

Book Reviews

Empowerment of Marginalized Youth by Amala Jeya Rayan A., New Delhi, Abhijeet Publications, 2014, 278 pages, ₹ 1160, ISBN 978-93-5074-130-6.

Empowerment of Marginalized Youth is a research publication; a research on the street youths from the four cities of Tamil Nadu namely Chennai, Salem, Coimbatore and Tirupur. The author has been working for fifteen years amongst the marginalized youth. The first chapter discusses the Indian youth, in particular, the marginalized youth; youth at various stages of life: childhood, adolescence and adulthood. The chapter discusses the various facets of marginalized youth explained by Kalam, Arimpoor, Andy Furlong, Yates and others. The youth who are on the streets and slums with or without their families, working and fending for themselves are termed as marginalized youth. Though the work focuses on the larger cities of Tamil Nadu, it is of vital importance to know that the rural youth in India are the most disadvantaged group. These are the youth who ultimately migrate to the cities. Drug abuse and alcoholism leading to suicide and crime plague these youths. The different dimensions of marginalization are dealt in brief so as to situate the topic of empowerment of the marginalized youth.

The second chapter is the literature review, dealing in depth with the concept and content of empowerment of the marginalized youth. National and international researches and books on the concept of empowerment of marginalized youth also form a part of this chapter. The first section deals with the concepts of empowerment, followed by the dimensions of integral empowerment of marginalized youth such as Protective Environment, Education, Vocational Skills and Life Skills. Various terminologies like 'youth work', 'youth service', 'youth welfare', 'youth development', 'youth empowerment', are used, to understand young people. However, there seems to be a thin line differentiating these terms. The six models of youth work by Cooper and White has been discussed in this chapter. The concept of empowerment has been clearly elaborated in its many dimensions. Some of the areas discussed are Empowerment as Power Generation, Empowerment as Process, Empowerment and Resources, Empowerment at the Psychological Level, Social Networks and Empowerment, Empowerment and Participation and Empowerment and Education. The author explains the dimensions of education in empowering the youth; development of any nation depends upon its educational system. He emphasizes upon the importance of the goal of education being both spiritual and moral. The author states that with education the marginalized youth can get vocational training, which in turn makes the youth employable. The author also discusses the importance of life skills; situation analysis, emotional management, communication competency and stress management skills. The chapter emphasizes on the need of empowerment model as the right approach to youth work. The researcher proposes an integral empowerment model for the empowerment of marginalized youth. The various dimensions include Protective Environment, Education, Vocational Skills

and Life Skills. The author concludes this chapter by stating that the four dimensions are not separate and distinct from each other but they are inter-related and inter-dependent. Each dimension paves the way and supports the other. It is a process to be continued all through life.

As with any research work, methodology is elaborately discussed in the third chapter. The chapter deals with, procedure of selection of samples and the methods and tools adopted in collecting the required data. The need of the study, research problem, objectives, population and sampling, questionnaire, interviews, group discussions and various case studies are also clearly explained in this chapter. The author states that the increase in the number of street and working children, who have been deprived of basic rights, discriminated and exploited in various ways has led to this research work. Working with youth is a challenge, since no single model for working with youth exists. The main objective of the study is: "To propose an integral model of Empowerment of marginalized youth and to study its various dimensions." The research is an outcome of three years of study in the four major cities of Tamil Nadu focusing on many NGOs and four Don Bosco institutions. Quantitative and qualitative analysis were used for the study. The tools of data collection included questionnaire, focused group discussions, semi-structured interviews, informal observation and case study.

No research work is without limitations, and here too the author has had certain limitations. The researcher used Purposive sampling which is a non probability sampling. Hence, no hypotheses were developed to be tested. Further, the study was restricted to the four hundred respondents from the selected four cities, which limits the findings of the study being applicable to marginalized youth in general. Youth behaviour are different in different parts of the country; social, cultural and economic background being different. Hence, the limitation lies in the scope of the study and the implementation of the recommendations. The author also assumes that, as the questionnaire had to be translated to Tamil there could be chances of ambiguity and mis-conceptualization of matters in the questions.

Chapter four is devoted to the analysis and interpretation of the data with the help of statistical tools and techniques. The chapter has been divided into five main sections. Section one presents the profile of the respondents while the subsequent sections present the four major dimensions of empowerment. Tables and figures have been used to present the data analyzed. The qualitative data from the focus group discussions, observations, and semi-structured interview is presented throughout the chapter, as per the topic of discussion. The analysis and interpretation analyzed the profile of the respondents, paying attention to their current status of empowerment. The interpretation shows that the respondents see themselves better than before, after having spent a minimum of one year in some rehabilitation programme. The interpretation also shows that the respondents enjoyed the protective environment where their needs were met and their education has enhanced their personal and social dimension of life. The interpretation also shows that the vocational skills have given confidence that they

can make a living for themselves and their dependents. However, it has been observed that some respondents are dependent either on the NGO or their families. The author observes that though the knowledge and training of life skills have begun, the process of empowerment needs further conscious effort and practice. However, not all the life skills are known and have become part of the respondents. The case studies clearly portray the need of each of the dimensions for the empowerment of the marginalized youth.

The last chapter presents the major findings of the study, the recommendations of the researcher and ends with conclusion. The findings are presented according to the objectives and various dimensions of empowerment of marginalized youth. Recommendations of the study presented, manifests the usefulness of the research both for policy and for practice in the empowerment of the marginalized youth and for further research. The researcher noticed a need for an integral model of empowerment of the marginalized youth. Hence, he has proposed an integral model of empowerment and has identified the four dimensions of the marginalized youth: Protective Environment, Education, Vocational Skills and Life Skills. Protective Environment assures safety and freedom, protection from all types of abuses, provision of basic needs and opportunities for growth and development. Education ensures development of one's physical, mental, social and spiritual capacities enabling the person to lead a responsible life fulfilling one's duties and asserting one's rights. Vocational Skills make the marginalized youth employable, creates an identity in the society and makes them more social. Life Skills helps them develop a positive behaviour and well-being and to adapt effectively to demanding life situations. The author observes that the four dimensions are interlinked and interdependent, playing an equal role in the empowerment of the marginalized youth.

The author in his final conclusion states, that commitment to one's duties and social responsibilities would facilitate the process of social inclusion and lead to the empowerment of marginalized youth. He is hopeful of future research developing empowerment scale for the marginalized youth, and youth development index and training modules for the marginalized youth to bring them out of their deprived state.

The outcome of the research work seems to be quite similar to almost every state of India; the difference being in the economic, social and cultural aspects in different parts of our country. Youth today, of the globalised world, are plagued by similar issues everywhere. Youth from low income households, minority youths, and youth from broken families face a series of barriers to success that may have negative implications both today and in the future. What is more difficult is to carefully document those problems across a broad spectrum of contexts. Moreover, it is difficult to assess the extent to which interventions can alleviate these causal impacts of disadvantage on a long term basis. However, the findings of the research publication could be used by many social organisations in partnership with local authorities in order to better implement the recommendations. Numerous studies have shown that the disadvantaged youth who obtain less education, or who are educated in lower quality schools, have worse

life outcomes. More such research needs to be carried out in different parts of the country so that we may be able to develop a common model of youth empowerment. India needs to take care of its most prized possession, the youth, and that is possible with more substantial research work and the monitored implementation of the various outcomes of research work.