COURSE CODE: PSYC448

COURSE TITLE: COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY

SESSION #12: Citizen Participation and Citizen Empowerment

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Welcome to session 12. In session 11, you learned about the evaluation of social and community intervention programmes, the types of programme evaluation available, as well as the reasons for programme evaluation. In this session, you will learn about the concepts of “citizen participation” and “citizen empowerment”. It will also help you to identify characteristics of citizen participation and citizen empowerment as well as advantages and disadvantages of both concepts.
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Defining citizen participation (CP)
- Forms of citizen participation
- Advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation
- Factors promoting citizen participation
- Role of power in citizen participation
- Defining citizen empowerment (CE)
- Characteristics of citizen empowerment
- Intersection between CP and CE
- Role of social power in CP and CE.
The goals of this session are to:

- Demonstrate the ability to explain citizen participation and citizen empowerment.
- Demonstrate the ability to identify forms of citizen participation.
- Demonstrate the ability to discuss advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation.
- Demonstrate the ability to describe the role of power in citizen participation and citizen empowerment.
Session Learning Objectives

• The desired measureable learning objectives students will achieve upon completion of this session are to.
  – Explain the concepts of “citizen participation” and “citizen empowerment”.
  – Discuss advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation.
  – List some forms of citizen participation.
  – Describe some qualities of effective citizen participation and citizen empowerment.
Session Learning Outcomes

• By the end of this session, you should be able to:
  – Define the concepts of “citizen participation” and “citizen empowerment”.
  – Critically evaluate forms of citizen participation.
  – List and discuss advantages and disadvantages of citizen participation and citizen empowerment.
  – Engage in citizen participation in your school, workplace, or community.
  – Describe some qualities of effective citizen participation and citizen empowerment.
This week, complete the following tasks:

• Log onto the UG Sakai LMS course site: http://sakai.ug.edu.gh/XXXXXXXXX

• Watch the Videos for Session 12—Citizen Participation and Citizen Empowerment.

• Review Lecture Slides for Session 12 – Citizen Participation and Citizen Empowerment.


• Visit the Chat Room and discuss the Forum question for Session 12.
Reading List

• **Required Text**

  • Akotia, C. S. (2014). Community psychology: Moving psychology into the community. In C. S. Akotia & C. C. Mate-Kole (Eds.), *Contemporary psychology: Readings from Ghana* (pp. 163-177). Tema: Digibooks Ghana Ltd.


Topic One

DEFINING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
Citizen participation “is a process in which individuals take part in decision-making in the institutions, programmes, and environments that affect them” (Wandersman, 1984, p. 339).

**Keywords in definition:**

- Decision-making
- Institutions, programmes and environments
Defining Citizen Participation

- **Keywords in definition:**
- **Decision-making:** It involves making one’s voice heard and influencing decisions in democratic ways. In other words, it has to do with taking collective decisions in groups, communities, and society.
Defining Citizen Participation

• Keywords in definition:

• Institutions, programmes & environments:
  – They include workplaces, hospitals, neighbourhoods, schools, religious congregations, & society at large.
  – They also include grassroot organisations such as block associations, political pressure group, labour unions formed to influence larger environments.
Defining Citizen Participation

- Keywords in definition:
- Institutions, programmes & environments:
Defining Citizen Participation

- Keywords in definition:
- Institutions, programmes & environments:
Topic Two

FORMS OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
Forms of Citizen Participation

- Citizen participation can take a number of forms. Some of these forms are as follows.

1. Grass-root activism
Forms of Citizen Participation

• Citizen participation can take a number of forms. Some of these forms are as follows.

2. Electoral participation
Citizen participation can take a number of forms. Some of these forms are as follows.

3. Government-mandated citizen participation (e.g. national sanitation day)
Forms of Citizen Participation

• Other forms of citizen participation:
  i. Writing a letter to the editor of newspaper.
  ii. Meeting a government official (e.g., Parliamentarian of your constituency) to press for an action on a community problem.
  iii. Attending a town hall meeting to discuss community development problem (e.g. water shortage).
Topic Three

ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES OF CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
Advantages and Disadvantages of Citizen Participation

• Is citizen participation a **means** to an end or is it an **end in itself**?

• Citizen participation may be considered a means, a path to a goal, or an end in itself.

• **Means**: As a means, citizen participation stems from the need to improve the quality of collective decision-making.

• **End**: As an end, citizen participation is viewed as a quality of a democratic process, regardless of whether or not this process leads better decisions and actions.
Advantages of Citizen Participation

1. Increases the quality of decisions that are made.
2. Increases citizens’ commitment and motivation.
3. Ensures the continuity, survival and sustainability of community projects.
4. Helps build a sense of community, social consensus and cohesiveness.
5. Deepens understanding of group dynamics.
6. Promotes democracy and accelerates community development.
7. Individuals acquire life skills and competencies that can be helpful later in life.
8. Promotes dignity, self-confidence, and high self-esteem.
Disadvantages of Citizen Participation

1. It may not always lead to better decisions, especially where there is conflict and where expertise may be lacking.
2. It may bring about delay in decision-making.
3. It may bring about social loafing.
4. It can lead to time-consuming in decision-making.
5. It may have huge financial costs because many people have to be involved.
6. Larger non-participating community members can cause a smaller participating citizen group to fail or can delay results of citizen participation.
Topic Four

