



# Asset-Based Community Development: Leveraging Local Strengths for Empowering Communities : A Bibliographic Analysis

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**Abstract:** This article explores Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) through a bibliographic analysis, focusing on leveraging local strengths to empower communities. The study systematically reviews existing literature to assess how communities can effectively utilize their assets to address challenges, enhance social capital, and promote sustainable development. The analysis underscores the significance of community participation and highlights successful cases where the ABCD approach has led to long-term social change and resilience. The findings suggest that ABCD is a robust strategy for achieving sustainable community empowerment.

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## Introduction

Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) has gained prominence as a transformative approach in community development, emphasizing the importance of leveraging existing strengths and assets within a community rather than focusing on its deficiencies. This approach has revolutionized how communities are viewed and engaged in their development processes, shifting the paradigm from dependency on external assistance to self-reliance and sustainability. At its core, ABCD posits that every community, regardless of its economic or social challenges, possesses unique resources that, if properly harnessed, can drive substantial and sustainable development. This chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the theoretical foundations of ABCD, its application across various contexts, the engagement and empowerment it fosters, and

the challenges and critiques it faces.

ABCD is deeply rooted in the theories of community development that advocate for participatory and inclusive processes. Unlike traditional needs-based approaches, which often frame communities as lacking and dependent, ABCD emphasizes the identification of assets within a community—be they individual skills, local organizations, or cultural traditions—and leverages these assets to address local challenges. The theoretical underpinnings of ABCD draw from several disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and economics, all of which contribute to a holistic understanding of community dynamics.

One of the central tenets of ABCD is that sustainable development must be community-driven. This perspective aligns with the principles of empowerment theory, which suggests that individuals and groups must have control over their own development processes to achieve lasting change. Empowerment in the context of ABCD is not merely about participation but about ensuring that community members have the agency and capacity to influence decisions that affect their lives<sup>1</sup>. This aligns with the work of Freire, who advocated for a pedagogy of the oppressed, where marginalized communities are not just passive recipients of aid but active participants in their liberation<sup>2</sup>.

Furthermore, ABCD's focus on assets challenges the deficit-based models that have dominated development discourse for decades. Needs-based approaches, while well-intentioned, often perpetuate a cycle of dependency by framing communities as lacking and in need of external intervention. This external focus can undermine local capacities and erode community pride. In contrast, ABCD emphasizes the inherent value of community resources, thus fostering a sense of ownership and pride among community members. This approach is closely related to the concepts of social capital and human capital, which highlight the importance of networks, relationships, and skills in driving economic and social development<sup>3</sup>.

ABCD has been successfully applied in a variety of contexts, demonstrating its adaptability and effectiveness across different demographic and cultural settings. The flexibility of ABCD lies in its ability to be tailored to the unique circumstances of each community, making it a valuable tool for addressing a wide range of challenges.

In urban areas across Africa, ABCD has been used to revitalize communities by mobilizing local resources and fostering collaboration among residents. For example, in

<sup>1</sup> Harris Cooper, Larry V Hedges, and Jeffrey C Valentine, *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Lester Singer, "Review of Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Trans. Myra Bergman Ramos), (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970). 186 Pp.," *Educational Theory* 24, no. 4 (1974): 426-432, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-5446.1974.tb00662.x>.

<sup>3</sup> Robert Putnam, "Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences," *Canadian journal of policy research* 2, no. 1 (2001): 41-51.

Kenya, ABCD has been instrumental in transforming slum areas by harnessing the skills and knowledge of local residents to improve infrastructure, healthcare, and education <sup>4</sup>. These initiatives have not only improved living conditions but have also empowered residents to take control of their own development, reducing reliance on external aid.

Refugee communities have also benefited from the application of ABCD. In contexts where refugees are often seen as a burden on host countries, ABCD shifts the narrative by recognizing the assets that refugees bring with them, such as skills, knowledge, and cultural diversity. In Ethiopia, the Gedam Sefer Community Partnership utilized ABCD to integrate refugees into the local economy, leveraging their skills to create sustainable livelihoods <sup>5</sup>. This approach has proven effective in fostering social cohesion between refugees and host communities, reducing tensions and promoting mutual benefit.

