

ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL BARRIERS TO THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

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Abstract: This article analyzes how social barriers affect participation of youth in community development activities. These findings are based on the study at Hai district in Kilimanjaro in Tanzania in 2018. This paper analyzes the barriers using Hai district in Kilimanjaro Region-Tanzania as a case study. Sample size of 50 respondents was involved of whom 44 respondents were selected using simple random. A non - probability sampling, called purposive sampling, was used to select the other 6 respondents. A cross sectional design was employed where the study area was put in to four divisions namely MachameMagharibi, MachameMashariki, MachameWeruweru and Machamekusini. Data were collected using semi structure Questionnaire, interviewing and focused group discussion. Semi structure Questionnaire was administered to 2 community development officers, 2 social welfare officers and 2 officers from a non- government organization dealing with youth affairs. Focus group discussion and interviewing were used to collect data from the 44 respondents in the four divisions with each division comprised of 11 respondents. Data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and Content Analysis. The results indicated how social barriers affect the participation of youth in community development activities. The study concludes that effective and better participation of youths in community development activities is only possible when such barriers are addressed. The study recommends stakeholders in community development activities to take a leading role in ensuring that the social barriers to the youth participation are addressed through Education and Persuasion. **KEY WORDS;** Youth participation, community development activities, social barriers.

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1.0 Introduction

Globally, youth are resourceful in contributing to socio- economic development of a given nation. This becomes possible when the youth are empowered to be active citizens (Kumar, 2002). The World Bank (2010) reports that nearly 50 of the developing world populations are youth and children. There are 1.2 billion youth aged between 15 and 24 in the world of whom one billion live in developing countries. This big number is referred to as “youth bulge” (Felix, 2015). Therefore, participation of youth in issues of development, especially in developing countries, is of paramount importance for sustainable development of the countries. Among the potential benefits of youth participation are as follows; in the first place, youth appreciate having a voice in public affairs and feel connected to their community (Chawla, 2002). Secondly, by participating in community development activities, youth enhance their civic capacity (African commission, 2009). And another benefit of youth participation in development issues is that youth are able to learn peaceful means of impacting their communities and the world (ECOSOC, 2015). Specifically, this study was concerned with youth participation in what is known as community development activities. Community development activities include a wide range of activities established through active participation of community members in identifying, implementing as well as in monitoring and evaluating the activities. Community development activities involve the utilization of local resources on one hand and the use of external resources of the central government or non-government organizations on the other. Local resources include labor, water. Trees and such other resources that can be made available within the local area. External resources from the central or non- government organizations include technical or specialized labor and other forms of technical resources that the local area is not in position to provide. Community development activities, just as it is the case in other parts of Tanzania, are available in Hai district in Tanzania. The key component in community development activities is the active participation of community members in the activities where the resources from an outsider (Government or non-government organization) should be supplementary. It is in light of this meaning of community development activities that Oakley and Marsden define community participation as “the process by which individuals, families or communities assume responsibility for their own welfare and develop a capacity to contribute to their own and community development; it is an active process where beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development” (Oakley and Marsden, 1987). Though participation of youth in

community development activities is beneficial to the youth themselves yet they fail to do so due to the existence of some barriers. Oakley cited three types of barriers to the effective participation of community members in community development activities in particular and community issues in general. They are administrative barriers, structural barriers and social barriers (Oakley, 1991). The structural barriers are typified by a top down development approach where centralized organizational systems control decision making, resource allocation and information, and in this case development is not oriented towards people's participation. Administrative barriers are associated with bureaucratic procedures, operated by a set of guidelines, providing little room for people to make their own decisions or control their development process. The social barriers are varied, and include mentality of dependence, culture of silence, domination by the local elite, gender inequality and low levels of education and of exposure to non-local information (Joe, 2007). Closely examined, social barriers- unlike the other two types- are unique in the sense that they tend to be obstacles within the people themselves, obstacles within the mindset of the youth. Administrative and structural barriers tend to be associated with the organizations (central government and local governments). Due to this unique feature of social barriers, a study making an analysis of how these barriers affect the participation of community members was done. It is against this back ground that the researcher sought to analyze the extent to which social barriers hindered the participation of Youth in community development activities at Hai district in Kilimanjaro region.

1.2 Problem statement

The need for youth participation in community development activities is indisputable. This results from the personal benefits associated with their participation. Such benefits underlie the rationale of supporting and including the youth in the development process as follows; youth have experience, knowledge and ideas unique to their situations, they constitute the majority of the population and they are custodians of their environment and leaders of their peers (Annie 2007). However, there is a growing concern about the minimal level of youth participation in community development activities. Though youth in Tanzania constitute a big portion of the total population (34.7 %) aged between 15-35 years old, yet they remain marginalized (NBC, 2013). NGGRP (2005) reports that the local Authorities and people of Tanzania have not been capacitated by the Government in the overall question of community participation.

