

Selective Participation – The Disempowerment amongst Bario Youth in Sarawak Malaysia

W. A. Amir Zal^{1*}, Asnarukhadi Abu Samah² & Ma'Rof Redzuan³

1. Department of Social Ecology, Faculty of Social Development, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 21030 Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu, MALAYSIA.
2. Faculty of Human Ecology, Universiti Putra Malaysia

* E-mail of the corresponding author: waamirzal@umt.edu.my

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Abstract

Participation is one part of an element of the empowerment; with it a person can control their capitals to gain their needs without depending outsiders. However, in reality, the issues concerned by public are always about the lacking of participation of youth in a local organization. Without participation, a youth will be in the state of disempowerment. To be more specific, this article listed out three research objectives; to describe the Bario youth's participation in community organizations; to identify the factors of youth's participations; to identify a barriers faced by Bario youths to participate in organization. This research studied on those issues encountered among Bario youth in Sarawak. This study was conducted through a survey research framework and the samples were chose by convenience sampling. The data were analyzed by descriptive statistic; the percentages and mean presenting the data. The result showed that, Bario youths were not participated in the local organization, especially when the organizations were dominated by other groups of age. They were participated in the organization by which they are free to make a decision on behalf of their affairs. The barrier is, the other group ages did not give chances to them in contributing their efforts to the organization. By considering those realities, researchers decided that Bario youths were disempowerment.

Keywords: Participation, barriers of participation, empowerment, disempowerment.

1. Introduction

All of community members realize that youths are the generator for a country development, even so they are reflecting the reality of society in the future as they influenced the system of beliefs, values, attitudes and behavior of the community (Nobaya, Ezhar & Turiman, 2007; Nobaya, Dzulhailmi, Salleh, Jamilah & Nor Azliza, 2008). Youths are also supposed to be able to influence the future development's trends of society and the nation (Turiman, Nobaya, Ezhar & Azimi, 2008a) and have been responsible for changing the country for betterment (Nobaya et al., 2007; Turiman, Azimi, Ismi Arif, Ezhar Tamam, Siti Raba'ah & Dzuhaulmi, 2008). Youths have responsibilities which have been charged by the community to pass down cultural, social and political practices to the next generation and to create a positive life (Turiman et al., 2008b). Because of that, they are seen as pillars of socio-economic activities, human capital development and social development (Jalaluddin, 2009).

This reality shows that a youth's role in community development is detectable by many scholars. These include the roles of a youth in leadership and community activities, such as making important decisions develop a work plan, arrange meetings and carrying out projects in the community (Lekies, Baker & Baldini, 2009). It shows the importance of participation in community activities. Other than bringing the positive benefits to the community, the participation may also can change their attitudes and behaviours (Asnarulkhadi, 2009).

The youths' participation is akin to kill two birds with single stone; whereby it gives more benefit in a community development. This theory is detected by Moser (1989) in Asnarulkhadi (2005); of the effects of participation where the first effect is meant for achieving development. Secondly, the participation's goal is to bring changes and gives priority to the direct participation of the togetherness in community, while forming the desired development. Participation is not only able to achieve goals in community development, but it also serves as a tool to enhance the

ability of effected individuals through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Examples can be seen through a survey conducted by Turiman et al. (2008a). Youths, by participating actively in associations are involved in questioning government policies, which includes the National Youth Policy of Malaysia. This shows that these youths are interested to directly participate in the process of decision-making for their benefits. This participation enables them to learn new things and somehow show their confidences in making self-decisions.

This has to say, youth's participation has a direct relationship with empowerment. The relationship among participation and empowerment was actually noted by Marfo (2008) in dealing with the community strengths in order to manage their lives. Gibson and Woolcock (2008) were analysing it by examining the ability of individuals or groups to make and change choices. An empowerment can be seen as a sequence of participation; as being analysed by Gamble and Weil (1995) in Bowen (2008) and Campbell, Wunungmurra and Nyomba (2007). They found out that participation helps in fair distribution of resources and helps to solve problems faced by low-income communities.