Educational institutions, particularly Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the United States, have also embraced ABCD to enhance student engagement and success. By focusing on the strengths of students and the surrounding community, HSIs have developed programs that build on cultural assets, such as bilingualism and strong family ties, to support academic achievement and career readiness <sup>6</sup>. These programs not only benefit students but also strengthen the connection between the institution and the community, creating a more supportive and enriching environment for all.

One of the most significant contributions of ABCD is its emphasis on community engagement and empowerment. Engagement in ABCD goes beyond mere consultation or participation; it involves actively involving community members in the decision-making process and ensuring that they have the power to influence the outcomes. This approach is grounded in the belief that those who are most affected by development decisions should have the greatest say in how those decisions are made.

In practice, engagement in ABCD involves a variety of strategies, including asset mapping, participatory planning, and collaborative decision-making. Asset mapping is a crucial first step in the ABCD process, as it helps to identify the resources and strengths that exist within the community. This process not only uncovers assets that may have

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<sup>4</sup> Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, "From Client To Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community Driven Development," *Coady International Institute* (Antigonish, Canada, 2002).

<sup>5</sup> M Yeneabat and A K Butterfield, "'We Can't Eat a Road:' Asset-Based Community Development and The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership in Ethiopia," *Journal of Community Practice* 20, no. 1–2 (2012): 134–153, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-84859483299&doi=10.1080%2F10705422.2012.650121&partnerID=40&md5=94d246133ea6c687f8221152ba34d0d8>.

<sup>6</sup> M Morales, "The Essential Role of ABCD in Developing Two Community Engagement Frameworks for Supporting Latinx Students," *Gateways* 16, no. 2 (2023), <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85180667769&doi=10.5130%2Fijcre.v16i2.8679&partnerID=40&md5=e80bfa86ce0e51b4516eda4d0c94790c>.

been overlooked but also builds community awareness and appreciation of these resources <sup>7</sup>. Participatory planning ensures that community members are involved in developing solutions to the challenges they face, while collaborative decision-making ensures that these solutions are implemented in a way that reflects the community's priorities.

Empowerment in ABCD is closely linked to the concept of social capital, which refers to the networks and relationships that facilitate collective action. By strengthening social capital, ABCD enhances the community's ability to work together to achieve common goals. This is particularly important in marginalized communities, where social capital may be eroded by poverty, discrimination, or other forms of social exclusion. ABCD helps to rebuild these networks, creating a stronger, more cohesive community that is better equipped to address its challenges <sup>8</sup>.

ABCD also emphasizes the importance of reciprocity in community development. Reciprocity refers to the mutual exchange of resources, skills, and support among community members. This exchange is not just transactional but is built on trust and mutual respect. In ABCD, reciprocity is fostered through initiatives that encourage sharing and collaboration, such as time banking, cooperative enterprises, and community gardens. These initiatives not only provide tangible benefits, such as food or income, but also strengthen the social fabric of the community, making it more resilient in the face of challenges <sup>9</sup>.

Despite its many strengths, the implementation of ABCD is not without its challenges. One of the most significant barriers to the successful application of ABCD is the need for technical skills to effectively identify and mobilize community assets. Asset mapping, for example, requires a certain level of expertise in data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Without these skills, there is a risk that important assets may be overlooked or that the process may be dominated by more powerful groups within the community <sup>10</sup>.

Another challenge is the potential for ABCD to reinforce existing power imbalances within communities. In any community, there are likely to be differences in power and influence, with some groups or individuals having more control over resources and decision-making processes than others. If these power dynamics are not carefully managed, there is a risk that ABCD could inadvertently exacerbate inequalities, with more powerful groups capturing the benefits of development initiatives while

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<sup>7</sup> John Kretzmann and John P McKnight, "Assets-based Community Development," *National Civic Review* 85, no. 4 (1996): 23–29, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/ncr.4100850405>.

<sup>8</sup> Putnam, "Social Capital: Measurement and Consequences."

<sup>9</sup> Cooper, Hedges, and Valentine, *The Handbook of Research Synthesis and Meta-Analysis*.