This suggests that youth in Tanzania are also inclusive among those not adequately capacitated to participate in development issues. Tanzania has its national youth development policy that seeks to promote, among other things, the overall issues of youth participation. However, participation of youth in decision making bodies is not adequate so far. The implication of this is that benefits of the youth participation in community development activities will be left out; firstly, the experience, knowledge and ideas of the youth will not be utilized. Secondly, their strength as majority population will be ignored. Finally, their dreams of being future leaders will be lost. Failure of the youth to participate effectively in community development activities need not be taken for granted, and barriers to their participation need to be determined. There exist three main barriers to community participation namely administrative, structural and social (Oakley 1991). Social barriers have one unique feature in that they are a problem associated with the mindset of the people. The problem addressed in this study is that little had been done to analyze the social barriers affecting the youth participation in community development activities and that unless the social barriers are addressed accordingly through appropriate interventions, youth participation in community development activities will not be possible or will be very minimal. The researcher therefore carried out a scientific study at HAI district in KILIMANJARO Region to analyze how social barriers affect the participation of Youth in community development activities.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Description of the study Area

Hai district is located in south east Tanzania in Kilimanjaro Region. Being one of the seven districts of Kilimanjaro Region, Hai is bordered to the south by Arusha region, to the west by Siha district, to the east by Moshi urban district, Moshi rural district and Rombo district. According to 2012 census, Hai district had a population of 210, 533. Four wards of Hai district were selected for this study namely MachameKusini, MachameMashariki, MachameMagharibi and MachameWeruweru.

2.2 Research design

A cross sectional survey design was employed in the study. This type of research design utilizes different groups of people who differ in some variable of interest, but share other characteristics such as socio economic status, educational background and ethnicity (Kothari, 2004).

2.3 Sampling Procedures and Sample size determination

The sample size was 50 respondents. This size is accepted by several researchers who regard at least 30 respondents to be a convenient sample size (Bailey, 1994; Boyd et al, 1981; Mbwambo, 2000; kaswamila, 2009).

Purposive sampling, a specific type of non-probability sampling, was used to select key informants namely officers from a non-government organization dealing with youth welfare, community development officers and social welfare officers. Random sampling, a specific type of probability sampling, was used to select the 44 youths into the sample size out of the total number of youth in the district.

Data collection

2.4 A combination of methods and techniques were used to collect data. Semi-structure administered questionnaires were administered to the key informants; community development officers, social welfare officers and officers of a Non- governmental organization dealing with youth welfare. Focus group discussion and Interviewing were employed to collect data from the 44 respondents. Four focus group discussions were organized where 11 respondents from each of the four divisions (MachameMagharibi, MachameMashariki, MachameWeruweru and MachameKusini) were involved.

2.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from Questionnaire were analyzed through descriptive statistics whereas Qualitative data from Focus group discussions (FGDS) were analyzed through content Analysis. Analysis of data through descriptive statistics involved frequencies and percentages while content Analysis focused on details of the components of verbal discussions held with the groups of youths according to the procedures described by Kijazi (2006).

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex, Age, Employment status and Marital Status of the Respondents were considered as important demographic information worth knowing about the study area. Description of the demographic data is made under table one

Table1; Socio- economic characteristics of the respondents (n=50)

Variables	Frequency	%
Sex		
Male	23	46
Female	27	54
Total	50	100
Age		
15-30	29	58
31-45	21	42
Total	50	100
Employment status		
Employed	11	22
Not Employed	25	50
Self Employed	14	28
Total	50	100
Marital Status		
Single	32	64
Married	18	36
Total	50	100
Education		
Primary	10	20
Secondary	25	50
Post- Secondary	15	30
Total	50	100

Table one above is a presentation of demographic information of respondents based on data collected from the field. It explicitly indicates that the minority 23(46%) of respondents were

male while the majority 27(54%) were females .The inclusion of both sexes is for the achievement of gender balance in this study. The researcher also classified the respondents in terms of age groups. According to the study findings, the majority 29(58%) of respondents were youth between 15-30 years old and the remaining 21(42%) of respondents were youth aged between 31-45 years old.

In terms of marital status of the study, majority 32(64%) of youth were single while 18(36%) of youth respondents were married. Furthermore, the study classified the respondents in terms of employment status while the significant number 25(50%) of youth were not employed followed by 14(28%) of respondents who were self-employed. Only 11 respondents (22%) were employed. Basically, the above statistical presentation reveals that majority of the respondents in the study area were not employed.

