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Impact of NGOs programmes on rural youth empowerment- with reference to NGOs operating in Bangalore Rural district

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Abstract

Youth empowerment is enhancing the status of young people, empowering them to build on their competencies and capabilities for life. It will enable them to contribute and benefit from a politically stable, economically viable and legally supportive environment, ensuring their full participation as active citizens in their countries. This study the impact of NGOs programmes on Rural Youth Empowerment- with reference to NGOs operating in Bangalore Rural District, is based on survey, descriptive and analytical method of research. This study is conducted in NGOs working in Bangalore rural district with a sample of 10 NGOs and 300 sample beneficiaries of NGOs. This study analyses the impact of various empowerment programmes of NGOs on the rural youth. For measuring the empowerment level of youth beneficiaries the statistical tools and techniques such as mean, standard deviation, Chi-square test and Cronbach's Alpha have been used. To make the data presentable in a meaningful way, wherever, necessary tables, charts and diagrams have been used. The qualitative data under the study has been quantified by using Likert's 5point scale.

Keywords: Youth, empowerment, NGO, empowerment-index

Introduction

In the present knowledge based economy, young population is the greatest assets for a nation and is regarded as potential and actual investment for a country's development. India is enjoying demographic dividend with good young human resource than any other country in the world. The statistics and surveys reveal that in India among the youth there is wide disparity between urban youths and rural youths as to education, income, consumption, access to health care services, political participation leading to many political, socio-economic problems like high rate of school dropouts, unemployment, early age addiction to alcohol, tobacco consumption, naxalism are the few to mention. The degree of disparity varies from state to state and again within the state from region to region.

In India, nearly 70 percent of the total population lives in rural areas and these rural youth have been deprived of many facilities due to so many reasons. The rural youth have treasure of hidden talents and are introverts, if they are given proper guidance and advice they can be moulded and they can become a responsible citizens and a great asset to the nation. The stakeholders like Families, education institutions, government, Inter-Government Organisations, Non- Government Organisations (NGOs) and community have the responsibility to create favourable environment to rural youths to attain 'equity' and thereby assist them in their all-round development. It is highly difficult for the state alone to shoulder and discharge the responsibility of empowering youth in the country, it is imperative for the state to take the help of Non- Government Organisations (NGOs) and other voluntary associations in the youth empowerment process.

This research article high lights the impact of NGOs programmes on various domains of youth empowerment like education level, health condition, economic, political, social status and psychological status of youth beneficiaries of NGOs. This study is conducted in Bangalore rural district.

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Operational definition of concepts

Youth: According to National Policy of Youth (2005), the term youth refers to “all individuals in the age-group of 13-30 years”. For the present study youth refers to individuals aged between 15 and 35 years.

Empowerment: “Empowerment” implies ‘strengthening people capacities; which can be achieved through ‘full participation of people’.

Youth Development: Youth Development as “enhancing the status of young people, empowering them to build on their competencies and capabilities for life. It will enable them to contribute and benefit from a politically stable, economically viable and legally supportive environment, ensuring their full participation as active citizens in their countries”

Youth Empowerment: Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) 1997 has defined “Youth Empowerment” as “empowering young people, means creating and supporting the enabling conditions under which young people can act on their own behalf, and on their own terms, rather than at the direction of others.”

Youth Empowerment Index: Youth Empowerment Index (YEI) is used to measure progress and improvement in youth empowerment level by aggregating the results across seven key youth empowerment domains – Education level, Health condition, Economic condition, culture, social status, political strength, and psychological.

Non- Government Organisation (NGO): United Nations Organization [UNO] defines (1945) Non-Governmental Organization as “any kind of private organization that is independent from government control can be termed an “Non-Governmental Organization [NGO]”, provided it is not-for-profit, non-prevention, and not simply an opposition political party”

“private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development” (World Bank 2001).

Beneficiaries refer to individuals and organizations receiving the benefits from the programmes and schemes of any Government or Non-Government Organizations.