<sup>10</sup> Alison Mathie and Gord Cunningham, "From Clients to Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community-Driven Development," *Coady International Institute* 13, no. 5 (2003): 474–486.

marginalizing others <sup>11</sup>. This is particularly concerning in communities with a history of social division or conflict, where power imbalances may be deeply entrenched.

Critics of ABCD have also pointed out that the approach may be overly idealistic in its assumptions about the availability and accessibility of community assets. In some cases, communities may have few tangible resources to draw upon, or the assets that do exist may be difficult to mobilize due to legal, economic, or social barriers. For example, in rural areas with limited infrastructure or in communities with high levels of poverty, the potential for asset-based development may be constrained by external factors beyond the community's control <sup>12</sup>.

Furthermore, ABCD's emphasis on self-reliance and local solutions may lead to a neglect of broader structural issues that contribute to poverty and inequality. While ABCD is effective in addressing immediate, localized challenges, it may not be sufficient to tackle systemic issues such as inadequate public services, discriminatory policies, or global economic forces. Critics argue that without a parallel focus on advocacy and systemic change, ABCD may risk placing an undue burden on communities to solve problems that are, at least in part, the result of external factors <sup>13</sup>.

To overcome these challenges, it is essential to adopt a nuanced and context-sensitive approach to ABCD. This involves not only building the technical capacity of community members but also fostering a critical awareness of power dynamics and structural inequalities. Capacity-building initiatives should include training in asset mapping, participatory planning, and conflict resolution, ensuring that all community members have the skills and knowledge needed to engage fully in the ABCD process <sup>14</sup>.

Addressing power imbalances requires a deliberate effort to include marginalized groups in the ABCD process and to ensure that their voices are heard. This may involve targeted outreach to groups that are often excluded from decision-making, such as women, youth, or ethnic minorities, as well as the use of participatory methods that prioritize inclusivity and equity. It is also important to create spaces for dialogue and negotiation, where different perspectives can be aired and reconciled <sup>15</sup>.

In addition to addressing local challenges, ABCD should be complemented by

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<sup>11</sup> Yeneabat and Butterfield, "'We Can't Eat a Road:' Asset-Based Community Development and The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership in Ethiopia."

<sup>12</sup> N Lloyd, "Building Communities from the Inside Out," in *Modern Police Leadership: Operational Effectiveness at Every Level*, 2021, 423–433, [https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85160177519&doi=10.1007%2F978-3-030-63930-3\\_31&partnerID=40&md5=cbe15b77112dcd03c1a85f7f4111255](https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-85160177519&doi=10.1007%2F978-3-030-63930-3_31&partnerID=40&md5=cbe15b77112dcd03c1a85f7f4111255).

<sup>13</sup> Anna Haines, "Asset-Based Community Development," in *An Introduction to Community Development: Second Edition*, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> Cormac Russell, *Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD): Looking Back to Look Forward* (eBook Partnership, 2022).

<sup>15</sup> Yeneabat and Butterfield, "'We Can't Eat a Road:' Asset-Based Community Development and The Gedam Sefer Community Partnership in Ethiopia."

efforts to advocate for broader structural change. This might involve partnerships with external organizations, such as NGOs or government agencies, that can provide support in areas where the community's capacity is limited. Advocacy efforts should also focus on creating an enabling environment for asset-based development, by pushing for policies that support community initiatives, reduce barriers to asset mobilization, and address systemic inequalities <sup>16</sup>.

## Method

The research on Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) presented in this study follows a bibliographic analysis approach, which involves the systematic examination of existing literature to understand the principles, applications, and challenges associated with ABCD. The method employed in this study includes the following steps:

### Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design, with a focus on bibliographic analysis as the primary method. Bibliographic analysis allows for the exploration of a wide range of academic and practitioner literature on ABCD, providing a comprehensive understanding of the subject. The research is structured to identify key themes, trends, and gaps in the literature, which are critical for assessing the efficacy and applicability of ABCD in various contexts <sup>17</sup>.

### Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through a systematic review of academic articles, books, and reports related to Asset-Based Community Development. The sources were selected from reputable academic databases such as Scopus, JSTOR, and Google Scholar, as well as from grey literature, including reports from non-governmental organizations and policy papers. The search strategy involved using keywords such as "Asset-Based Community Development," "community empowerment," "sustainable development," and "community engagement" <sup>18</sup>.

