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Exploring the Practices and Challenges of Social Networks in Facilitating Community Mobilization in North Wollo Zone: An Emphasis on The Self-Mobilization Approach

BY

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the Practices and Challenges of Social Networks in Facilitating Community Mobilization in North Wollo Zone through self-mobilisation approach.

To achieve this objective, exploratory research design and qualitative data gathering instruments such as key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews was employed. The data were collected from 40 focus group discussion participants, 44 in-depth interviews, and 16 for key informant interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. The study revealed several key ways in which social networks facilitate community mobilization in the North Wollo Zone. 1. *Information dissemination and awareness raising, building Trust and encouraging participation resource mobilization and conflict resolution and Consensus building. 2.* Community members expressed a strong sense of ownership, enhances collaboration and unity within the community, and empowerment when engaging in self-mobilization efforts. 3. The challenges are lack of resources and capacity building limitations are the challenges contribute to

the failure of social networking for community mobilization. 4. Social networking in community mobilization provided opportunities for innovation and the development of local solutions tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the community.

Key Words: *Social Networking1, community mobilization practices.2 and challenges3*

1. Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to discuss the occurrence of community development within a community where its members actively participate in the process. Hence, the focus, Self-mobilization is achieved when a community organizes itself and takes accountability for managing its issues. This includes identifying problems, developing solutions, implementing them, and ensuring their success (Cheetham, 2002). Therefore, the significance of community participation in the development process cannot be overstated (Cleaver, 1999). Without the active involvement of the community, community development cannot be realized.

The conventional growth-oriented top-down development strategy, as stated by, Narayanan (2003), has not been successful in achieving the desired trickling-down of the benefits of development to the marginalized sections. The programs, which are administered by 'outsiders' including the government, tend to view people as mere 'objects' of development, (Cleaver, 1999). These agencies provide things and services based on 'what they can' rather than 'what people need'. The failures of plans and programs have led to disillusionment among policy-makers, administrators, and donor agencies, who now recognize the need to understand local realities.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of community participation, (Watson-Thompson et al., 2008), across various applied disciplines, including international development studies, policy studies, urban planning, and community development. However, coalface experiences have highlighted theoretical and practical contradictions of participatory development. In July 2008, the Community Development Journal's special issue on 'Participatory Approaches in Community Development' engaged critically with this space, drawing on deconstructions and reconstructions of participation from international development studies.

The gradual emergence of the concepts of participation and empowerment in development literature has been attributed to the need for understanding local realities (Woldegies, 2016). In recent years, these twin concepts have been positioned at the center of both radical and mainstream perspectives on development (Pradeep, 2003). On one hand, participation is presented as the rightful claim of excluded sections, while on the other hand, it is also used to perpetuate and disguise continued top-down approaches.

Participation is ultimately a discourse, (Eversole, 2012; Pradeep, 2003), a way of speaking, signaling (in an implicit binary) that we-as-professionals believe that they-as-communities have something important to contribute to the process of social change.

Community Participation can be generally defined as a 'process' in which individuals who are expected to benefit from local development influence the direction and execution of project activities, rather than solely receiving a portion of the benefit, (Awortwi, 2013). It involves households or community members taking an active role in identifying their needs, prioritizing those needs, mobilizing internal and external resources, and implementing activities towards achieving their objectives.

Community mobilization, where people unite to take action on an issue, can boost social connectedness and efficacy, (Lippman et al., 2018). Youth involvement in planning and community action can promote healthy youth development and counter low efficacy. When at-risk youth help define community problems, solutions and gain a sense of ownership, responsibility, and development. Since the 1980s, community partnerships have emerged as a strategy for addressing complex societal concerns, including youth violence prevention. However, the community is often viewed as an unchangeable risk factor, and youth as the source of the problem.

Community mobilization, (Wang et al., 2021), is a process of engaging people to take collective action to achieve a common goal. It involves building social networks, identifying common concerns, and developing strategies to address them. Social networks, (Edmonds & Meyer, 2013), are critical for community mobilization because they provide a platform for communication, collaboration, and collective action. In this literature review, we had explore the role of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in North Wollo Zone and how self-mobilization approaches can empower communities to take collective action.