For the present study youth in the age group of 15-35 years are considered as ‘beneficiaries’

Literature review

C. Francis (1993) ^[6], in this article “rural development, people’s participation and the role of NGO’s, the author views that if the government is willing to take NGOs into confidence and is prepared to assign them a responsible role, the rural transformation would become much easy. Bureaucrats might feel shy of learning from the NGOs. The true spirit and motivation for the cause of the poor should give way to such reservations. Pradeep Narayanan (2003) ^[7], Empowerment through Participation, How effective is this Approach? This essay is based on the cases studies on approaches to empowerment and the author explained the limitations of earlier top-down approach to development. These case studies are used by the author to assess general

impact and deficiencies of participatory approach. He views that participatory approach to empowerment is the best approaches compared to trickling –down approach to development and views that the participation and empowerment are the means and ends to each other. He views that most of the gross root NGOs demands for the establishment of participatory institutions for the empowerment of excluded section. The participatory approach if adopted in true spirit of development can empower the weaker sections of the society. Rosenmary (1984) ^[11], explained the extreme expressions of youth relating to their problems, as due to fragmentations in society and not due to generation conflict; he tends to view youth as consisting of only those from lower socio-economic background. Identifying the types of self-exclusion among youth, he enumerates them as apathy; formation of sub-cultural ghettos; religious sects and armed separation. Alan France (1993) ^[3], in this book the author expressed his views about challenges that emerge when trying to research analyse the issues relating to young people. The author opined that in his opinion, researching youth and youth related issues have recently become major thrust areas for social research. The book highlighted the complex influences and pressures that are at work in shaping the agenda when studying the youth. Youth as a social problem remains a core focus of the research agenda and the lack of attention in the policy framework on the influence of culture and history in understanding what it means to be youth sets us many challenges.

Abhijit Das (2001) ^[8], In this study the author narrated socio-political and economic conditions in northern India where state is losing interest in development and protecting the rights of marginalized groups. At the same time Voluntary Organizations (NGO’s) are gaining increased credibility and importance in development and protecting the rights of marginalized groups. The study explains the plight and challenges of Voluntary Organizations (NGO’s) working for human rights, against women harassment and sexual assault on women in northern states. The study throws light on the vulnerability of Voluntary Organizations (NGO’s) from different sections in the society like dominant communities’, upper castes in the society, local politicians, local media, Peer NGO’s, and even from judiciary at lower level. The study also reveals the inactiveness of state administrative machinery, police atrocities on the volunteers and activists of Voluntary Organizations (NGO’s). the study concluded with the remarks that in spite of attacks and NOG’s vulnerability from various corners some progressive individuals, groups and organizations from community, Media, legal fraternity, fund providers are encouraging the activities of Voluntary Organizations (NGO’s). Mrs. R. Jeyalakshmi and Dr. M.Jayalakshmi (2013) ^[9], this is a descriptive study conducted in Virudhunagar District to analyse the Role and Social Responsibilities of Social Welfare Organizations in uplifting the down trodden. To study the services and their responsibilities social welfare organizations, 13 projects taken up by the three organizations –Lions Club, Rotary club and Jaycees Club operating in the district are taken. The findings reveal that the service projects of these social welfare organizations are effective in meeting the social responsibilities of the organizations in the study area. Sandra Svensson, (2014) ^[10], It is a case study, which analyzes the projects involving children and youths conducted by two NGOs in Dharavi- a

slum-area in Mumbai, India. This dissertation studies the role played by these two NGOs in social development and empowerment of these slum children and youths. The researcher in this study has collected the information through qualitative methods. Research design that is used in this dissertation is the case study. For the study data was collected through observations and interviews. The researcher has made visits to communities in the slum areas under study. The researcher has drafted interview guides and tested on colleagues before interviews were conducted. Though this study don't target one particular organization, or case, does it have one specific focus which is on a certain situation; how children and youths from one under privileged area gain empowerment and develop through non-governmental organizations. The study's focus is to explore the objective of the research and explain the reality for exposed children and youths in a specific community through an explicit line of organizations. This case study allows for the use of different methods to do a detailed analysis. This research was conducted study as to how these NGOs work within the social work area, the ways in which they work towards change in the social structures of the society, how they work to create new social interactions as to overcome obstacles and differences between people as well as how they wish to achieve empowerment and liberation for individuals to provide them with a chance to create better lives for themselves.

