

Comprehension and Construction the Phenomenon of Youth Empowerment In Relation To Life Experiences and Wishes among the Youth in Bungoma South Sub-County

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Abstract- Kenya's population is made of the Youth who have been termed by various scholars as the potential for the future of the country as escalating political-economic disaster awaiting solution. The Youth 'Youth bulge' of the Country viewed in negative lenses is regarded as a cause of various social problems such as increased levels of crime and political instability. It is some of the challenges faced by the Youth that have drawn global attention that seeks for intervention measures as outlined by international Conventions that have called for Youth empowerment programs. The Youth in Bungoma South Sub-county faced harsh conditions such as economic, environmental, social and cultural hardships. The economic problems manifested themselves through unemployment, low paying jobs and lack of credit facilities. We analyze the comprehension and construction of the phenomenon of Youth empowerment in relation to life experiences and wishes among the Youth in Bungoma South Sub-County. The target population were Youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County. The paper has examined demographic information of youth groups relating to their numbers; level of education; challenges they faced as a group and their understanding on marginalization as a cause of their challenges

I. INTRODUCTION

Kenya's population is made of the Youth who have been termed by various scholars as the potential for the future of the country as escalating political-

economic disaster awaiting solution (Mwaura,, 2015). The Youth 'Youth bulge' of the Country viewed in negative lenses is regarded as a cause of various social problems such as increased levels of crime and political instability. For instance, the Kenyas' post-election violence of 2007 had the Youth majorly placed at its centre (Ajao, 2017). However, Youth bulge' when viewed positively is regarded as demographic dividend that can be tapped to contribute to economic, social, and intellectual potential of a country (Chikozho etal, 2020).Inability of the harness the potential of the Youth is linked to disadvantaged position they find themselves in, removing them at the centre of various opportunities, a situation that normally makes this group to channel their energies towards negative activities such as crime and drugs.For instance, the report of United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] of 2013 state that Kenyan Youth face competition for work engagements with Youth unemployment rates in the country oscillating between 15 and 35 per cent subject on age. This state of unemployment is a pointer that the Youth face uncertain future as expected schooling and occupation options are inadequate to bridge the demand of a rising Youthful population.

It is some of the challenges faced by the Youth that have drawn global attention that seeks for intervention measures as outlined by international Conventions that have called for Youth empowerment programs. Such Conventions include the launching of the Education for All (EFA)

initiative in 1990 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in 2000 (UNESCO, 2014) where signatory nations to UN Conventions are supposed to play an active role in promoting the achievement of set resolutions . It is on this basis that Kenya embraced SHGs as a mitigation measure for youth empowerment.

The Youth in Bungoma South Sub-county faced harsh conditions such as economic, environmental, social and cultural hardships (Chepkoech, 2022). The economic problems manifested themselves through unemployment, low paying jobs and lack of credit facilities. The problems facing Youth led to deviant behaviours among the Youth living in Bungoma South Sub-County. We analyze the comprehension and construction of the phenomenon of Youth empowerment in relation to life experiences and wishes among the Youth in Bungoma South Sub-County.

The target population were Youth self-help groups in Bungoma South Sub-County. Records at Ministry of Youth and Social Services Bungoma County (2018) shows that there were 123 self-help SHGs in Bungoma South with total membership of close 3,750 registered members.

II. DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF THE YOUTH

- The study sought demographic information of relating to their numbers; level of education; Various questions on that formed a basis of investigation were developed on Likert scale and findings presented in tables. First the study sought to establish their level of awareness on whether they form the bulk of the population.

Table 2.1: Gender of Membership of Youth Self Help Group

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	264	82.76
Female	55	17.24
Total	319	100

The findings from table 2.1 reveal that majority of the respondents as members of the FHGs were male

as they accounted for 82.76 percent of the respondents. This is likely to imply that YSHGs are dominated by male. This finding may imply that female Youth appear to be even more marginalized within the Youth group.

This position was confirmed by one Secretary of the Youth Group who had this to say:

-----Women as the Youth are a less worried than men counter parts. In our culture, women are supposed to get married and to be taken care of by the husband. With such conviction and considering the age bracket of the Youth, most female are either married or being taken care of by their husbands or are about to get married and be taken care of by their husbands. Ladies in our culture are even not to engage in serious economic activities like rearing of livestock at their parental home. There is fear that such ladies may not get married. You will realize that even unmarried working ladies normally use the earnings on dressing but not for investment at their parental home.

The above position may clear be a clear indicator that majority of Youth being men may be joining YSHGs due to the pressure they have to meet their obligations as heads of their own families.

Further to gender, it was necessary to find out age composition of various members of YSHGs. This investigation was found necessary as it was to give the clear indication of which cluster of the Youth age group had embraced the notion of YSHG as a route for Youth empowerment. The findings are given in table 2.2

Table 2.2: Classification of Members of Youth Self Help Group per Age Clusters

Age Cluster	Frequency	Percentage
18-20	5	1.57
21-24	45	14.11
25-28	125	39.18
29-31	87	27.27
32-35	57	17.87
Total	319	100

The findings in table 2.2 showing the age clusters of membership of various respondents per age group reveal that majority of the members of the various YSHGs lie in the age bracket of 25-31 years (over 65%). This is likely to indicate that the level of awareness of the Youth about the importance of Self Help Group is higher as well as the pressure to improve the quality of life for members in this age bracket is higher. However, the lower number at start is due to limited awareness and lower pressure to meet of the members to meet domestic needs. The lower number towards the end could be traced to continue loss of interest among the members as one approach exists of the Youth age bracket.