The Ethiopian government has prioritized the promotion of community mobilization and self-empowerment in its development initiatives, (Alemu et al.,2002). The country's development strategy, known as the Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP), emphasizes the need for inclusive and participatory development that involves local communities in decision-making processes, (Ohno, 2009).

The government has implemented various programs to support community mobilization and self-empowerment, such as the Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) and the Community-Based Health Extension Program (CBHEP). These initiatives aim to enhance the capacity of communities to address their own needs and improve their livelihoods.

However, (Watson-Thompson et al., 2008), there have been criticisms that these programs do not go far enough in promoting genuine community participation and self-mobilization. Some argue that the government's emphasis on top-down planning and implementation may limit the potential for grassroots mobilization and empowerment, (Alemu et al., 2002).

Furthermore, there have been concerns about the government's approach to civil society organizations and their role in community mobilization, (Mequanent, 1998). There have been instances of restrictions on the activities of NGOs and civil society groups, which can hinder their ability to support community mobilization efforts.

Overall, while the Ethiopian government has made efforts to promote community mobilization and self-empowerment in its development initiatives, there is still room for improvement. A more bottom-up approach that emphasizes genuine community participation and engagement may be necessary to fully realize the potential of these initiatives. Additionally, (Yeneabat & Butterfield, 2012) ensuring the autonomy and freedom of civil society organizations can support their role in promoting community mobilization.

Social networks are groups of people who are connected through social relationships, such as family, friends, and colleagues. They play a crucial role in community mobilization because they provide access to information, resources, and social support. Social networks can also facilitate the exchange of ideas and the formation of alliances, (Lippman et al., 2018), which are critical for building collective power.

Social relations pertain to the interactions among neighbors, such as borrowing or lending tools, informal visiting, and seeking help in an emergency, (Unger & Wandersman, 1985). Through these interactions, neighbors extend emotional/personal, instrumental, and informational support to one another. When individuals experience a sense of community, they are more inclined to engage with the residents in their locality, (McMillan & Chavis, 1986: (Unger & Wandersman, 1982). Simultaneously, the positive face-to-face contact of neighboring further strengthens the shared emotional bond that fosters a sense of community, (McMillan & Chavis, 1986).

Social networks play a crucial role in facilitating self-mobilization efforts within communities. These networks can take various forms, including family ties, friendships, religious affiliations, and professional associations, (Edmonds & Meyer, 2013). The characteristics of these networks can greatly influence the success of community mobilization efforts. For instance, larger networks may provide a broader base of support for mobilization efforts, while more diverse networks can help to bring together individuals from different backgrounds and perspectives. Similarly, networks built on trust and shared values are likely to be more effective in mobilizing resources and generating momentum towards a common goal.

The development, support, and supplementation of the neighborhood association's efforts are facilitated by the social network within a community. This is achieved through the sharing of information about the association and the promotion of coproduction of services, such as sanitation and security, through informal social control, as stated by, (Rich, 1979). Generally, residents who engage in social interactions with their neighbors are more likely to be aware of local voluntary organizations and become members, as noted by, Wandersman & Giamartino (1980) and Wandersman et al. (1981).

It is particularly true for neighbors who possess a greater number of friends in their vicinity and maintain close ties with neighbors whom they rely upon for socioemotional and instrumental support (Ahlbrandt & Cunningham, 1979; Hunter, 1974). The presence of social networks within a neighborhood helps regulate social behavior through normative mechanisms called informal social control (cf. Merry, 1987). After conducting an extensive review of the literature, Greenberg

and, (Rohe, 1985), concluded that while much more research needs to be done, there is evidence for a negative relationship between informal social control.

Overall, social networks are a key component of self-mobilization efforts within communities. By understanding the characteristics and dynamics of these networks, individuals and groups can work to leverage their power to effect positive change.