Statement of the problem

The literature review revealed that in India different agencies are working for empowering disadvantaged people. NGOs are playing important role in this empowerment process. The literature review indicates that more research work is carried in the area of women empowerment and little research work is done on the role of NGOs in rural youth empowerment, hence the present study is undertaken. This is undertaken to find the answer to the following questions:

- (1) What is the role of NGOs in the society?
- (2) What is the level of youth empowerment in the study area?
- (3) How youth is empowered through Non-Governmental Organizations?
- (4) What are the challenges faced by NGOs in youth empowerment?

Research Methodology

A Thorough review of literature identified the present topic "Impact of NGOs programmes on Rural Youth Empowerment- a special reference to Bangalore rural district. This is based on survey, descriptive and analytical method of research. 10 sample NGOs working in Bangalore rural district and 30 youth beneficiaries from each NGO forms sample size for the present study.

For the study NGOs youth empowerment programmes are taken as independent variables, the various dimensions of youth empowerment such as Economic Empowerment, Political, Social, Financial, Cultural, Psychological empowerment and over all empowerment are the dependent variables and political environment, capacity building, financial resources, leadership and governance issues are the extraneous variables. The data is collected from Heads of NGOs and Youth Beneficiaries through interview schedules. The statistical methods -Percentages, Mean, Standard deviation, Paired' test, Chi-square test and Cronbach's alpha

test were used to analyse and interpret the data. To make the data presentable in a meaningful way, wherever, necessary tables, charts and diagrams have been used. The qualitative data under the study has been quantified by using Likert's 5point scale.

Objectives of the study

1. To study the problems of youth in the study area.
2. To study the need for youth empowerment
3. To study the various youth empowerment programs implemented by the NGOs
4. To study the empowerment level of the youth beneficiaries before and after joining NGO
5. To offer constructive suggestions based on the study

The problems of youth in the study area

India is fortunate in having demographic dividend as out of total population more than 65% of population is below the age of 35 years, no other country except China has this dividend. Today the youth life is very turbulent and violent, is not simple, is more complex and with full of adversities and is challenging than ever before. In spite of this situation, we neglect to nurture and develop this invaluable resource and make this a productive asset. Indian youth are facing with numerous problems, the common view is that the economically, socially, politically backward, educationally deprived and culturally low and psychologically weak youth are subject to problems of underage drinking, tobacco use and prey to anti-social elements in the society leading to socio-economic and political problems in the country.

The important ones being-

- Illiteracy
- Poverty
- Unemployment
- Inadequate health facilities
- Child marriage
- Alcoholism
- Lack of self confidence and respect
- Deterioration of moral values
- Superstition and old beliefs

Need for youth empowerment

Youth are the back bone of any country. The success of a nation depends on liberty and empowerment of youth. As the present day youth are facing with numerous problems, it is the need of the hour for all the stakeholders to take suitable actions to address these problems.

As per The Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment[PAYE], the key areas of youth development and empowerment are- education, health, employment, civic participation and political participation.

- Youth are in the transitional period from childhood to adulthood and it is a crucial stage in the life cycle of people. It is during this period one's life is socially, economically, psychologically, physically and behaviorally moulded. Again during this youth period some rights are often irremediably damaged or violated and a time after this some rights cannot be recovered or regained
- It is needed to reduce the social, economic and political crimes in the society, only through empowerment we can avoid youth from engaging in anti-social acts.
- Needed to inculcate life skills among the youth which is the need of the hour today