Table 2.3: Academic Qualification

Level	Frequency	Percentage
University	9	2.82
Tertiary	31	9.72
Form Four	256	80.25
Standard Eight	15	4.70
Other	81	25.39
Total	319	100

The findings in table 2.3 reveal that majority of the respondents (over 90%) had at least form four level of education and as such were likely to be literate enough to understand the issue under investigation. However, despite such high level of literacy, majority of the respondents (about 80%) were form four leavers, an indicator that they did not have specific productive skills in particular area of speciality, an issue that was likely to hamper their employability. This position of the level of education of the Youth was confirmed by all officials of YSHGs who affirmed that majority of the Youth who were members of the groups were form leavers.

The study found it necessary to establish economic activities in which the members of the YSHGs were engaged in. This was found necessary because the nature of economic engagement dictates ones' financial pressure and the need for empowerment. The findings are given in table 2.4.

Table 2.4: Classification of Members of Youth Help Groups on Engagement

Nature of employment	Frequency	Percentage
Public sector	26	8.15
Private Sector	15	4.70
Self –employed	231	72.41
Unemployed	47	14.73
Total	319	100

The results in table 2.4 show that majority of the respondents (over 86%) who were members of YSHGs were either unemployed or self- employed. This implies that majority of the respondents were engaged in professions that were unlikely to generate stable returns considering their level of academic qualifications as reflected in table 2.2.

As if to confirm this position, the Chairman of Weyeta YSHG had this to say:

---majority of members of my organization are mainly boda boda riders. However, we were advised by our local Member of Parliament to form SHGs in order to access Youth Fund offered by the government. Our group accessed Ksh 50,000 which we share among ourselves for investment at personal level. Some invested in farming by buying fertilizer and other farm inputs. We even had some who used it on illicit drinks. However, repayment of the same became a challenge.

The above position clearly points out on various aspects of Youth empowerment. It points out that empowerment should be multidimensional as different Youth had different needs of empowerment

III. CHALLENGES FACED THE YOUTH

This section presents findings of the study sought to investigate the views of the Youth on their numerical strength, employability, causes of the same and intervention measures that can be initiated in order to address the challenges.

Table 3.1: Response on whether the Youth are Majority of the Population

Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	145	45.45
A	174	54.55
Total	319	100

The findings in table 3.1 reveal that all the respondents (100%) were aware that the Youthful population formed a bulk of the Youthful population. This statement saw 145(45.45%) and 174(54.55%) of the respondents strongly agreeing and agreeing to the positive statement respectively. This finding implies that the Youth were majority of the population and as such were likely to demand for their share of opportunities. This finding agrees with earlier study by Mutuku, (2011) who established that Kenya’s population is made of the Youth.

Table 3.2: Response on whether the Youth are more disadvantaged on employment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	123	38.56
A	161	50.47
UD	12	3.76
SA	23	7.21
Total	319	100

The findings in table 3.2 reveal that majority of Youth respondents (over 90%) were either in agreement or strongly in agreement that despite the general state of unemployment; the Youth are worst hit by the state. This likely to imply that the Youth felt discriminated when it comes to apportionment of the opportunities that were available. This finding is in agreement with the report of United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] of 2013 state that Kenyan Youth face competition for work engagements with Youth unemployment rates in the country oscillate between 15 and 35 per cent subject on age.

It was necessary to establish from the respondents whether their inaccessibility to job opportunities is as a result of marginalization. A statement postulating that Youth un-employability is majorly due to marginalization, the findings are given in table 3.3

Table 3.3: Level of agreement of Youth is Marginalization on employment

Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	134	42.00
A	157	49.22
UD	10	3.13
D	13	4.08
SD	5	1.57
TOTAL	319	100

The findings in table 3.3 reveal that majority of the Youth (over 92%) were in agreement that the state of their un-employability was due to marginalization. This is likely to imply that the Youth normally felt discriminated on the labor market when various job openings occur.

As to confirm the above position, the General Secretary of Jitegemee Self Help Group had this say:

--it is true that globally the Youth remain discriminated from various jobs opening that may arise. When job openings emerge, you will find that the requirement may be experience of a number of years. You have to remember that most Youth are fresh graduates from school. Where can one get a 5 year experience when one has not in the first instance been given opportunity to work? Does it mean that opportunities are for only those who are transferring from one job to another?