2. The reality of youth problems

The issue of youth's participation becomes critical in communities (Yan & Gao, 2007). It has become critical due to lack of youth participation in community activities as they rather be an observer than being a contributor to any community activities. These Participations include either in formal or informal organizations (Du Toit et al., 2008). Moreover, not only they are less involved, but also rarely encouraged to engage in community development (Munford & Sanders, 2007).

This aforementioned problem of lacking in participation was seen through findings in Turiman et al studies (2008b), where most of youth participation in communities is only at moderate level. Similarly, study by Nobaya et al. (2008) and Dzulhailmi, Nobaya, Nor Azliza, Md. Salleh, Jamilah and Mariah (2009) also show the youths were not involved in community activities and not even in cultural activities. These findings from those researchers have been served as proofs of the unavailability of youth participation's occurrence in community development within favourable momentum.

According to Matarrita-Cascante et al. (2006), there are many factors that contribute to this issue. This includes the negative perception to youth. For example, a study by Munford and Sanders (2007) found that youths are heavily involved in social problems. Thus, there is one view which theorized that youths are not capable in resolving problems created by themselves (Yan & Gao, 2007). This perception also creates an ambience which discriminates against youth, such as providing different opportunities for them to gain access to resources available in the community (Ponte, Roberts & Sittert, 2007).

This problem gets worsened when the companion of youth, such as professionals and community leaders are not helping the youths to increase their capabilities. Instead, the youth is seen as an immature, helpless, lack of knowledge, experience to develop, submit ideas to solve community issues and take decisions (Lekies et al., 2009). Wherever, the youths are supposed to be able to learn new things through their companions (Asnarulkhadi, 2009). Strangely, this does not happen, and the youths have fewer opportunities to engage in publicity activities, organizational structure, financial management and coordinating meetings (Lekies, Baker & Baldini, 2009).

It happens because some people view the youths as the ones who are still in the construction of educational, career and aspirations (Demi, McLaughlin & Snyder, 2009). Not only that, youths are always regarded as people who plagued by a crisis of knowledge, skills, and intellectual and stuck in a variety of social problems (Turiman et al., 2008a). These stereotypes are preventing youth from joining the organization and learning to use their potentials in order to develop within their communities (Lekies et al., 2009). These barriers have caused a great declined for youth participation in community development.

This reality gives a big impact because the youth participation is directly associated with empowerment (Wilson, 1996; Moyle et al., 2006 & Kapitsa, 2008). According to Bowen (2008) and Choudhury (2009), a close relation between participation and empowerment shows a positive result in life. It is contemplated by Jonsson (2010) through his research on marginalized groups; to be free from inequality. This effort is successful only through the participation in the community. Examples given by Carr (2003) also associates between participation and empowerment. It is being expressed through the efforts of participation which allow them to access, control resources and control of their lives. The ability of accessing these things is important, because it shows the ability of individuals to control the resources owned by them (Kantor, 2005 & Basargekar, 2009).

Conversely, the failure to engage youths in the community has made them to become disempowerment persons. Without participation, they will not have the access to the available resources in their communities, such as obtaining the quality of education, job satisfaction, the media, to establish funds and financial organizations that enable them to further develop the capital (Kapitsa, 2008). Hence, without participation, they could not perform the roles which normally being performed by members of a community. As being expressed by White (2004), it is to make collective decision-making within community. As a result, they cannot control the outcome and eventually changed them into disempowerment persons.

Based on these problems, this study focuses on three objectives; to describe the Barrio youths' participation in community organizations, to identify the factors of youth's participations, and to identify barriers faced by Barrio youths in order to participate in organization. The first and second objectives will describe the reality whether Barrio's youths were empowerment or disempowerment.

3. Participation and empowerment – the underpinning conceptual

Newman (2008) states that participation is purely subjective; it has a different meaning. For Roth, Malone and Gunn (2010), the meaning of participation is more than attending an activity. Those scholars have conducted the research by using a multi-pronged search based on empirical literature of afterschool programs by electronic databases and websites. In the same time, they used informal methods, i.e. inspecting the references in articles. Participation requires someone to participate in community activities (Barki & Hartwick, 1994 & Cornwall, 2008).