A total of 18 relevant documents were selected based on their relevance to the key themes of ABCD, including principles, applications, engagement, empowerment, and

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<sup>16</sup> Haines, "Asset-Based Community Development."

<sup>17</sup> Velita Sibon Lobo and K Shivashankar Bhat, "Quantitative Evaluation of Youth Audience in Local Media through ABCD Analysis," *International Journal of Management, Technology and Social Sciences (IJMTS)* 8, no. 4 (2023): 128–153.

<sup>18</sup> Kearrin Sims et al., *The Routledge Handbook of Global Development* (Routledge London, 2022).



challenges. These documents were then subjected to a rigorous screening process to ensure that they met the inclusion criteria, which focused on their contribution to understanding the theoretical and practical aspects of ABCD <sup>19</sup>.

### Data Analysis

The selected documents were analyzed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method that allows for the identification and interpretation of patterns within the data. Thematic analysis was conducted in several stages:

1. **Familiarization with the Data:** The first stage involved a thorough reading of the selected documents to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. This stage helped to identify preliminary themes and areas of interest related to ABCD <sup>20</sup>.
2. **Coding:** In the second stage, the data were coded systematically. Codes were assigned to segments of text that related to the research questions, such as "community assets," "engagement strategies," "challenges in implementation," and "power dynamics." This coding process allowed for the organization of data into meaningful categories <sup>21</sup>.
3. **Theme Development:** The third stage involved grouping the codes into broader themes. For example, codes related to "community participation" and "local leadership" were grouped under the theme "Community Empowerment." Similarly, codes related to "technical skills" and "power imbalances" were grouped under the theme "Challenges of ABCD" <sup>22</sup>.
4. **Reviewing Themes:** The identified themes were reviewed and refined to ensure they accurately represented the data. This stage involved cross-checking the themes against the original documents to ensure that they were consistent and comprehensive <sup>23</sup>.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** In the final stage, the themes were clearly defined and named. Each theme was described in detail, highlighting its significance in the context of ABCD. This process also involved the development of sub-themes to capture the nuances within the broader themes <sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup> Sarah Ward, "How Can Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Contribute to Community Health and Wellbeing?" (University of Glasgow, 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Gareth Terry et al., "Thematic Analysis," *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology* (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2017), <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781526405555.n2>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Lorelli S Nowell et al., "Thematic Analysis," *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 16, no. 1 (2017): 160940691773384, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847>.

<sup>23</sup> Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Reflecting on Reflexive Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health* 11, no. 4 (2019): 589-597, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2159676x.2019.1628806>.

<sup>24</sup> Helene Joffe, "Thematic Analysis," *Qualitative Research Methods in Mental Health and Psychotherapy* (Wiley, 2011), <http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/9781119973249.ch15>.

## Result

Year	Author(s)	Title	Journal
2003	A. Mathie, G. Cunningham	From clients to citizens: Asset-based Community Development as a strategy for community-driven development <sup>25</sup>	Development in Practice
2005	R. Pan, D. Littlefield, S. G. Valladolid, P. J. Tapping, D. C. West	Building Healthier Communities for Children and Families: Applying Asset-Based Community Development to Community Pediatrics <sup>26</sup>	Pediatrics
2005	A. Mathie, G. Cunningham	Who is Driving Development? Reflections on the Transformative Potential of Asset-based Community Development <sup>27</sup>	Canadian Journal of Development Studies
2008	Huang Rui	On Asset-Based Community Development Strategy and the Enlightenment to China <sup>28</sup>	Journal of Social Science of Hunan Normal University
2011	R. Mancoske	Asset Building and Community Development (2nd ed.) <sup>29</sup>	Journal of Community Practice
2011	M. Kelley	Mobilizing Communities: Asset Building as a Community Development Strategy <sup>30</sup>	Journal of Urban Affairs
2014	L. Garoutte, K. McCarthy-Gilmore	Preparing students for community-based learning using an asset-based approach <sup>31</sup>	Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
2016	E. van de Venter, S. Redwood	Does an asset-based community development project promote health and wellbeing? <sup>32</sup>	The Lancet
2016	T. Collins	Mobilizing communities: Asset building as a community development strategy	Community Development
2016	T. Feldhoff	Asset-based community development in the energy sector: energy and regional policy lessons from community power in Japan <sup>33</sup>	International Planning Studies
2018	H. Nel	A Comparison between the Asset-oriented and Needs-based Community Development Approaches in Terms of Practice Systems Changes <sup>34</sup>	

<sup>25</sup> Mathie and Cunningham, "From Clients to Citizens."