Self-mobilization is the process of individuals coming together to initiate and drive community-based activities and projects that are aimed at promoting community development, (Awortwi, 2013). It is a powerful tool that can bring about positive changes in society by encouraging individuals to work collaboratively towards achieving common goals.

Community development is the process of enhancing the capacity of individuals and groups within a community to take control of their lives and make decisions that affect them, (Awortwi, 2013). Self-mobilization can contribute significantly to community development by giving individuals a sense of ownership and responsibility for their community's development. When individuals come together to initiate and drive activities and projects, they take ownership of the process and become more invested in the outcome.

Self-mobilization can bring about community development in several ways. Firstly, it fosters a sense of community ownership and responsibility. When individuals come together to initiate activities and projects, they take responsibility for the outcome. They become invested in the process and are more likely to work towards achieving positive results. This sense of ownership can be a powerful motivator for individuals to become active participants in their community's development.

Secondly, self-mobilization promotes collective action. When individuals come together, they can pool their resources, skills, and knowledge to achieve common goals. This collaborative approach can be more effective than individual efforts, as it enables individuals to leverage their strengths and overcome their weaknesses. Collective action can also help to build social capital within a community, as it fosters relationships and trust between individuals.

Thirdly, self-mobilization can help to build community resilience. By working together, individuals can develop the skills and knowledge needed to respond to challenges and crises. They can also develop networks and support systems that can help them to cope with adversity. This resilience-building process can help communities to become more self-sufficient and less reliant on external assistance.

Fourthly, self-mobilization can promote community-led development. When individuals take ownership of the development process, they are more likely to prioritize activities and projects that are relevant to their needs and aspirations. This community-led approach can be more effective than top-down approaches, as it ensures that development activities are driven by local priorities and are more likely to be sustainable in the long term.

In conclusion, self-mobilization is a powerful tool that can bring about community development. By fostering a sense of community ownership and responsibility, promoting collective action, building community resilience, and promoting community-led development, self-mobilization can help individuals and communities to take control of their lives and make decisions that affect them. It is a process that can enable communities to become more self-sufficient, resilient, and empowered, and can contribute significantly to positive social change, (Rashid Khan & Bibi, 2011).

Community development has been a crucial aspect of global development efforts for decades. However, traditional approaches to community mobilization have often relied on external actors and resources, leading to unsustainable outcomes. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of self-mobilization in achieving sustainable community development. The self-mobilization approach empowers communities to take charge of their own development and leverage their social networks to achieve their goals. This approach has the potential to be a game-changer in global development efforts, as it can lead to more sustainable and effective outcomes. In this study, we explore the role of social networks in community mobilization and examine the challenges and opportunities associated with the self-mobilization approach in North Wollo Zone.

Throughout the world, a multitude of research studies and in-depth discussions have been conducted to confirm the immense value and potential drawbacks of self-mobilization approaches. These approaches have been found to be highly effective in bringing about significant change within communities, particularly in addressing their most pressing needs and enhancing their capacity to achieve their desired development goals.

In fact, the implementation of self-mobilization approaches has been shown to yield a wide range of benefits, including increased community participation and engagement, enhanced social cohesion, and improved overall well-being. Moreover, these approaches have been found to be particularly effective in empowering marginalized and vulnerable populations, such as women, children, and individuals living in poverty.

Among researches conducted globally, (William. Nitzky, 2013), notes the positive impact of participatory approaches and networks on community mobilization efforts. The study further recommends the employment of such participatory approach for community development initiatives, (Awortwi, 2013).

Previous research, (Njeru, 2021), has shown that communities with strong social networks are more likely to mobilize and work together towards a common goal, such as improving access to healthcare or education. These social networks, (Molla, 2008), can provide a sense of community, trust, and shared responsibility, which can be leveraged to promote collective action and achieve meaningful change. However, it is important to also explore the challenges faced in leveraging these social networks for community mobilization, such as limited resources or competing priorities, in order to develop effective strategies that address these barriers.