- Youth empowerment process leads to self-employment, development/ creation of new generation entrepreneurs and there by solve unemployment problem.
- Youth empowerment is needed to instill vital tenets and social values among the youth
- Needed to reduce poverty and thereby improve the living conditions in the country
- Youth empowerment in any development is imperative not only for national development but because the transitional period from childhood to adulthood is quite a challenge. If the potential of these youth are not profitably harnessed and marshaled towards development, there is bound to be trouble (Ojikutu, 1998)
- Millennium Development Goals also aim at empowerment of youth. Among the MDGs eradication of poverty and hunger, promote gender equality an empower women, achieve universal primary education, combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other diseases.
- Youth empowerment needed to promote national integration and helps in nation building and national development process. The empowered youth can maintain and sustain country's integrity.
- Needed to promote regional co-operation and to have better international understanding
- Empowerment of Indian youth is needed to en cash demographic disadvantage of developed countries
- Needed to create value in Young women and men so that they can contribute to the economic, social, political and cultural advancement of their own, their families and countries.

In this direction there is a need to empower youth of the nation to make them more productive and responsible citizens, thereby we can overcome the social, cultural, economic and political problems prevailing in the society.

NGOs youth empowerment programmes in the study area

The sample NGOs in the rural district have designed and implemented various empowerment programmes with the

assistance of government, companies, banks, donors and other NGOs. such Important programmes are - Spoken English Classes, Arts and Crafts training, Music classes, Nursing training, Secretarial Training, Commercial Practice, Tally and office Administration training, Computers training, Automobile and Fitter training, Electrical training, Sports training programmes in basket ball, volley ball and football, Micro-finance scheme through setting up of Credit Societies in line with the Grameen Bank model to provide financial assistance to youths and those who need financial help, they also assists SHG as a part of village welfare initiative, Leadership training programmes and Income generating programmes.

Analysis and interpretation of data

The impact of NGOs empowerment programmes on youth empowerment is studied by comparing youth beneficiary's empowerment level before they join the NGOs with the youth beneficiary's empowerment level after they join the NGOs. The respondent youth beneficiary's empowerment level is measured through constructing the youth empowerment index. Aspect wise empowerment index values for each dimension of youth empowerment is constructed and then over all empowerment index value is constructed at two points of time -one pre-joining the NGOs point of time and two after-joining the NGOs point of time.

Hypothesis: 'There is significant association between NGOs youth empowerment programmes and youth empowerment level'.

This hypothesis is tested by calculating and comparing youth empowerment Index for all dimensions of empowerment for the beneficiaries before they join NGOs and index values after they joined the NGOs.

Table showing Various Dimensions of Youth Empowerment Index before and after availing the benefits of NGOs empowerment programmes

| Sl. No | Dimensions of Youth Empowerment | Composite Youth Empowerment Index | Youth Empowerment Index | |
|--------|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | | | Before Joining NGO | After Joining NGO |
| 1 | Education | EEI : Education Empowerment Index | 0.1071 | 0.8136 |
| 2 | Health | HEI : Health Empowerment Index | 0.1501 | 0.8424 |
| 3 | Economic | EEI : Economic Empowerment Index | 0.0996 | 0.7974 |
| 4 | Political | PEI : Political Empowerment Index | 0.1804 | 0.8064 |
| 5 | Social | SEI : Social Empowerment Index | 0.1263 | 0.8126 |
| 6 | Cultural | CEI : Cultural Empowerment Index | 0.2533 | 0.8870 |
| 7 | Psychological | PsEI : Psychological Empowerment Index | 0.1640 | 0.8778 |
| 8 | Overall | OEI : Overall Empowerment Index | 0.1629 | 0.8489 |

Table represents the various dimensions of youth empowerment and derived composite empowerment index from these dimensions. There are seven dimensions are identified for overall empowerment of youth under the present study. These dimensions are Education, Health, Economic, Political, Social, Cultural and Psychological. The indexes related to these dimensions are noted as Education Empowerment Index, Health Empowerment Index, Economic Empowerment Index, Political Empowerment Index, Social Empowerment Index, Cultural Empowerment Index and Psychological Empowerment Index respectively. On the basis of the obtained data from the respondents index

values are calculated for each dimensions before and after joining NGOs. Among seven indices Economic Empowerment Index (0.0996) is very low before joining NGO and followed by Education Empowerment Index (0.1071) and Social Empowerment Index (0.1263). There is drastic improvement in all the indices after joining NGOs. It is revealed from the Table that the Cultural Empowerment index is the highest among all and followed by Psychological Empowerment Index and Health Empowerment Index. However the difference and improvement in all these dimensions are tested by using paired sample test in the Table.