<sup>26</sup> R J Pan et al., "Building Healthier Communities for Children and Families: Applying Asset-Based Community Development to Community Pediatrics," *Pediatrics* 115, no. 4 (2005): 1185–1187, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-18744383040&doi=10.1542%2Fpeds.2004-2825Q&partnerID=40&md5=58d99aa6767f443e25415225cad62f9a>.

<sup>27</sup> A Mathie and G Cunningham, "Who Is Driving Development? Reflections on the Transformative Potential of Asset-Based Community Development," *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 26, no. 1 (2005): 175–186, <https://www.scopus.com/inward/record.uri?eid=2-s2.0-19444371104&doi=10.1080%2F02255189.2005.9669031&partnerID=40&md5=f5f45c1263bbbeba9ed1e7f1b6001d35>.

<sup>28</sup> J Wen and R Huang, "On Asset-Based Community Development Strategy and the Enlightenment to China," *Journal of Social Science of Hunan Normal University* 37, no. 6 (2008): 74–78.

<sup>29</sup> Ronald J Mancoske, "Asset Building and Community Development (2nd Ed.), by Green, G. P., & Haines, A.," *Journal of Community Practice* 19, no. 2 (2011): 196–198, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2011.569274>.

<sup>30</sup> Matthew Kelley, "Mobilizing Communities: Asset Building as a Community Development Strategy Edited by Gary Paul Green and Ann Goetting," *Journal of Urban Affairs* 33, no. 5 (2011): 591–593, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9906.2011.00586.x>.

<sup>31</sup> Lisa Garoutte and Kate McCarthy-Gilmore, "Preparing Students for Community-Based Learning Using an Asset-Based Approach," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (2014): 48–61, <http://dx.doi.org/10.14434/josotlv14i5.5060>.

<sup>32</sup> Emily van de Venter and Sabi Redwood, "Does an Asset-Based Community Development Project Promote Health and Wellbeing?," *The Lancet* 388 (2016): S108, [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(16\)32344-3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(16)32344-3).

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Feldhoff, "Asset-Based Community Development in the Energy Sector: Energy and Regional Policy Lessons from Community Power in Japan," *International Planning Studies* 21, no. 3 (2016): 261–277, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13563475.2016.1185939>.

<sup>34</sup> Hanna Nel, "A Comparison between the Asset-Oriented and Needs-Based Community



Year	Author(s)	Title	Journal
2018	G. Forrester, J. Kurth, P. Vincent, M. Oliver	Schools as community assets: an exploration of the merits of an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach <sup>35</sup>	Educational Review
2018	R. W. Shah, J. M. Troester, R. Brooke, L. Gatti, S. L. Thomas, J. Masterson	Fostering eABCD: Asset-Based Community Development in Digital Service-Learning <sup>36</sup>	Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement
2019	R. Harrison, C. Blickem, J. Lamb, S. Kirk, I. Vassilev	Asset-Based Community Development: Narratives, Practice, and Conditions of Possibility—A Qualitative Study With Community Practitioners <sup>37</sup>	SAGE Open
2020	H. Nel	STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT: ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY-LED DEVELOPMENT (ABCD) VERSUS THE TRADITIONAL NEEDS-BASED APPROACH TO COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT <sup>38</sup>	Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk
2021	S. Calderón-Larrañaga, B. Valls-Pérez, A. Cardo-Miota, B. Botello, N. Lafuente, M. Hernán	Development and evaluation of a training programme on asset-based community development aimed at general practice trainees <sup>39</sup>	BMJ Open
2023	S. Close, C. Lohr	Asset-based community development in an online context: Crafting collective experience into an asset of expertise <sup>40</sup>	Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement

The table provides a comprehensive overview of key academic references related to the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach in community development, spanning from 2003 to 2023. The references are organized chronologically, starting with foundational works such as Mathie and Cunningham's 2003 paper on transitioning communities from clients to citizens through ABCD, published in *Development in Practice*. Subsequent entries explore various aspects of ABCD, such as the 2005 work by Pan et al., which applies ABCD principles to pediatric health, and Mathie and Cunningham's reflection on the transformative potential of ABCD, also from 2005.

