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ROLE OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT:

In recent years many studies have geared towards Youth development approaches, yet in the context of the Garo Youth such studies have not been addressed sufficiently. Young people are the torch bearers of the society. They hold a priceless treasure. It is important to boost up their youthful energy and vigour and channel it in right direction to tap the maximum of them which would amount to positive youth development. Varied opportunities are at their disposal in their milieu. This paper reviews contemporary perspectives on the positive youth development approach in the light of extracurricular activities. Taking into consideration the paramount importance of positive youth development this study is an attempt to go deeper into the role of extracurricular activities in the formation of the youth: enhancing their skills and thus adding extra values for life opportunity prospects. It also looks into youth perception towards extracurricular activities and the benefits received.

KEYWORDS:

YOUTH, PARTICIPATION, POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

1.0. INTRODUCTION

Youth are the cream of the society. It is important therefore that they are nurtured well and their growth in positive direction is taken care of. In today's world positive youth development is being reiterated in many occasions in connection to this section of the society. The concept guiding positive youth development revolves around an axis of insight that every youth has the potential for successful, healthy development and that all youthful individual possess the capacity for positive development. The vocabulary about youth and the various programs envisioning youth empowerment has evolved over the course of a scientifically arduous path (Lerner et al., 2002). Across the globe Governments and many agencies are trying to take forward positive youth development with clear cut goals to achieve the maximum of the youthful potentials and thus build their own future nation. Studies of youth development in the past had reinforced the notion that youth are a valuable asset for building healthy communities (Zeldin et al. 2000; Haid et al. 1999; Zaff and Michelson 2002).

2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW

Positive youth development is geared on building upon the assets and competencies of youth to promote desirable outcomes (Farruggia et. al, 2013). Further Positive youth development is an ecological, asset-based approach that promotes healthy human development through supportive environments and community connections (Hamilton et al. 2004). Many elements are included in the notion of positive youth development. The key principles of positive youth development include an emphasis on inclusiveness as contrasted to targeted programs; promoting thriving and resilience, rather than problem prevention or treatment; a focus on building relationships with caring people through engagement in challenging activities; and youth as active participants rather than mere recipients of services (Hamilton et al. 2004).

Studies done in the past have proposed several Positive Youth Development (PYD) models. As cited by Lerner (2002) one such model is Lerner's Five Cs model. It postulates that there are five specific traits that motivate positive development. These traits are caring, confidence, competence, character, and positive connections with institutions and people. Effective youth development programs that target each of these traits should lead to the emergence of a sixth characteristic that is contribution endorsed Lerner (2002). It further suggests that youth should be provided with opportunities and structure to build upon their assets rather than risks (Bradshaw et al., 2008).

Youth development programs can be distinguished from other programs by their goals, atmosphere, and activities (Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). The goal of youth development programs is to build youths' internal and external assets (Benson, 1997). These goals are accomplished in a supportive, empowering atmosphere where adults convey a belief in and hope for the adolescent's future. In addition, these programs provide activities that offer multiple opportunities for skill-building, exploration of interests and talents, and individual or group recognition. The underlying function of youth development programs is the promotion of normal, healthy adolescent development (Pittman et al., 2003, Bradshaw et al., 2008). It is important to focus on

youths' assets rather than deficits, and a positive rather than a problem-centered approach opined Bradshaw et al. (2008).

For inculcating in the youth the desire and interest for involvement in various matters that concern civic it is essential that in important community issues meaningful and ecologically valid opportunities for involvement is provided (Pittman, 1999; Roth and Brooks-Gunn, 2003). Further helping youth develop a deeper understanding of societal problems can empower them to become more engaged with their civic environment while also helping them to become more active and successful adults, adults who manifests interest in social justice (Evans and Prilleltensky, 2005). Empowerment happens when individuals perceive themselves to have some control over their environment (Zimmerman, 1995). The extent to which youth are empowered and committed to the various issues in the community or society is related to their perception of the meaningfulness of their involvement (Andolina et al., 2002).