In recent years, (Campbell, 2014), there has been growing interest among researchers and practitioners on the role of community mobilization and development in promoting empowerment and improving the lives of communities. Global research studies have provided important insights into the challenges, opportunities, and best practices for community mobilization and development.

Three notable studies that have contributed to this field include "Social Capital, Community Governance and Territorial Development" by Berdegué and Fuentealba, 2006: Kretzmann & McKnight, (1993), "Social Capital or Networks, Negotiations and Patronage: Explaining Access to Services in Rural Pakistan" by Shirazi and Abbott (2018), and "Studying the Relationship between Social Capital and Development with Emphasis on Entrepreneurship Development in Rural Areas" by Zarafshani, Mohammadi, and Sazegara (2016). These studies highlight the importance of social networks, governance, and entrepreneurship in promoting community mobilization and development.

However, locally, A review of the literature shows that there is limited research on the practice and challenges of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in the North Wollo Zone. Most studies have focused on participation in development programs, with limited attention given to the role of social networks in community mobilization and self-Mobilization itself. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the self-mobilization approach, which emphasizes the role of communities in initiating and leading their development programs.

The problem being explored in this research is the effectiveness and challenges of using social networks to facilitate community mobilization in the North Wollo Zone, specifically focusing on the self-mobilization approach.

There are multiple rationales for conducting research on the utilization and obstacles of social networks in promoting community mobilization in North Wollo Zone. Primarily, community mobilization plays a vital role in accomplishing sustainable development objectives and addressing social and economic concerns in the area. However, several factors such as insufficient resources, restricted access to information, and inadequate community participation can impede community mobilization efforts, (Eversole, 2012). Hence, by exploring the function of social networks in facilitating community mobilization, this research can furnish valuable insights into effective methodologies for encouraging collective action and resolving community requirements.

Secondly, North Wollo Zone is a region with diverse ethnic groups and a complex socio-political setting, which can create challenges for community mobilization initiatives. Consequently, comprehending the role of social networks in this setting can provide meaningful insights into the cultural, social, and political influences that impact community mobilization.

Thirdly, the self-mobilization approach highlights the significance of empowering communities to take charge of their development processes. Consequently, by analyzing the opportunities and

challenges of this approach, this research can offer guidance on how to effectively support and facilitate self-mobilization initiatives in North Wollo Zone.

Basic Research Questions

This study seeks to bridge this gap by exploring the practice and challenges of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in the North Wollo Zone, with emphasis on the self-mobilization approach. Specifically, this research was to investigate the following research questions:

I. How do social networks facilitate community mobilization in North Wollo Zone?
   a. *what specific roles do they play in the process of community mobilization?*

II. How do community members perceive the self-mobilization of development in their efforts to mobilize their communities?
   a. *what challenges and opportunities does this approach present?*

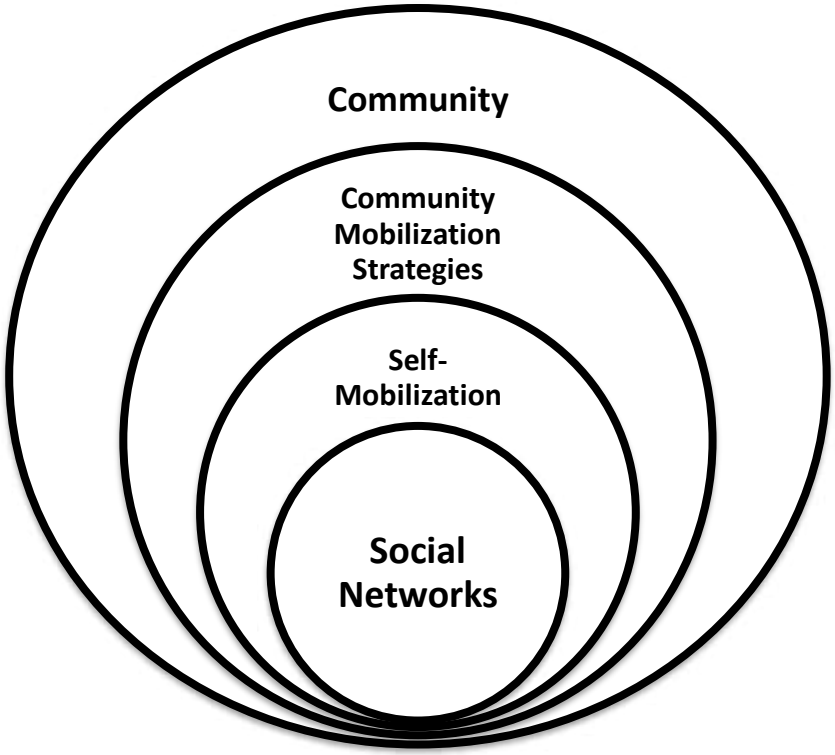
III. What are the key factors that contribute to the success or failure of community mobilization efforts in North Wollo Zone?
   a. *how can these factors be leveraged or addressed to promote effective community mobilization?*