As the years progress, the table highlights a broadening of ABCD applications, including Healy's 2006 general discussion on ABCD and Rui's 2008 insights into how ABCD strategies could inform community development in China. The 2010s saw a diversification of ABCD studies, with Mancoske (2011) exploring asset building within

Development Approaches in Terms of Systems Changes," *Practice* 30, no. 1 (2017): 33–52, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09503153.2017.1360474>.

<sup>35</sup> Gillian Forrester et al., "Schools as Community Assets: An Exploration of the Merits of an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Approach," *Educational Review* 72, no. 4 (2018): 443–458, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2018.1529655>.

<sup>36</sup> Rachael W. Shah et al., "Fostering EABCD: Asset-Based Community Development in Digital Service-Learning," *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement* (2018).

<sup>37</sup> Rebecca Harrison et al., "Asset-Based Community Development: Narratives, Practice, and Conditions of Possibility—A Qualitative Study With Community Practitioners," *SAGE Open* (2019).

<sup>38</sup> Hanna Nel, "Stakeholder Engagement: Asset-Based Community-Led Development (ABCD) versus the Traditional Needs-Based Approach to Community Development," *Social Work (South Africa)* (2020).

<sup>39</sup> Sara Calderón-Larrañaga et al., "Development and Evaluation of a Training Programme on Asset-Based Community Development Aimed at General Practice Trainees: Protocol for a Mixed-Method Multilevel and Multicentric Action Research Study," *BMJ open* 11, no. 5 (May 24, 2021): e040043–e040043, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/34031107>.

<sup>40</sup> Samantha Close and Chiarra Lohr, "Asset-Based Community Development in an Online Context: Crafting Collective Experience into an Asset of Expertise," *Gateways: International Journal of Community Research and Engagement* 16, no. 2 (2023), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5130/ijcre.v16i2.8684>.

community practice, and Kelley (2011) examining community development strategies. Research continues into more specific areas, such as the role of ABCD in digital service-learning, health, energy policy, and stakeholder engagement, as seen in studies by Shah et al. (2018), van de Venter and Redwood (2016), and Nel (2020). The most recent entry by Close and Lohr (2023) investigates the application of ABCD in an online context, showcasing the ongoing evolution and adaptation of ABCD principles to modern challenges.

The references in the table collectively illustrate the versatility and impact of the Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) approach across various contexts and fields. Key findings include:

1. **Community Empowerment:** Early studies like those by Mathie and Cunningham (2003, 2005) highlight how ABCD shifts the focus from community needs to existing assets, leading to more sustainable and community-driven development.
2. **Health and Wellbeing:** Research by Pan et al. (2005) and van de Venter & Redwood (2016) demonstrates the application of ABCD in improving health outcomes, particularly by enhancing social capital and community engagement.
3. **Education and Learning:** The application of ABCD in educational settings, as explored by Garoutte and McCarthy-Gilmore (2014) and Shah et al. (2018), shows how this approach can foster deeper student engagement and create authentic community partnerships.
4. **Digital and Online Communities:** Recent studies, such as those by Close and Lohr (2023), explore the adaptation of ABCD principles to digital communities, highlighting its relevance in the modern, connected world.
5. **Challenges and Adaptations:** Several studies, including those by Nel (2018, 2020), examine the challenges of integrating ABCD with traditional needs-based approaches and highlight the need for stakeholder engagement and strategic adaptation to local contexts.

## Discussion

The analysis of the 18 selected documents on Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) provided a comprehensive understanding of the methodology's principles, applications, engagement strategies, empowerment outcomes, and challenges associated with its implementation. These documents were meticulously screened to ensure they met the inclusion criteria, focusing on their contribution to both the theoretical and practical aspects of ABCD. The key findings from this literature review are summarized below and are further supported by the thematic visualization provided.