Youth who are attached to their families, schools, and communities tend to be invested in the beliefs and standards held by these groups (Zeldin et al., 2000). Bonds between various networks in the web of the society create an ambient suitable for the young people to involve themselves meaningfully. It is also imperative that skills or traits are provided to them and their involvement is recognised (Zaff and Michelson, 2002). Providing skills to cope up with the demand of their involvement implies in other words that they are encouraged and motivated sufficiently and timely by the adults. Adolescents who are involved in civic affairs have been shown to have a stronger work ethic, are more likely to be involved in voluntary activities and to vote, and exhibit socially responsible attitudes as adults in comparison to those who do not involve themselves (Zaff and Michelsen, 2002). Further, as teens they have been shown to have more success in school and are less likely to use drugs than their peers who do not participate (Zaff and Michelsen, 2002). Youth civic engagement has also been linked with a sense of personal competency, self-esteem, and involvement in prosocial activities (Yates and Youniss, 1996). Youth participation in community-based programs has also been linked with positive academic performance (Johnson et al., 1998) in Cooper (2007). Participation gives them hands-on experience. It will empower and enhance their efficiencies. It does not only benefit self but benefit the environment around them. Participation addresses need for belonging, self-esteem and interdependence (Bernard as cited in Kothari, 1996). Involvement in participatory processes helps them to attain social capital by enabling them in gaining capacity development whereby their communication skills, expression of their needs and claiming their rights as well as getting access to information and social networks, feeling of identity, motivation, self-confidence, self-organisation skills and their ability to conduct political dialogue with relevant decision makers are strengthened (Golembek, 2002, Kothari, 1996, UNICEF, 2013, Sibthrop & Morgan, 2011). Overall development of a person can be enhanced by participation.

As opined by Checkoway and Guteirrez (2006) young people do several things as expressions of their participation. Hence it is important that young people involve themselves in various activities in their milieu and adults too must encourage and help the young people involve themselves in multiple activities. In the various educational institutions and other institutions that concerns youth various youth directed development programs are being organised besides academic syllabus with the view to enhance their sense of personal competency, self-esteem, and involvement in pro-social activities or in other words improve their efficiency to be able to achieve to the utmost the fifth trait that is contribution. The main goal or objective of extracurricular activities is ultimately that they may be able to contribute to the society constructively, that they may be effective agents of change and development in the society and not just be a liability or a problem.

Therefore the present study is significant as the researcher is interested to explore and understand to what extent the young people avail the opportunities that is kept at their disposal to form themselves constructively. And it is also imperative to explore the extent to which the youth respond to the help given and extend their collaboration. It would be interesting to know the benefits received by them from such activities too. Thus the findings would help as pointers to the policy makers and other in-charge of various sectors related to positive youth development.

3.0. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions have been formulated keeping in mind the goal of the study.

a) What is the extent to which youth of today respond to the various extracurricular or personal development activities offered for them or efforts made by adults to help them?

b) What role can extracurricular or personal development programs play in positive youth development?

4.0. OBJECTIVES

The objective of the present study is to explore the roles extracurricular activities can play in positive youth development.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES ARE:

1. To understand youth perception towards extracurricular activities.

2. To understand the benefits of extracurricular activities in youth empowerment.

3. To describe the relationship between participation in specific activities and personal development skills.

5.0. METHOD AND DESIGN OF THE STUDY

The present study is established on both primary

and secondary data. Primary data is collected online using Google forms while secondary data has been collected through various books, journals, articles and websites. The exploratory nature of the study necessitated a quantitative approach in order to obtain the perceptions and feelings of respondents and the underlying issues. The study applied quantitative techniques using survey method targeting youth in pursuing their education in different institutions of the Garo Hills region of Meghalaya. The questions are formulated in a very simple easy to understand language.

5.0. THE POPULATION

The universe of the study or the population of the study covers the youth, both male and female, in the selected area between the ages of 15-24 years. From this the study population covers those youth who are presently pursuing their education in various institutions in Meghalaya.

5.2. SAMPLE SIZE

A total of 60 respondents were covered in the survey. Samples were collected through online forms and since all the questions were mandatory the responses that reached were all selected as all are duly filled.

5.4. TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

Questionnaire which was delivered online were employed to obtain the required data for the present study. The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of the questions related to biographical information. The second part consisted of 15 questions on their involvement in various extracurricular activities and the benefits received from them. Responses were coded using a seven point Likert-type scale.