By addressing these research questions, this study aims to contribute to the understanding of the role of social networks and self-mobilization in community mobilization and provide insights that can inform policy and practice to promote community development and development in North Wollo Zone.

Conceptual Framework

Social networks have increasingly become a valuable tool for community mobilization efforts, with individuals leveraging their connections to bring about social change. In the North Wollo Zone of Ethiopia, social networks have been utilized to facilitate community mobilization, particularly through the self-mobilization approach.

However, despite its potential benefits, the practice of using social networks for community mobilization, (Wang et al., 2021), is not without its challenges. This research aims to explore the practice and challenges of social networks in facilitating community mobilization, with a specific focus on the self-mobilization approach. By examining the relationship between social networks, self-mobilization, and community mobilization, this study seeks to provide insights into how best to leverage social networks for effective community mobilization efforts.



The conceptual framework could be represented as a four-tiered diagram with social networks at the center, surrounded by community mobilization strategies, self-mobilization behaviors and community outcomes on the outer layer. The diagram could be divided into four sections, each representing a key concept.

The first section could show the different types of social networks and their characteristics that influence community mobilization efforts. This section could include factors such as network size, diversity, and trust. The second section could depict the various community mobilization strategies that are employed to foster social change, (Campbell, 2014). These strategies could include advocacy, education, and community organizing.

The third section could show the different self-mobilization behaviors that individuals engage in to create change within their own communities. These behaviors could include volunteering, activism, and civic engagement. The fourth section could illustrate the community outcomes that result from social networks, community mobilization strategies and self-mobilization behaviors. These outcomes could include increased social capital, improved health outcomes, and stronger communities.

The diagram could also include arrows between each section to show the interconnectedness of these concepts. For example, social networks could influence the effectiveness of community mobilization strategies, which in turn could impact self-mobilization behaviors. Additionally, self-mobilization behaviors could lead to the formation of new social networks, creating a cyclical relationship between these concepts and resulting in positive community outcomes.

However, it is important to note that while this framework provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding community development, the actual practice of community mobilization and self-empowerment can be more challenging. For example, social networks may be difficult to build in communities that are geographically dispersed or socially fragmented. Similarly, community mobilization strategies may face resistance from those who are resistant to change or lack the necessary resources and support.

Moreover, (Campbell, 2014) self-mobilization behaviors may not always lead to positive outcomes, as individuals may have competing priorities or face barriers to participation. Finally, community outcomes may be difficult to measure and evaluate, and may not always reflect the full range of benefits and challenges associated with community mobilization and self-empowerment, (Eversole, 2012).

Therefore, (Cleaver, 1999), it is important to recognize that the relationship between concepts and practice in community development is complex and dynamic. While conceptual frameworks can provide a useful starting point for understanding community mobilization, (Wang et al., 2021), and self-empowerment, practitioners must be prepared to adapt their strategies and approaches based on the specific needs and context of each community. This may involve building trust and relationships with local stakeholders, identifying and addressing barriers to participation, and fostering a sense of ownership and accountability among community members, (Campbell, 2014). Ultimately, the success of community mobilization and self-empowerment efforts was depend on the ability of practitioners to navigate these challenges and work collaboratively with communities to achieve their goals.