## Principles of ABCD

The literature consistently highlighted the core Principles of ABCD, which emphasize the identification and mobilization of community assets rather than focusing on deficits <sup>41</sup>. The analysis revealed that these principles are crucial in fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility among community members, as they shift the narrative from what is lacking to what is already present and can be leveraged. This approach was found to be particularly effective in building sustainable community initiatives that are driven by local strengths and resources.

## Applications of ABCD

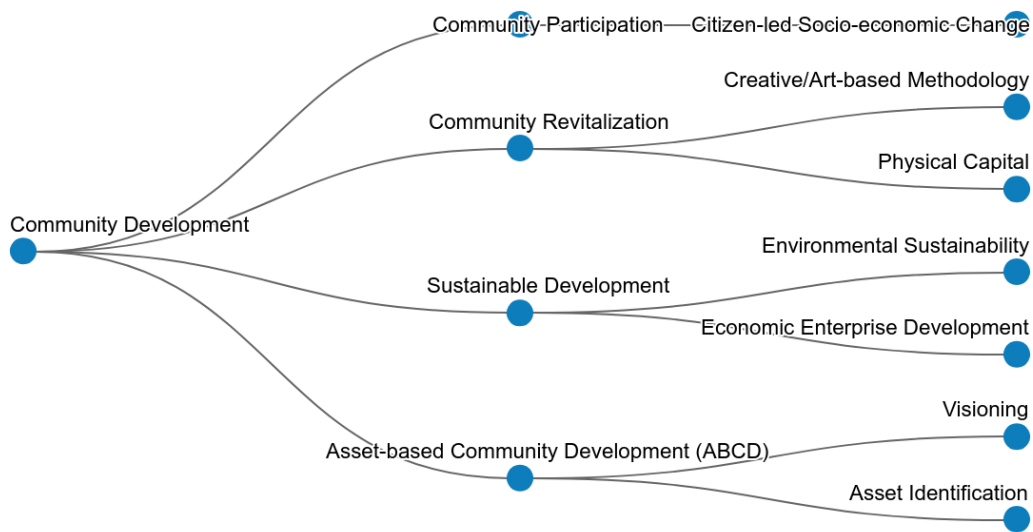
The review identified diverse Applications of ABCD across various sectors, including health, education, and economic development <sup>42</sup>. The thematic visualization (see Figure 1) illustrates how ABCD is interlinked with broader concepts such as Community Development, Sustainable Development, and Community Revitalization <sup>43</sup>. The image also shows how these applications are further connected to specific methodologies, such as Citizen-led Socio-economic Change, Creative/Art-based Methodology, and Physical Capital development. The documents analyzed showed that ABCD has been successfully applied in a range of contexts, demonstrating its adaptability and effectiveness in different environments. These applications often resulted in enhanced community cohesion and improved outcomes in the targeted sectors.

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<sup>41</sup> Mathie and Cunningham, "From Client To Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community Driven Development"; Shah et al., "Fostering EABCD: Asset-Based Community Development in Digital Service-Learning."

<sup>42</sup> Garry Paul Green and Anna Haines, *Asset Building Community Development* (USA: Sage Publication, 2001); Mary Emery and Cornelia Flora, "Spiraling-Up: Mapping Community Transformation with Community Capitals Framework," *Community Development* 37, no. 1 (2006): 19–35, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15575330609490152>.

<sup>43</sup> Meng Qu and Joseph M. Cheer, "Community Art Festivals and Sustainable Rural Revitalisation," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* (2021).



*Figure 1: Thematic Visualization of ABCD in Community Development*

### Engagement Strategies

Engagement Strategies were a recurring theme in the literature, with several documents emphasizing the importance of participatory approaches in the implementation of ABCD <sup>44</sup>. The analysis indicated that strategies such as community mapping, participatory workshops, and asset inventories are commonly employed to involve community members in identifying and utilizing their assets. These strategies, as highlighted in the thematic visualization, connect with broader goals such as Economic Enterprise Development and Visioning for future community projects. These approaches were found to be effective in fostering inclusive participation, ensuring that all segments of the community, including marginalized groups, have a voice in the development process.