Content validity of the instrument was established by a pilot test and also using logical thinking and checking whether items and questions cover the full range of the issue. 20 members not in the sample were used to pilot test the instrument to determine its face validity and assess internal reliability. Further face validity was covered by checking that each question or item has a logical link with the objective of the present study.

The instrument consisting of 22 items yielded Cronbach's coefficient alpha value 0.874. This indicates that the tool has high internal consistency since this value obtained is closer to 1.0. Hence it can be concluded that the tool is reliable.

TABLE 1

RELIABILITY OF RESEARCH TOOL

Statistical technique	Reliability Values
Cronbach's Alpha	.874

6.0. DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

The statistical package for Social Sciences program (SPSS) version 21 was used to analyse the data. First the statistical indicators were entered in the mentioned software. Descriptive statistics was used to analyse the demographic information of the qualified respondents and inferential statistics was used to further analyse the data. Cross tabulation was applied to understand the relationship between the variables. Pearson Chi-square test was used to find out the association between the selected variables.

7.0. RESULTS

7.1. RESPONDENTS PROFILE

The table below shows the profile of the respondents.

TABLE 2

RESPONDENT'S PROFILE

Profile	Valid	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	28	46.7
	Female	32	53.3
Age	15-17	14	23.3
	18-20	18	30
	21-24	28	46.7
Educational Qualification	Pursuing HSLC	12	20
	Pursuing Graduation	24	40
	Professional courses	9	15
	Other	15	25
Grades in School	Mostly A's	19	31.7
	Mostly B's	35	58.3
	Mostly C's	4	6.7
	Mostly D's	2	3.3
Total		60	100

The analysed data showed that 28 of respondents were male and 32 of the respondents were female. 14 of the respondents are of the age between 15-17, 18 of them between 18-20, and 28 between 21-24. 12 of them revealed that they are pursuing Higher secondary course, 24 of them pursing graduation, 9 of them are doing professional course and 15 said others. It would mean that they are engaged at the moment in some other courses but are affiliated to an institution. With regards to the grades they used to obtain in school or college, 19 of them said mostly A's, 35 said mostly B's, 4 mostly C's and 2 mostly D's.

7.2. OBJECTIVE 1: YOUTH'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

A question was asked if the respondents involve themselves in extracurricular activities. The analysis showed that 55 of the respondents said yes and 5 said no.

An option was provided for the respondents to tick the various groups in which they involve themselves or affiliate themselves to. 31 out of 60 respondents ticked Religious organisations or groups while 17 out of 60 responded School/college/Community service

organisation (NSS etc.). 4 of them said Athletics, another 4 said Departmental clubs such as Science club, drill club, music club, dance club etc., while 1 out of 60 said Special interest groups such as chess, drill team, scouts/guides, YCS, NCC etc. and 3 out of 60 responded they join student organisation.

To the question how often are you engaged in your extracurricular activities 32 of them out of 60 responded 'sometimes', 19 of them said 'every time', 4 said 'once in a while' and 5 responded 'others'.

To the question who motivated you to join the group majority of them that is 31 out of 60 (51.7%) claimed that they did so on their own. While 13 (21.7%) claimed friends motivated them, 7(11.7%) said their parents motivated them, 7(21.7%) said teachers while 2(3.3%) opted for others option. From the findings it is clear that majority of them joined the groups or events for extracurricular activities on their own. While there are few who need to be encouraged or motivated by some others friends, parents or teachers. It could be that peer pressure too has been instrumental in doing so.

The analysis showed that 18 of them that is 30% rated their extent of interest in such programs as 5 for the range from 1 to 5, 15 of them 4, 13 of them 3, 11 of them 2 and 3 rated 1.

With regard to the analysis on their perception about the program 78.3 per cent (47 out of 60) rated 2 for likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. 18.3 per cent (11 out of 60) rated 4 while 3.3 per cent (2 out of 60) rated 5.

Respondents were sought about their perception about various co-curricular activities conducted in their institution. 47 out of 60 (87.3%) said it is value addition, 11 out of 60 (18.3%) said it is opportunity for enjoyment and 2 out of 60 (3.3%) said they joined just for the sake of joining.

