

PERCEIVED IMPACT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT INITIATIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING: INSIGHTS FROM THE SELECTED REHABILITATION CENTER IN BAGAMOYO, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, youth empowerment initiatives have emerged as vital components in promoting the mental health and well-being of young people, especially in communities grappling with social, economic, and psychological challenges. In Tanzania, where nearly sixty per cent of the population is under the age of 25, the need to focus on youth empowerment is particularly critical. This essay delved into the perceived impact of such initiatives, specifically those implemented by the youth rehabilitation organisation in Bagamoyo. The participants involved project facilitators, counsellors, the District Medical Officer, the youths with mental illness and health care professionals. Methods of data collection were interviews and focus group discussions. The results show that there was a positive perception of the impact of youth empowerment initiatives on mental health and well-being. These positive impacts include the reduction of youth's anxiety and depression in a rehabilitation center, improvement in emotional regulation among youth with mental illness, enhanced resilience and coping mechanisms among youth with mental illness, enhanced sense of community and belonging among youth with mental illness, adoption of healthier lifestyle choices among youths with mental illness and reduction in risky behaviours among youth with mental illness. Therefore, this study recommends that collective measures be taken by the government of the United Republic of Tanzania in collaboration with the rehabilitation centers to enhance the mental health and well-being of the youths.

Keywords: Youth empowerment, mental health, well-being, rehabilitation, Tanzania.