Table 2; Social Barriers to Youth participation (N=95)

Item	Frequency	Percent
Mentality of dependence	35	36.84
Domination of local Elite1	15	15.78
Gender Inequality	25	26.31
Low levels of Education	20	21.05
Total	98	100

Source: survey data.2018

Table 2 depicts that mentality of dependence (36.8 %) constituted the greatest social barrier to the participation of youth in Hai district. Through focus group discussion, it became clear that youths were much dependent on the Government as the provider of each and everything to her citizens. For this reason, youths did not see why they should be involved in community development activities which could, in their views, be financed and performed by the Government. The second largest social barrier (26.3%) affecting youth participation was Gender inequality .This barrier is related to the patriarchy system, and it largely affected the participation of female youth as far as community development activities were concerned . One female respondent in a focus group discussion in MachameMashariki was quoted as saying; “if

we participate in the development activities, who will cook and serve food for my husband'. Suffice it to say that participation in community development activities was regarded to be more of the work of men than that of women. The third largest social barrier to the youth participation in community development programs was low levels of exposure to non-local information (21.05 %). Responding to the semi- structure questionnaire, community development officer and social welfare officer asserted that most youths found it difficult to participate in community development programs due to lack of technical know- how. Non-local information to which youth had little or lack exposure included; evaluative participation, monitoring of programs and where (institutions) to get technical support. With lack of exposure to technical information, youth feared to participate in community development programs, as it was asserted by a male youth, a resident of MachameMagharibi during focus group discussion; "The procedures of the government are too cumbersome to follow, and they sometimes discourage us from participating in government initiatives". This problem (low exposure to non-local information) is more serious with female youth than male youth, thereby symbolizing the seriousness of gender inequality as a social barrier. On this, a female youth, a resident of Machame Weruweru, was quoted as saying;" we know very little about these development issues compared to our counterparts (males)". Another social barrier to youth participation was domination of local Elites (15.7%). There arose some complaints among respondents that some members of the community(experienced adult members of society) were exercising dominance over development issues including the question of participating in community development programs .These local elites, due to this state of dominance, discouraged other members of society , youth included, from participating in community development activities. The local elites at times took advantage of their dominance by not revealing to other members of society developmental information (including participation in community development programs) that could be resourceful to the public. Moreover, the local elites were blamed on exercising favoritism in favor of their friends and relatives. This favoritism manifested in the tendencies of the local elite to reveal opportunities offered by the government or nongovernmental organizations to their close friends and relatives could participate in and benefit from.

Table three interventions to address social barrier (n=50)

Item	Frequency	Percent
Provision of Education	30	60
Persuasion	20	40
Total	50	100

Source: survey data.2018

Table two depicts major interventions that the respondents recommended so as to address the social barriers discussed above. According to table 2, respondents rated Education as the most effective intervention to make youth participate in community development activities . 60% of the respondents recommended it. Using content analysis based on focus group discussions, the researcher discovered that respondents regarded provision of Education as cure for all social barriers to youth participation- gender inequality, low exposure to non- local information, domination of local elites as well as mentality of dependence. One of the respondents, mrDaudKweka aged 35 years old in MachameKusini, had this to say on Education; “We lack education and exposure to many development issues including national policies. With education, we could participate in all activities for our personal and national development”

Persuasion was the second largest intervention suggested by the respondents to address the social barriers to youth participation as 40 % of the respondents suggested this intervention. The respondents, in the course of focus group discussions, revealed that the responsibility of persuading youth in to active participation in community development activities rested with the central government and the local government on one hand and Non- governmental organizations as well as community based organizations on the other hand. Most of the respondents made it clear that youth needed persuading from the Government if they (youth) were to effectively engage in community development activities. The need for persuading the youth to participate in community development activities, is supported by the findings of scales and leffert who asserted that youth needed recognition from the community for them to take part in any activity (Scales and leffert, 1999).Therefore, if the government succeeded in persuading the youth to participate in community development activities, the latter could feel recognized and valued, feeling motivated to participate in development activities.

CONCLUSION

Effective participation of Youth in community development activities is only made possible when social barriers, among others, are overcome. The social barriers include; mentality of dependence, culture of silence, domination of Elites and Gender inequality and low levels of Education.

Furthermore, study concludes that overcoming the said social barriers entails changing the attitude of the youth so that they have positive attitudes to the overall question of participation in community development activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that community development workers in particular and development stakeholders in general should design Educational and Persuasion strategies that largely focus on changing the present negative attitudes of the Youth towards participation in community development activities

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