.	80 (20.8)	86 (22.4)	74 (19.3)	69 (18.0)	75 (19.5)	2.93	1.42
Local leader helps the community members to deal with problems and solve issues.	109 (28.4)	74 (19.3)	70 (18.2)	81 (21.1)	50 (13.0)	2.71	1.40
Overall Mean						2.86	1.40

Source: Field Survey

Table 10*Perception Level of Collaborating (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	92	24.0	2.86	1.40
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	158	41.1		
Low (1-2.33)	134	34.9		
Total	384	100.0		

*Source: Field Survey***Table 11***Perception Score of Managing Conflict (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader manages conflict and power issues in a manner that keeps them to the bare minimum.	96 (25.0)	82 (21.4)	62 (16.1)	69 (18.0)	75 (19.5)	2.86	1.47
Local leader ensures that the problems are solved by community members which results in effective and sustainable solutions.	58 (15.1)	69 (18.0)	82 (21.4)	72 (18.8)	103 (26.8)	3.24	1.41
Local leader is able to resolve conflicts with other communities collaboratively.	85 (22.1)	84 (21.9)	74 (19.3)	68 (17.7)	73 (19.0)	2.90	1.42
Local leader lets community members resolve the simple issues between themselves without the intervention of the local leader.	86 (22.4)	85 (22.1)	57 (14.8)	64 (16.7)	92 (24.0)	2.98	1.49
Local leader prevents a simple problem from getting into a bigger problem in the community.	68 (17.7)	53 (13.8)	77 (20.1)	65 (16.9)	121 (31.5)	3.31	1.47
Overall Mean						3.05	1.45

*Source: Field Survey***Table 12***Perception Level of Managing Conflict (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	119	31.0	3.05	1.45
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	149	38.8		
Low (1-2.33)	116	30.2		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Survey

Table 13*Perception Score of Satisfying Needs (n=384)*

Statements	Score Frequency (Percentage)					Mean	SD
	1	2	3	4	5		
Local leader ensures that the individual needs of community members are taken care of in the time of decision-making for community development.	108 (28.1)	74 (19.3)	61 (15.9)	77 (20.1)	64 (16.7)	2.78	1.46
Local leader encourages people to participate voluntarily in the community development projects that are vital in the village.	89 (23.2)	83 (21.6)	83 (21.6)	68 (17.7)	61 (15.9)	2.82	1.38
Local leader participates in the other villages' projects to learn and solve the community's needs.	89 (23.2)	87 (22.7)	75 (19.5)	70 (18.2)	63 (16.4)	2.82	1.40
Local leader supports those community members with a desire to enhance their skills and knowledge for development.	74 (19.3)	90 (23.4)	84 (21.9)	76 (19.8)	60 (15.6)	2.89	1.34
Local leader clarifies the governmental/non-governmental intentions and plans for the community members.	84 (21.9)	84 (21.9)	89 (23.2)	66 (17.2)	61 (15.9)	2.83	1.37
Overall Mean						2.82	1.39

Source: Field Survey**Table 14***Perception Level of Satisfying Needs (n=384)*

Level	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	S.D
High (3.67-5.0)	94	24.5	2.82	1.39
Moderate (2.34-3.66)	159	41.4		
Low (1-2.33)	131	34.1		
Total	384	100.0		

Source: Field Survey**Conclusion and Recommendation**

This article investigated how respondents perceived the internal roles of local leaders (Goal Focusing, Facilitating Decision-Making, Maintaining Standards, Collaborating, Managing Conflict, and Satisfying Needs) in community development decision-making. The study found that these roles were viewed as moderately fulfilled, suggesting local leaders act as intermediaries between the community and government, bridging the gap between community needs and decision-making processes. Their efforts further encourage

mandatory community participation and foster positive relationships within the community.

Community decision-makers and planners for development purposes have long recognised the value of myths and stories in engaging people and guiding them toward development efforts (Lung-Amam & Dawkins, 2020). Despite the concerted efforts of the new government and support from international governing bodies to foster development in Afghanistan, the results of this study indicate that the perception of local people remains at a moderate level. Consequently, there is

a pressing need for additional training to be provided to local leaders through workshops, seminars, and practical learning focusing on decision-making processes and project implementation strategies. Such initiatives are essential to enhance the effectiveness of development efforts and ensure meaningful engagement and progress within local communities.

traditional restrictions prevented women in some families from responding to the questionnaire. In these cases, the researchers collaborated with family members to gather their perspectives. Furthermore, the lack of additional information and research on local leadership in the specific Afghan region has limited the scope of the study. Finally, budgetary constraints prevented the comprehensive inclusion of the entire country in the research scope.

Limitations of the Study

Like any research, this study faced limitations. Illiteracy posed a challenge, as some community members needed help to read the questionnaire, requiring literate family members to help them answer the questionnaire. Additionally, certain

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End Notes:

1. The Hazara tribe is an ethnic minority that is mostly Shia Muslim religion in Afghanistan (Amiri, 2023).
2. The Tajik as an ethnic community is predominantly Sunni Muslim religion in Afghanistan (Ibrahimi, 2023).
3. The Sayed (Saadat) tribe is an ethnic minority that is Sunni and Shia Muslim religion (Wilder, 2005).
4. The Ismailia tribe is an ethnic minority that is Ismailia Muslim follower of Agha Khan (Emadi, 2023).
5. Pashtun as an ethnic community is predominantly Sunni Muslim religion in Afghanistan (Abraham, 2013).
6. Sunni: follower of Imam Abu Hanifah (Kidwai, 2022).
7. Shia: Follower of Imam Jafar Sadiq (Maqsood, 2023).
8. Developing communities: communities that are safe and secure and developing projects are implemented without any problem.
9. Definition of Community members: A person who lives in a community and participates in various activities or initiatives that contribute to the well-being of their community.
10. Literate family members helped them answer the questionnaires.
11. Local authorities: authorities of formal or governmental in local administrations (Habib, 2013).

Author Contributions:

Mohammad Salem Faizi: Drafted the paper and performed analysis

Norsida Man: Supervised the research

Patisha Akbari: Developed the paper and assisted in data collection and data analysis.

Khal Mohammad Ahmadzai: Supervised data collection in the study area.

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