FACTORS PROMOTING CITIZEN PARTICIPATION
Factors Promoting Citizen Participation

- Perceived threat to community life.
- Perceived benefit to the individual and community.
- When citizens have the knowledge, skills, time, and ability.
- When citizens feel obliged to serve their community.
- When citizens feel the need to activate their religious beliefs.
- When individuals feel personally motivated.
- Having certain personality factors (OCEAN).
Factors Promoting Citizen Participation

• Creating awareness and providing relevant information.
• Having knowledge and skills regarding participation.
• Creating and assigning participatory roles to members.
• Strengthening citizens’ sense of community.
• Involving influential people, local heroes, and role models.
Topic Five

DEFINING CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT
Defining Citizen Empowerment

- Citizen empowerment is broader than “women empowerment”. And it is not for women only.
Rappaport (1987) defines citizen empowerment as "a process, a mechanism by which people, organizations, and communities gain mastery over their affairs" (p. 122).

- Rappaport & others adopted the Cornell Empowerment Group’s definition.
Defining Citizen Empowerment

• Citizen empowerment is “an intentional, ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation, through which people lacking an equal share of resources gain greater access to and control over those resources” (cited in Wiley & Rappaport, 2000, p. 62).
Defining Citizen Empowerment

- Citizen empowerment:
Topic Six

CHARACTERISTICS OF EMPOWERMENT
Characteristics of Empowerment

- Characteristics of citizen empowerment:
  1. A multilevel concept (i.e. individuals, organisations, communities, societies can become empowered).
  2. A bottom-up approach (i.e. action originates from the grassroots level and reflects attempts by ordinary people to take control of their lives).
  3. Contextual (i.e. it differs across organisations, localities, communities, and cultures).
  4. Dynamic process (i.e. it develops over time, it can deteriorate or grow).
Characteristics of Empowerment

• Communities and organisations can be described as empowering or empowered.

1. **Empowering organisations**: They foster member participation and sharing of power in group decision-making and actions.

2. **Empowered organisations**: They exercise power in the wider community or society, influencing decisions and helping to create community change.
Characteristics of Empowerment

- Qualities of “empowering” communities:
  - They have group-based and strength-based belief systems.
  - They have opportunity and role structures.
  - They have shared, inspiring leadership.
  - They have peer social support systems.
  - They promote human diversity.
  - They foster inter-group collaborations.
  - They have task-focus orientations.
  - They have inclusive decision-making procedures.
  - They have participatory reward systems.
Topic Seven

EXERCISE
Exercise

• **Exercise 1:** From your knowledge of the characteristics of empowering and empowered communities, would you describe your community as an “empowering” or “empowered” one? And why?
Topic Eight

INTERSECTION BETWEEN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION & CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT
Citizen participation intertwines with citizen empowerment as well as with sense of community.

**Similarity**: Both citizen participation and citizen empowerment involve exercising power in collective decision-making (Dalton et al., 2007).

**Difference**: Participation is a *behaviour*, but empowerment is a *broader process*, which includes variables that may lead to citizen participation, accompany it or result from it (Dalton et al., 2007).

**Relationship**: The two concepts are equally important and mutually reinforcing.
Intersection Between Citizen Participation & Citizen Empowerment

• Qualities for effective citizen participation and citizen empowerment
• Critical awareness
• Participatory skills/competence
• Sense of collective efficacy
• Sense of personal participatory efficacy
• Participatory values and commitment
• Relational connections
Topic Nine

ROLE OF POWER IN CITIZEN PARTICIPATION & CITIZEN EMPOWERMENT
Role of Power in Citizen Participation & Citizen Empowerment

• Understanding citizen participation and citizen empowerment requires that the concept of “power” be considered.
• One school of thought says **three sources of power** determine social relationships in communities and societies (Rudkin, 2003). These are:
  1. **Power over**
  2. **Power to**
  3. **Power from**
Role of Power in Citizen Participation & Citizen Empowerment

- Three sources of power (Rudkin, 2003):
  1. **Power over**: It is the capacity to compel or dominate other people. It involves the ability to issue and enforce commands. Its use tacitly suggests that if others do not comply, sanctions be may applied. Use of “power over” gives rise to a hierarchical, unequal relationship that can lead to injustice in a social situation.
  2. **Power to**: It has to do with the capacity of a person or a group to pursue their own goals in order to enhance their knowledge base. The use of this power to doesn’t involve coercion. While power to relates to personal determination on the part of a person, it doesn’t lead to cooperative activities.
  3. **Power from**: 
Role of Power in Citizen Participation & Citizen Empowerment

- **Three sources of power** (Rudkin, 2003):
  
  3. **Power from**: It is an ability to resist the power or unwanted demands of a dominant authority figure or friend. For example, people can use “power from” to circumvent a manager’s orders by reporting him or her to higher management.

In summary, citizen can gain social power by working together to offset the power of organised money or powerful individuals or organisations.
Topic Ten

FORUM QUESTION
Forum Question

• **Question 1**: How should a local community in your country respond to incessant attacks from armed robbery?

• **Question 2**: A multinational company obtains a permit to dump human waste in your community for recycling purposes. After a few months of operation, your community could no longer stand the stench from the dumping site. Community members noticed later that the waste was actually contaminating their only source of drinking water. How would you mobilise social action against the company? And why is it important to do so?
References


