

Rural Youth Participation in Development Activities in Youth Centers in Gezira State, Sudan

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Abstract: *Youth are often referred to young people in the age category between 15 – 45 years and were seen as the future leaders. However, the youth strongly believe that we have a crucial role to play in Sudan in terms of peacebuilding and sustainable development now. Previous approaches have considered Sudanese youths as passive rather than participants in shaping society. The Sudanese youth have worked hard often through selfless sacrifice to end unjust social orders and restructure social and political fundamentals. The objective of this study to explore the opinion on which youth can contribute to community development in Wadmedani locality. Also hopes to attract the attention of society at large, because everyone and every institution have a significant role to play in encouraging and harnessing youth participation in community development. The study used primary data through a questionnaire with a random sample from youth in Wadmedani centers and used descriptive statistics for analysis. The study showed that most youths have a role towards community participation, and they have very good attitudes toward the community development dimension. The study concludes that Youth participation in youth centers provides them with the opportunity to discuss development issues related to their villages, and they need more attention from the ministry of youth to fund these centers to meet the needs of young people.*

Keywords: Rural Youth, participation, development, Gezira State.

INTRODUCTION

Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006) define youth participation as a process involving young people in the institutions and decisions that affect their lives, therefore making them active rather than passive recipients of services in their communities. As Brennan, Barnett and McGrath (2009) explain, due to a host of social and economic obstacles within communities, it is essential that strategies for increasing youth participation in community development be identified and encouraged. Jennings et al (2006) concur that opportunities to engage youth in meaningful activities through which they make a significant contribution to their communities as essential for critical youth empowerment. This is because young people need to familiarize themselves with the needs of their communities in order to be able to participate in initiatives aimed at meeting those needs.

Furthermore, Checkoway and Gutierrez (2006) emphasize that youth participation can strengthen social development, build organizational capacity, and hence create positive changes for both youth and their communities. Jennings et al (2006) add that youth participation makes it possible for youth to be involved in social transformative actions. Through participation, young people are therefore empowered to play a significant role in their own development as well as the development of their communities (United Nations, 2010). With their vigor and vibrancy, young people are a good resource base. Pittman (2000) concurs that youth participation holds the promise of instilling a sense of civic and social responsibility in young people. Young people therefore get the experience of genuine participation and knowledge of responsibilities of real citizenship which will help them become effective and efficient role players in their communities (Mullahey, et al 1999).

Youth participation therefore affords young people an opportunity to construct the world they would want to live in while at the same time developing themselves (Phaswana, 2009). Youth participation in community development activities can be beneficial for both the community and youth development. Young people can bring innovation, creativity and energy which can be useful in community development. Community development involves the mobilization of members in efforts aimed at socio-economic development (O'Brien, 2009). Youth participation can thus be seen as an ideal strategy for community and youth development. Youth participation facilitates psychological empowerment, leadership development, and socio-political development for youth (Christens and Dolan, 2010). Participation in community development is therefore considered as one of the key strategies that increase young people's connections to positive, supportive relationships and challenging, meaningful experiences which they need to grow into socially responsible and productive individuals (Judd, 2006). Jennings et al (2006) add that through participation, youth experience opportunities for engagement with diverse sectors within their communities.

Cornwall (2010) explains that a significant component of community development is the focus on community empowerment which targets personal empowerment and positive action that addresses poverty, health and other challenges. Community developers harness local economic, human, and physical resources to secure daily requirements and respond to changing needs and conditions in the community (Matarrita- Cascante and Brennan, 2012).

According to the critical youth empowerment theory, participation enhances the capacity of individuals to contribute to and work in collaboration with others to effect social change (Jennings et al, 2006). Community development initiatives therefore have an advantage that they help enhance human capabilities, and thus strengthen community members' chances to solve their social and

economic problems. Christens and Dolan (2010) add that it should therefore come as no surprise that human development and community development processes are most efficient when intertwined.

The idea of youth centers in Sudan was established in the early fifties under the name of boys clubs. It was interested in theater, music, sports, youth competitions and folklore. It also participated in independence the Sudan with graduates clubs and student unions.

The idea developed for the establishment of youth centers and social welfare after the independence of Sudan and was affiliated to the Ministry of Culture and Information and focused activities in youth and sports activities. After the formation of the first Ministry of Youth and Sports in the early seventies developed the idea to establish youth training centers in addition to the retention of youth centers and social welfare.

The Training Centers were established by the Ministry of youth and sport. It was the largest department in the ministry and included the excellence of youth leaders in the field of annual activity, engineering and innovators in all fields. The Ministry has also established privileged relations with United Nations organizations (ILO and UNICEF). These organizations have supported centers with training, training of staff at home and abroad and budgets for the activities of volunteers. The centers have succeeded in benefiting from the organizations' efforts to work groups of both sexes, and the experience has been very successful in the field of women (Ahmed, 2011).