Methodology

Research Paradigm

Based on the intended objectives and nature of the investigations, the research paradigm of the qualitative research in "Exploring the Role of Social Networks in Facilitating Community Mobilization in North Wollo Zone: A Focus on self-mobilization Approach of Development" appears to be constructivism.

Research Approach

The research was employed a qualitative approach to explore the role of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in North Wollo Zone.

Research Design

The research design was exploratory and aim to identify the various social networks that exist in North Wollo Zone, how they contribute to community mobilization and development, and the challenges and opportunities associated with these networks.

Population, Sample and Sampling

The study was target community members and leaders in North Wollo Zone who have been involved in community mobilization and development initiatives. The sample was purposively selected to ensure that it includes individuals with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. The study was involved participants from different social networks, including religious groups, youth groups, women's groups, and community-based organizations.

To represent the diversity of communities in the North Wollo Zone, the study was sampled five towns, namely Lalibela, Mersa, Meket, and Woldia. The sampling reason for choosing the five towns for the proposed research is based on the following criterion which the researcher used to purposively differentiate towns in North Wollo and Waghemra:

The data were collected from 40 focus group discussion participants, 44 in-depth interviews, and 16 for key informant interviews.

Data Analysis Technique

The study was used thematic analysis to analyze the data collected from the interviews and focus group discussions. The analysis was involved by identifying patterns and themes in the data and developing an understanding of the role of social networks in facilitating community mobilization and development in North Wollo Zone. The researchers were used a coding scheme to organize the data and identify emerging themes and patterns.

Finding and Discussions

Facilitations of Community Mobilization through Social Networks

The study revealed several key ways in which social networks facilitate community mobilization in the North Wollo Zone. Through in-depth analysis and thematic categorization of the data collected from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, several

specific roles of social networks emerged. These roles align with existing literature on the subject and provide valuable insights into the dynamics of community mobilization.

Specific Roles of Social Networks in Community Mobilization

Information Dissemination and Awareness Raising

Social networks play a critical role in disseminating information and raising awareness about community issues and mobilization efforts. They serve as vital channels through which important messages and updates are communicated swiftly and efficiently.

A community member in Mersa noted, "When there's a community meeting or a new project starting, we often hear about it first from our friends and neighbors. This way, everyone is informed quickly, and we can all get involved from the beginning."

This finding aligns with the work of Valente and Pumpuang (2007), who highlight the importance of social networks in the diffusion of innovations and information within communities. Effective communication through social networks ensures that critical information reaches community members promptly, facilitating timely engagement and participation.

Building Trust and Encouraging Participation

Trust is a cornerstone of effective community mobilization, and social networks are instrumental in building and maintaining this trust. These networks, which are based on existing relationships and social bonds, encourage community members to participate actively in mobilization efforts.

A focus group participant shared, "We trust the people we know, and when they tell us about a new initiative, we're more likely to believe in it and take part. It's different when the message comes from within the community."

The significance of trust in community mobilization is well-documented in literature. Putnam (2000) emphasizes the role of social capital, including trust and norms of reciprocity, in facilitating collective action. Trust within social networks reduces the perceived risks associated with participation and enhances collaborative efforts.

Resource Mobilization

Social networks help in mobilizing resources, both human and material, needed for various community development activities. These networks enable communities to pool their resources and efforts, making it easier to implement projects and sustain them over time.

A community leader emphasized, "Through our social connections, we can gather what we need for community projects, whether it's labor, materials, or money. Everyone contributes what they can, and together, we achieve more."

Resource mobilization through social networks is supported by studies such as those by Woolcock and Narayan (2000), which discuss how social capital can facilitate access to resources. By leveraging their networks, communities can efficiently gather the necessary inputs for development initiatives.