Documented literature reveals that Youth marginalization is real. For instance, the report of International Labor Organization(ILO) of 2017 indicate that Worldwide, Youth unemployment stands close to 70.9 million (15-24 years of age) in 2017 (ILO, 2017).By 2018, the global number of unemployed Youth is expected to rise by another 134,000, to reach 71.1 million and Youth unemployment rate was expected to remain at 13.1 per cent over the next couple of years; where a slight jump to 13.2 per cent is expected .Similarly, in 2018, close to 172 million young people globally were unemployed and the number unemployed

people was projected to increase by 1 million annually to clock 174 million by 2020 due to the expansion of labor force (ILO, 2019).

The study aimed at finding out the consequences of Youth marginalization. The study sought to establish from the respondents whether marginalization from economic activities has made them to engage in various social evils such as theft. The findings are given in table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Marginalization as the Cause of various Social Evils

Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	74	23.10
A	131	41.07
UD	13	4.08
D	67	21.0
SD	34	10.66
Total	319	100

Table 3.4 social findings in table show the response of the Youth on whether marginalization from economic activities has made the Youth to engage in various social evils. The findings reveal that majority (over 60%) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the positive statement. This is likely to be interpreted that through marginalization majority of the Youth are likely to have challenges of meeting their own needs, a situation that puts them under pressure to find alternative means of raising finances to meet their needs. Such alternatives may include engagement in antisocial activities such as prostitution and theft.

The above position was supported by all (100%) officials of YSHGs interviewed whose position was best summarized by chairman of Muungano Youth Self Help Group who had this to say:

-----engagement in some activities that may be considered to be anti-social sometimes is triggered by pressure that an individual may be going through. When an individual is an individual is under pressure for instance to meet own needs, one may be forced to act in irrational manner and by using what is at disposal. This is where you may find individuals engaged in

prostitution not because they do not know the consequences but because they under pressure to survive. An individual may be willing to risk own life to still because of loose in hope of living due to suffering occasioned by their exclusion from economic activities which are critical for support of their living. Such individuals do not fear dying, making them to engage in theft. They represent a pool of goons for hire at a marginal cost including offer of illicit drinks and money as little as Ksh 200 for hire as goons and hecklers during political rallies.

This finding is in agreement with earlier studies. Various studies attest to the fact that though the Youth population represent demographic dividend, several countries more so the emerging economies have failed to tap their potentiality as young people are uprooted, unemployed and with few opportunities for positive engagement, making them to be a ready pool of recruits for groups seeking to trigger violence (Urdal, 2000; United Nations, 2007; World Bank, 2006/09; and USAID, 2005). Indeed an examination of demographic and civil conflict data in the 1990-2000 period exposes that countries with a large Youth share of the populace and rapid urban population growth are more likely to be politically insecure with fierce civil turmoil (USAID, 2005).

IV. YOUTH POSITION ON EMPOWERMENT

The study sought to establish from the Youth their views on inclusivity as a way of fighting marginalization. The study sought to establish from the Youth on how they should be supported to promote their productivity as members of the society. This involved various positive statements developed on Likert Scale which were given to Youth respondents and scored. The inquiry sought to establish the extent of support supported empowerment programs, forms of empowerment

Table 3.5: Response on Support of Empowerment Programs

Response	Frequency	Percentage
SA	111	34.80
A	201	63.01
Total	319	100

The finding in table 3.5 reveals that all (100%) the respondents supported establishment of empowerment programs as a way of Youth empowerment. This finding implied that the Youth could have readily welcomed the initiative of Youth Self Help Group as an empowerment initiative by actively embracing its activities.

Various studies attest that The SHGs approach has been used in several other Countries. In Ethiopia, SHGs have been used promote empowerment of the poor as a way of fighting poverty reduction in a manner that is consistent with the strategies and goals of the state and its development partners (Prime bulletin, 2011).In, Tanzania SHGs are among the important and working civil societies where people who form them join their efforts to take collective actions for some matters of their interests (Rappaport, 1987). In Uganda, the projects started to form SHGs with the poorest of the poor communities in the slum areas in 2008. The purpose of this is to bring poor people together to unleash the potential to develop socially, economically and politically. The women meet on a weekly basis and save the little money they have (Rocha, 1997).

Table 3.6: Youth rating of forms of Empowerment in Order of preference

Form of Empowerment	Frequency	Percentage
Finance	222	69.59
Skills	46	14.42
Knowledge	36	11.29
Attitude	15	4.70
Total	319	100

The results in table 3.6 on ranking of the level of preference on areas in which the areas needed for empowerment based on the preference of preference reveal that 222(69.59%) prefer financial empowerment as an area of first priority with attitude being the least area of preference by the respondents at 4.7 percent. This is likely to imply that the Youth if empowered with finances in form of capital are likely to be able to engage in productive economic activities.

This is an interesting finding considering the level of education of the membership of YSHGs in table 2.3. Though the fact that capital is one of the main factors of production could not be denied, the best empowerment program should be multidimensional. The program should first be concerned with skill development which is a training program which has to go hand in hand with training with capital coming towards the end. Reversing the order is likely to have negative impact on the level of success.

CONCLUSION

The paper has examined demographic information of youth groups relating to their numbers; level of education; challenges they faced as a group and their understanding on marginalization as a cause of their challenges. The study has presented their position on empowerment and the Youth position on their wishes as regards the empowerment programs.

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