However for Harvey and Reed (2007), the participation actually refers to a voluntary process in which individuals can influence and control their lives. This also means, the participation allows individuals to make decisions (Harvey & Reed, 2007) for themselves and their community, if they participate in the organization. The researchers gave that particular statement based on their reviews of the primarily research cases in management and participations in Ghana, Kenya, Uganda and Zambia. In summary, participation refers to an active participation in activities, including decision making, implementing processes, programs and projects, which affect them (Thomas-Slayter, 2009).

Scholar's discussions on the participation show that it is a major something; as important as the result of a joint development (Newman, 2008). It is being approved by Kretzmann and McKnight (2005) and Laverack and Thangphet (2009); the development through participation able to survive for a longer period of time. Through participation, it allows a change to occur in the community and improves the weaknesses in the community (Matarrita-Cascante, Luloff, Krannich & Field, 2006).

4. Participation: Empowerment or Disempowerment

Campbell et al. (2007) sees participation as the tools to encourage the empowerment of individuals, small groups and communities. Precisely, the question is, empowerment refers to what? Scholars generally see empowerment as a process and outcome (Rappaport, 1984 & Carr, 2003). Zimmerman (1995) detailing the differences by stating empowerment as a process that explains how people, organizations and communities to empower. Meanwhile, the results refer to the impact of the process.

In a context of a relationship between empowerment and participation, Wilson (1996) concludes that an empowerment happens if there is participation. However, even the empowerment dismantles the sense of personal isolation amongst individual in a community by create a feeling of belonging and interconnectedness. Not just that, an empowerment also creates a new situation in which it produces a commitment and cooperation amongst members of community (Wilson, 1996).

In reality of an organization, participation which includes the participation in the organization (Fedi, Mannarini & Maton, 2009) leads to a social change (Bowen, 2008). However, for White (2004), participation must involve the change of collective decision-making process from all the community's level; this enables them to control and influence the decisions that are made. Thus, participation enables them to access and control the resources and eventually control of their lives (Carr, 2003). It is because the empowerment is a praxis and cyclical process with a collective dialogue and social action to achieve a positive change (Carr, 2003).

In respect of disempowerment, Eylon and Bamberger (2000) in Young, Vance and Ensher (2003) and Toomey (2011) described it as a condition contrary to empowerment. Among them is the declining sense of confidence and

performance, conduct verbal or non-verbal, which prevents the increase in revenue or a change. Disempowerments occur in all circumstances, whether to women or a group that is isolated from the mainstream (Kawewe, 2001). Kawewe (2001) gives specific examples, such women who obtain lower costs than men; do not get the same benefits, limited entry and other facilities, including training and education. This means, participations are also serve as a measurement in a community disempowerment.

However, the terminology of disempowerment has not been truly studied by others researchers within the context of youth participation. The other way, most of them discussed only on the barrier of participation instead of reviewing the problem as something that might lead to a negative impacts in a disempowerment. That is the reason why researcher was having a problem to find literature reviews in which discussing a direct relationship between a participation and empowerment. However, the researcher took it as a challenge and believed that sooner, it will give out new information in the relation between participation and disempowerment.

5. Research methodology

This study was conducted through mixed methods and applied the sequential explanatory design. Based on this design, the researchers started the phase with collected quantitative data; qualitative data were gained. It has been applied similarly in analysing and displaying findings. As for quantitative data, researchers used a special designed questionnaire. Meanwhile, for the qualitative data collection, researchers used in-depth interviews methods. Both questionnaire and the protocol for in depth interview were created base on the theme of literature review. Specifically, the first part of questionnaire consists of respondent's background and second part consists of youth's participation in an organizations. For the second part, it has the list of factors in youth's participations factor. The barriers in youth's participations were located in the third part. These parts were being measured by an ordinal measurement. Meanwhile, for in depth interview's protocol, it has been similarly arranged like a questionnaire; it has semi-structured protocol which leads by three themes. Those themes are fellow questions of participation in organizations, participation's factors and participation's barriers.