This study seeks to explore the opinion in which youth can contribute to community development in Wadmedani locality. Also hopes to attract the attention of society at large, because everyone and every institution have a significant role to play in encouraging and harnessing youth participation in community development.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in Wad Medani locality in Gezira state is located in central Sudan, The total number of youth centers in Wadmedani is 28 centers registered in youth ministry. A sample of 100 youths was randomly selected by quota technique. A structured questionnaire was administered to 100 randomly selected respondents involved in these centers. However, data analyses were based on 80 useable questionnaires collected. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) and Likert scale test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table (1) Sex of the respondents:

Sex	Frequency	Percent %
Male	76	95
Female	4	5
total	80	100

Source: field survey 2020

Table (1) shows that the vast majority of the respondents were male (95%) and just 5% of them were females. because male youths were more present at these centers in the evening, this implying that gender has some effect on attitude towards participation. Male respondents who are physically stronger than the females seem to have less favorable attitude participation in center activities.

Table (2) Age group of the respondents:

Age group	Percent %	Frequency %
15 _ 20	20	25
20 _ 25	32	40
25 _ 30	13	16 .25
30 _ 35	4	5
35 and above	11	13.75
Total	80	100

Source: field survey 2020

As in table (2), it is clear that 40% of the respondents are between 20 - 25 years of age, 25% are 15-20 years old, 16.25% are between 25-30 years old, 13.75% are 35 years old and over. The age of the respondents affects their attitude towards participating in community development projects. This finding supports Ekong (2003) reported that age is more often used as a tenable criterion for some social participation than education. Goedkoop et al. (2004) stated that young people have a natural disposition for innovation and for learning new tools and those assets can help to create viable options to remain in the countryside.

Table (3) educational level of the respondents

Educational level	Frequencies	Percent %
illiterate	3	3.75
basic	10	12.5
Secondary	25	31.25
University	42	52.5
Total	80	100

Source: field survey 2020

The results in the above table it is clear that 52.5% of the respondents have a university education level, 31.25% have a secondary education level and 6.25% have a level of primary and basic education with a low percentage who has not received any education. Ovwigho and Ifie (2004) reiterated the importance of education when they noted youth's involvement in cooperative endeavors. Education is a major determinant of effective participation in community development projects. The educated youth would most likely appreciate community development better than the less educated. If the youth appreciates community development his attitude towards participating in community development projects is likely to be favorable.

Table (4) youth participation:

Youths participation	Frequencies	Percent %
Participate	60	75
Not participate	20	25
Total	80	100

Source: field survey 2020

In the above table, it is clear that 75% of the respondents have a role in community participation and 25% of the respondents have no role in community participation. This indicates that most youths have a role in community participation. Youths make up a significant portion of the workforce in both rural and urban communities. They have assumed wider community development roles through the formation of youth associations (Ogolo, 1996). Youths have been involved in development activities in one way or the other. These activities are expected to lead to community development. Youth participation in real and concrete activities which include self-help endeavors, environmental sanitation, renovation work has been reported (Adesope et al., 2007). Since youths have been noted for their active involvement in community development, greater social propensity, faster reaction time, innovation proneness (Adesope, 2007), it becomes necessary to exploit their active features for progressive change in the community.

Table (5) community development dimension perception among youths:

community development dimension	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		mean
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
Economic dimensions	47	58.7	20	25.0	13	16.3	0	0	0	0	4.3
Administrative and organizational dimensions	42	52.5	22	27.5	12	15.0	2	2.5	2	2.5	4.3
Political dimensions	25	31.25	20	25.0	10	12.5	25	31.25	0	0	3.7
Social dimensions	40	50.0	26	32.5	14	17.5	0	0	0	0	4.4
Mean										4.2	

Source: field survey 2020

Table (5) shows that the youths have very good attitudes toward community development dimensions at 4.2 points on likert scale. Hancock, (1994) states that involvement is empowering for anyone, and that includes today's youth. Involvement is especially empowering for the disaffected or those who are traditionally excluded from the process. Youth can play a fundamental role in addressing important issues; their participation in the decision-making process of community organizations can reenergize communities.

Table (6) role of youth's center in community development:

Center role in community development	Frequency	Percent %
yes	65	81.25
No	15	18.75
total	80	100

Source: field survey 2020

Table (6) shows that 81.25% of the respondents agree with the role of the center in community developmental activities and only 18.75% agree with no role of the center in community development activities. This illustrates the importance of these centers in absorbing the youth and benefit from their aspiration to develop their community and develop the spirit of voluntary and community work. Marilyn (2001), cited youth are often unaware of opportunities to become involved in the decision-making process. Through church groups, 4-H, and scouts, youth have been made aware of and have embraced community service as a way to make positive changes in their communities, but they have not recognized the potential for social and political activism.

Conclusion:

Based on the result of the study, the following conclusions are drawn youth participation in youth centers provides them with the opportunity to discuss development issues related to their villages. The centers also serve as headquarters for the youth and a place where developmental activities are held, such as meetings, training sessions to solve their social problems. These centers also serve as an outlet for young people to play sports and many useful activities for their community. These centers need more funds and attention from youth ministry to accomplish the youth needs.

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