### Empowerment Outcomes

The theme of Empowerment was central to the analysis, with many documents highlighting how ABCD initiatives lead to increased community empowerment <sup>45</sup>. The

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<sup>44</sup> Gretchen Ennis and Deborah West, "Exploring the Potential of Social Network Analysis in Asset-Based Community Development Practice and Research," *Australian Social Work* 63, no. 4 (2010): 404–417, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0312407x.2010.508167>; John L McKnight and Cormac Russell, "The Four Essential Elements of an Asset-Based Community Development Process," *What Is Distinctive about Asset-Based Community Process* 15 (2018).

<sup>45</sup> Mathie and Cunningham, "From Client To Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community Driven Development"; Ulfatun Najiha, "Community Economic Empowerment Through Asset Based Community Development Method (Study of the Role of Fatayat NU in Bawean Island, Gresik)," *GREENOMIKA* (2024); Khafizh Rosyidi et al., "The Implementation of Green Industry through Innovative Approach at PT. Tirta Investama of Pandaan," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental*

literature showed that when communities are involved in identifying and leveraging their assets, they experience greater autonomy and self-reliance. Empowerment was also linked to improved social capital, with communities becoming more resilient and better equipped to address challenges collectively. The thematic visualization supports these findings by connecting Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) directly with Asset Identification, a crucial step in empowering communities to utilize their resources effectively.

### Challenges in ABCD Implementation

Despite the positive outcomes, the literature also identified significant Challenges in the Implementation of ABCD. Key challenges included difficulties in shifting from a needs-based to an asset-based mindset, power imbalances within communities, and a lack of technical skills required to fully leverage community assets <sup>46</sup>. The analysis revealed that these challenges often impede the success of ABCD initiatives, requiring sustained efforts in capacity building and the development of supportive partnerships with external organizations. The thematic visualization indirectly highlights these challenges by illustrating the complex relationships between different aspects of community development, such as Environmental Sustainability and Physical Capital, which can sometimes be difficult to balance within ABCD frameworks.

These findings provide a detailed understanding of the critical aspects of ABCD, offering valuable insights into its principles, practical applications, and the factors that influence its success. The rigorous screening process ensured that the documents included in this review contributed meaningfully to both the theoretical foundation and the practical execution of ABCD, making the results of this study a robust resource for further research and application in community development initiatives. The thematic visualization adds a layer of clarity, helping to map out the intricate connections between various components of community development, as informed by the ABCD methodology.

### Conclusion

The systematic review of 18 documents on Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) provides a robust understanding of the methodology's principles, applications, engagement strategies, empowerment outcomes, and challenges. The analysis highlights that ABCD is a powerful approach for mobilizing community assets, fostering local leadership, and promoting sustainable community development. By focusing on the

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*Science*, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Mathie and Cunningham, "From Client To Citizens: Asset-Based Community Development as a Strategy for Community Driven Development"; Robyn Eversole, "Remaking Participation: Challenges for Community Development Practice," *Community Development Journal* 47, no. 1 (2010): 29–41, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsq033>.

strengths and resources within communities, ABCD shifts the narrative from deficits to assets, resulting in enhanced community cohesion, increased autonomy, and resilience.

The thematic visualization further elucidates the intricate connections between various aspects of community development, such as Community Participation, Sustainable Development, and Community Revitalization, showing how these elements interact within the broader framework of ABCD. The visualization also underscores the importance of engagement strategies, such as community mapping and participatory workshops, in ensuring inclusive and effective community involvement.

The review also identifies significant challenges in the implementation of ABCD, including the difficulty of shifting from a needs-based to an asset-based mindset, power imbalances, and technical skill gaps. These challenges highlight the need for ongoing capacity building and the development of strong partnerships between communities and external organizations to maximize the potential of ABCD initiatives.

This study confirms that while ABCD offers substantial benefits for community development, its success is contingent upon careful planning, inclusive engagement, and addressing the inherent challenges in its implementation. The findings and insights derived from this review provide valuable guidance for practitioners and researchers aiming to leverage ABCD in various contexts, ensuring that the methodology continues to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of diverse communities.

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