The population of this study was youths who live in Bario Sarawak. Youth refers to those individuals who aged from 15 to 40 years. These age category is based on the definition of youth employment accepted in the Malaysia National Youth Development Policy. Researchers do not have any sampling framework because the Bario's head of community do not have the list of Bario's youths. Therefore, researcher needs to estimate the total population of Bario's youths which are about 1,500 peoples while the number of youths was estimated around 40 to 50 percent of the total number. That makes up a number of in between 700-750 peoples. By using the principle to determine the number of samples by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the possible number of samples need to be involved in this study are 245 people. Luckily, this study has earned a total of 352 respondents where they were the convenience selection.

Quantitative data was being analysed by SPSS computer software; it involves only the use of a descriptive statistic. Meanwhile, qualitative data was being analysed by QSR NVivo. Through QSR NVivo, researchers have performed basic procedures of data analysis in which forming an open code from the raw data and categorizing the code into the same group. At the same time, an open code is screened in order to avoid duplication on the same code. For the next step, researcher categorized the groups that have been formed earlier into specific themes based on the study's objectives. The developed theme serves as the result of this study, but it will only be accepted by researchers only if it was expressed by the majority of the informants. These activities were carried out in the software of QSR NVivo through the functions of free nodes and tree nodes.

6. Finding and discussion

6.1 Youth participation in community organizations and the factors

Table 1 shows the organizations in the community and the participation of respondents in the organizations. The study shows that 89.0% of the respondents knew about the existence of organizations Malaysian People's Volunteer Corps (RELA) within their communities while 20.2% of these respondents are actually being involved with the organization. 72% of the respondents knew about the existence of Development and Security Committee (JKKK) in their community while 13.2% of them involved in it. In regards to youth organization, 67.4% of the respondents

knew about its existence and 30.9% of them are involving in the association. As for sports clubs, 49.1% of the respondents knew about its existence and 25.3% of them joined the club. Meanwhile for political parties, 33.0% of respondents knew about the organization and 14.6% of them have got themselves involved with the organization. Last but not least, for the Neighbourhood organizations, 17% of respondents knew about the existence of the organization in their villages and 7.8% of the respondents are actually participated.

Findings show that youth do recognize the existences of various organizations in their communities. However their participations in these organizations are at a lower level. This reality puts Bario youths in the state of disempowerment as they do not joining the organizations available in their communities. The statement is in accordance to Moyle et al. (2006) and Kapitsa's (2008) view towards the participation of the indicators in empowerment. It shows a manifestation of their disappointments towards the non-youths. This is based on the fact that a lot of ideas and views on an issue uttered by youths are not appreciated by non-youths. This reality is being represented by the following informant::

It's easy, we simply follow the village committee and accept the decisions they made. Em, but if possible, we shall want to share our view as well. We've got ideas too right? But there's no one want to hear". Though some wants to hear, but for the sake of hearing only. (Informant A)..

Table 1: Distribution of the percentage of existence of the organization and participation of youth (N = 352)

Organization	Know	Participate
Malaysian People's Volunteer Corps (RELA)	89.0	20.2
Development and Security Committee (JKKK)	72.0	13.2
Youth Organization	67.4	30.9
Sports Clubs	49.1	44.5
Cultural clubs	35.6	25.3
Political Parties	33.0	14.6
Neighborhood organizations	17.0	7.8

The consequence from this issue, youths have been denied in accessing the resources within their communities. In contrast to Carr (2003), participation allows individuals to access and control their resources. Failure to participate will not only cause them failures to access the resources, but also make them to be more isolated from the other community members. Meanwhile, as for Jonsson (2010), participation is required by the marginalized because it able to free them from the inequality in their environment. This marginalization has placed them as a discriminated group. Consequently, this discriminatory has caused the community members to ignore the existence of organizations in community and even refuse to accept any participation (Ponte et al., 2007). Reality is represented by a feeling state of informant F:

Sometimes we don't even know if there is a meeting. If we join them, it is difficult to talk in the meeting. Em, they not angered us, through their faces we knew that they do not like us to talk. That is not fun (informant F).