7.3. OBJECTIVE 2: BENEFITS OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES IN YOUTH EMPOWERMENT

To the question which activity benefits you the most in enhancing your skills 25 out of 60 (41.7%) said skill oriented programs, 11 out of 60 (18.3%) said career guidance seminars, 10 out of 60 (16.7%) said sports, 9 out of 60 (15%) said classes and 5 out of 60 (8.3%) said clubs/groups. From the analysis it can be seen that majority are of the opinion that skill oriented programs benefits them the most.

To the question which skills learnt from extracurricular activities do you think have more weightage in corporates majority of them that is 56.7 per cent (34 out of 60) opted for the option 'All of the above'. The options given were: confidence, motivation, team work, soft skills, General knowledge, leadership, all of the above, others. 15 per cent (9 out of 60) said confidence, 11.7 per cent (7 out of 60) said Team work, 5 per cent each for soft skills and leadership and 3.3 per cent each for motivation and General knowledge.

7.4. OBJECTIVE 3: RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPATION IN SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SKILLS

TABLE 3

CHI SQUARE TEST BETWEEN THE AGE OF THE RESPONDENTS AND THE FREQUENCY OF THEIR INVOLVEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Statistics	Age of the Respondents	Frequency of engagement in Extracurricular Activities
Chi-Square	5.200[a]	35.067[b]
Df	2	3
Asymp. Sig.	.074	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 20.0.		
b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.		

The sample included 60 respondents. The Pearson Chi-square test was undertaken between the age of the youth and the frequency of their engagement in extracurricular activities as shown in Table 3. The calculated value obtained is 5.2000 for the age of the youth respondents for 2 degrees of freedom. While for frequency of engagement in extracurricular activities the calculated Pearson Chi-square value is 35.067 for 3 degrees of freedom. The table value of Chi-square for 2 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 5.991 and the table value of Chi-square for 3 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 7.815. The calculated value is greater than the table value. This indicates that there is a significant association between the age of the respondents and the frequency of involvement in the extracurricular activities. In other words it can be interpreted that as they grow in age they involve themselves more in various extracurricular activities.

TABLE 4

CHI SQUARE TEST BETWEEN THE GRADES OBTAINED BY THE RESPONDENTS IN SCHOOL/COLLEGE AND FREQUENCY OF THEIR ENGAGEMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Statistics	Grades obtained in school/college	Frequency of engagement in Extracurricular Activities
Chi-Square	47.067[a]	35.067[a]
df	3	3
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.		

The Pearson Chi-square test was done to find the association between the grades obtained by the respondents in school/college and the frequency of engagement in extracurricular activities, obtained value is

47.067 for grades obtained and 35.067 for frequency of engagement for 3 degrees of freedom. The table value of Chi-square for 3 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 7.815. The calculated value of Chi-square is higher than this table value indicating the existence of a significant association between the grades obtained in school/college and the frequency of their involvement in extracurricular activities. The frequency of their engagement is dependent on the grades obtained in school or college.

TABLE 5

CHI SQUARE TEST BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION AND BENEFITS OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Statistics	Educational Qualification of the respondents	Benefits Received
Chi-Square	6.533[a]	43.167[b]
df	3	4
Asymp. Sig.	.088	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.		
b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 12.0.		

On analysis of the data using Pearson Chi-square test to understand the association between the educational qualification of the respondents and the benefits or helps received by participating in various extracurricular activities obtained value is 6.533 for educational qualification and 43.167 for benefits received. The degree of freedom is 3 and 4 respectively. The table value of Chi-square for 3 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 7.815 and the table value of Chi-square for 4 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level is 9.488. The obtained value for educational qualification of the respondents is lesser than the table value and hence it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between the educational qualification and the benefits received from participating in extracurricular activities.

TABLE 6

CHI SQUARE TEST BETWEEN GRADES OBTAINED IN SCHOOL/COLLEGE AND BENEFITS RECEIVED

Statistics	Grades in school/college	Benefits Received
Chi-Square	47.067[a]	43.167[b]
df	3	4
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000
a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 15.0.		
b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 12.0.		