Diagram showing Various Dimensions of composite Youth Empowerment Index before and after availing the benefits of NGOs empowerment programmes

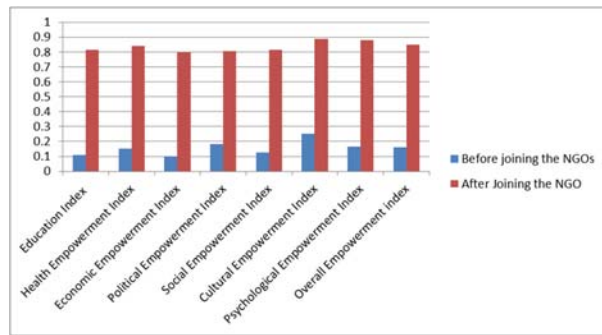


Diagram depicts the composite youth Empowerment Index for Various Dimensions of youth Empowerment before and after joining NGO. As shown in the bar diagram, the composite youth empowerment indices for all dimensions of youth empowerment has increased from pre-NGO membership period to post-NGO membership period.

Findings

The findings of the study revealed that NGOs programmes have positive influence on youth empowerment. The overall empowerment index of respondent beneficiaries before joining the NGOs is 0.1629 and it increased to 0.8489 after they became the members of NGO. The absolute 't' value of mean difference between Overall Empowerment Index before and joining NGO is 71.416 and statically significant at 5% level. ($t=71.416$, $p < 0.0000$) Therefore the empowerment index of all dimensions of youth empowerment have improved after joining NGO, hence, it can be concluded that the level of empowerment of the beneficiaries is improved after joining NGO. It can be concluded that the NGOs empowerment programmes have positive impact on the youth empowerment level.

From the field survey and interviews the researcher had with the chief executives, the staff and volunteers of the NGOs, it is observed that the respondent NGOs have number of youth empowerment programmes like Computer training, Tally, DTP, Spoken English classes, Soft skill training programs. Some NGOs also have D. Ed, B. Ed programmes, nursing courses for the benefit of youth beneficiaries. Major health empowerment programs of respondent NGOs are awareness programs on Drug addiction, alcoholic consumption, tobacco consumption, AIDs awareness programmes, family health and hygiene, training in various sports. They also providing Automobile training, conducting courses in self finance, imparting training in handicraft activities, training in dairy farming. Some NGOs also conducting beautician courses, embroidery classes, providing training in entrepreneurial skills.

Suggestions

Based on the above findings following suggestions are recommended to improve the performance of NGOs and other stakeholders especially the government to empower the youth.

1. NGOs should come out with Strategies for effective Mobilisation of local Community Resources.
2. NGOs should educate and create awareness among the local community about their development programmes.

3. The central government should enact a single unified Act for NGOs registration and monitoring the functioning of NGOs to make them more accountable and transparent in their dealings.
4. For a sustainable youth empowerment holistic approach is needed. The roles of different or stakeholders are interrelated, interdependent and interconnected.
5. Government should by giving more financial assistance and support to NGOs having rural orientation.
6. Proper training should be given to staff and volunteers of NGOs.

Conclusion

This study with objective based findings helps to build and expand the existing research on the NGOs role in youth empowerment. The interviews and discussion with the Chief executives, the staff, and the volunteers of NGOs and with the beneficiaries of NGOs and result of the study help to strengthen /improve the NGOs youth empowerment programmes. The findings also help to overcome the issues and challenges in youth empowerment. This can be concluded that with active role of NGOs with co-operation from other stakeholders like families, government and inter-governmental organisations can empower the youth and make them to become great asset for the country.

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