The Bario youths found that they were not required by the non-youths because they are not being invited to participate in any activities held by the organization. This failure caused them to lose the opportunity to be jointly in making decisions in regards of their communities. This is not even related to the description made by White (2004), because according to him, participation gives the direction in a collective process of decision-making which involved in all the levels within community. However, the main reality experienced by Bario youths is contradictory; they cannot give the ideas in order to participate in the process of decision making.

Lacking of opportunities to participate in the organization caused them zero chances to access and to control resources in the communities of their own. This problem reflected as a state of disempowerment faced by Bario youths. A brief summary has been made accordingly to the scholars of relationship between participation and

empowerment, such as Carr (2003), Bowen (2008) and Choudhury (2009).

6.2 The barriers of Bario's youth to participate

Table 2 shows the barriers faced by youths of Bario in order to participate in their communities. The findings of this study have been categorized into two; the internal barriers within the respondents and the barriers to be accessed. As for internal barriers, the findings show the min score for the thinking level of the community development; 2.70 and by what means it is close to an agreement. In other word, they often think on how to develop their communities. In fact, their interests to participate in community activities have been shown. Similarly, the availability to choose the goodness sake of the community approaches the agree scale, with the mean score of 2.65. It is almost in the same situation with 'free to explore the community problems', with a mean score of 2.53. These findings reveal that the Bario youths themselves (internal factors) do not preventing them to participate in community activities.

Meanwhile, for the second category, it shows the availabilities to access are dissimilar in various realities. The mean score of the power owned by Bario youths to develop the community is approximated at the scale of 2:17, by those who disagree. Similar reality applied to the power of deciding for the community, with a mean score of 2.15. Although Bario youths are interested and willingly to participate in the community, the reality of the community does not support their readiness.

According to Kudva and Driskell (2009), participation happened when individuals have sufficient spaces to show their concerns. In the other hand, as for the current situation experienced by Bario youths, they do not have enough spaces to access the community and even to alter any changes within their communities. This reality is sufficient just to show the fact that Bario youths are in the state of disempowerment. It is based on the view made by Toomey (2011), who attributed the failure to pour contributions, either directly or indirectly. Similar view made by Kawewe (2001) has stated that, despite the opportunities are available to be used but they are not given an opportunity to exploit..

Table 2: Mean score barrier participation in the community

Statement	Mean
Thinking of the community development	2.70
Availability to choose for the good of the community	2.65
Free to explore the community problems	2.53
Power youth to develop the community	2.17
Power to make decisions for the community	2.15

Mean score on a scale of

- 1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree
 3: Agree 4: Strongly agree

7. Conclusion

Disempowerment is a state of condition in contrast to the empowerment. This study has found out that the participation of Bario youths in community organizations is at a low level, although they are all well aware of the existences of the organizations. It happens due the fact that non-youths do not provide sufficient opportunities for the youth to participate in the organization. Whereby, from the perspective of empowerment, participation is one of the elements which have direct relationships with empowerment. Without participation, a person is said to be a disempowerment.

It went similarly with the barrier faced by Bario youths in order to participate in the community organizations. Bario youths are revealing their interests and have the abilities to develop their communities. However, their participations are limited. Bario youths do not have any access to act accordingly to their interests and abilities. In fact, their interests and abilities are being retarded as they have not been given any opportunities to participate in the community. Reality proves that their internal factors are not the main cause of youths for not participating in the community, but external factors are. These external factors are the non-youths and limited-access spaces; Bario youths unable to participate in activities and in efforts of community development. These problems extended to be placing the youths of Bario in the state of disempowerment.

This implication causes the activities of community development to be retarded. It is retarded to the extent of not achieving the objectives of community development in which targeting the use of resources in the developments. Neglects made by youths may cause the community to be outsourced out from the community to develop their own communities. This soon will increase the reliance on outside parties and consequently will lead them away from obtaining the community empowerment.

Hence, there is an urgent need to balance up the community and encouraging the youths to participate in community activities. This includes by giving them appropriate positions in an organization. In addition, communities should be seating together along with the youths to discuss possible acts for their communities. By this way, it will encourage the youths to engage in the efforts of community development and apparently will took them out from the cocoon of disempowerment.

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