The statistical analysis undertaken to understand the association between the grades obtained by the respondents in school/college and the help received in participating in various extracurricular activities using Pearson Chi-square showed the obtained value 47.067 for the educational qualification for 3 degrees of freedom and obtained Chi-square value 43.167 for 4 degrees of freedom. The table value of Chi-square for 3 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level of significance is 7.815 and the table value of Chi-square for 4 degrees of freedom at 0.05 level is 9.488. Hence it is evident that the obtained value is greater than the table value. It is clear from the result that there is enough evidence to affirm that there is an association between the educational qualification of the respondents and the benefits received.

8.0. DISCUSSION

The study revealed that majority of the respondents is appreciative of the various activities that are being conducted in their institution. Further the study yielded an amazing result to the question what is your perception about such programs or activities. Majority that is more than half opined it is value addition. A few of them said that they join the groups or activity clubs for enjoyment and few still 'for the sake of joining'. Responses to the other options 'waste of time' and 'burden' were nil. Definitely such activities are worth participating and are platforms for self-formation and self-transformation. It is an opportunity to help them enhance their skills and add extra value to their job opportunity prospect. Working in groups and interacting with peers have given them hands-on experience, helped to boost their confidence, teamwork, in some cases soft skill, leadership qualities, motivation and increased their general knowledge. In other words involvement and participation in various activities facilitates integral formation. The analysis showed that the representatives of the young people in the study population preferred skill oriented programs to other types. As revealed by the analysis majority joined the group on their own will. This indicates self-interest or taking responsibility upon oneself for auto-formation. It implies that the youth take life and their future seriously and have understood the implications of such involvement. This necessitates saying that effort to conduct such programs is not all in vain. The recipients do appreciate them and benefit from them. Again, the findings of the study revealed that the age of the youth is associated to the frequency of their involvement in various extracurricular activities. It was also found that educational qualification of the youth is also associated with the benefits or help gained from taking part in various extracurricular activities whereas the analysis done employing Pearson Chi-square test revealed that age of the respondents is independent on the benefits or experience gained. The more educated they are they understand better the implications of participating in various activities and hence that would be an incentive for them to be a part of extracurricular activities, hence are the beneficiaries.

9.0. CONCLUSION

The present study has brought to light insights that can be useful for better nurturing of youth, the future

of the society. It has looked into the youth perception towards personal development programs. The findings revealed that majority of them are appreciative and found participating in extracurricular activities beneficial. It is a value addition program. They help in enhancing one's skills. Involvement gives them an opportunity to do by themselves which by itself is a learning process. Skills acquired also add extra value to their job prospects and better opportunity for recruitment in various capacities or gives them wings to follow their dreams. Though the study is done on students who are still pursuing their studies at different institutions it was found that for majority of them extracurricular activities do not hinder their academics much though for some it does. It only implies that there should be a balance. This was further cross checked by conducting chi-square test to find the relationship between the grades obtained in schools/colleges and the frequency of their participation. The analysis showed that there is an association between the variables. This posit that the young people should be able to know themselves and judge for themselves what is to be done and how. They should learn to balance things in life. As per their need that is according to their aptitudes and calibre their involvement and time given for extracurricular activities should be regulated. And here it necessitates to cite that supervision or oversee of adult is crucial. Young people need guidance. So adults responsible for the young people; could be parents, teachers or coordinators or those conducting the programs should be able to counsel the youth according to their capability and aptitude. They should know well the individual youth they are dealing with and give them pointers as to how to go about. In this way they will be capacitated to form themselves and prepare themselves to face the challenges life offers. Pearson Chi-square test showed that age is dependent on the frequency of their involvement in various activities, so it is with educational status. And again educational qualification is associated to the benefits they receive from participation in the activities while it is independent of their age attained.

Ultimately, extracurricular activities are not obsolete and it is still an important means of forming the young mind to emerge as successful human beings and be an asset to the society. All the stakeholders, parents, teachers, youth workers and policy makers can seriously take upon themselves to motivate and boost up their interest. This will usher in proper platform for positive youth development. The youth of any society are an asset. Fostering their formation in right direction is assuring a bright future, promising citizen and a developed State.

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