Conflict Resolution and Consensus Building

Effective community mobilization often requires resolving conflicts and building consensus among community members. Social networks facilitate these processes by providing a platform for dialogue and negotiation, leveraging the influence of respected community members to mediate and resolve disputes.

A key informant explained, "When disagreements arise, it's usually the elders and respected members of our networks who step in to mediate. They help us find common ground and move forward together."

This role of social networks in conflict resolution is supported by Lederach (1997), who highlights the importance of local leaders and social structures in peacebuilding and conflict management. Social networks can provide the necessary support for mediation and consensus-building, essential for cohesive community action.

Encouraging Innovation and Adaptation

Social networks foster an environment where new ideas and innovative approaches to community development can be shared and adapted. These networks provide a space for community members to learn from each other's experiences and apply best practices to their own contexts.

A focus group participant observed, "We've seen how other communities have tackled similar issues through our connections, and we adapt those strategies to fit our needs. This way, we're always learning and improving."

The role of social networks in promoting innovation is echoed in Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which explains how new ideas spread within a community. Social networks act as conduits for knowledge exchange, enabling communities to adopt and adapt innovations that suit their specific needs and contexts.

Community Members' Perceptions of Social Networks and Self-Mobilization

Community members overwhelmingly viewed social networks as essential to self-mobilization efforts. They expressed a strong sense of ownership and pride in initiatives that emerged from within the community, highlighting the sustainability and resilience of such efforts compared to externally driven projects.

An in-depth interview participant stated, "When we organize ourselves, the projects are more likely to succeed because they come from our own needs and efforts. External help is always welcome, but it should support our initiatives, not replace them."

This perception aligns with the principles of community-driven development (CDD), as discussed by Mansuri and Rao (2004). CDD emphasizes the importance of local ownership and participation in development projects, arguing that initiatives driven by community members are more likely to be sustainable and effective.

The findings underscore the indispensable role of social networks in facilitating community mobilization through various functions that enhance communication, trust, resource sharing, conflict resolution, and innovation. These networks not only empower communities to mobilize effectively but also foster a sense of unity and collective purpose, which are crucial for sustainable development.

The relevance of social networks in community mobilization is well-supported by existing literature, which highlights their role in building social capital, facilitating information flow, and enabling collective action. As demonstrated in the North Wollo Zone, social networks are pivotal in promoting self-mobilization and ensuring that community development initiatives are locally

driven and sustainable. Future research and policy should continue to focus on strengthening these networks to enhance community resilience and development outcomes.

Community Members' Perceptions of Self-Mobilization

The study provided valuable insights into community members' perceptions of self-mobilization in their efforts to mobilize their communities. Through a qualitative exploratory research design, data from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews were analyzed thematically. Several challenges and opportunities associated with the self-mobilization approach emerged from the data.

Sense of Ownership and Empowerment

Community members expressed a strong sense of ownership and empowerment when engaging in self-mobilization efforts. They felt that initiatives driven by the community were more likely to address their actual needs and be sustainable in the long term.

> "When we organize ourselves, the projects are more likely to succeed because they come from our own needs and efforts. External help is always welcome, but it should support our initiatives, not replace them." In-depth Interview Participant.

This sense of ownership aligns with the principles of community-driven development (CDD) highlighted by Mansuri and Rao (2004), which emphasize the importance of local participation and leadership in development projects for sustainability and effectiveness.

2. Increased Collaboration and Unity

Self-mobilization efforts were seen to enhance collaboration and unity within the community. Working together towards common goals fostered a stronger sense of community and mutual support.

> "Through self-mobilization, we've learned to rely on each other more. It has brought us closer and made us realize the strength we have as a community."- Community Leader

Putnam (2000) discusses how social capital, which includes networks, norms, and trust, is crucial for collective action. The increased collaboration and unity observed in North Wollo Zone reflect the positive impact of social capital in community mobilization.

Challenges of Limited Resources and Capacity

One significant challenge identified was the limited resources and capacity within the community. Despite the willingness to mobilize, communities often faced constraints related to funding, skills, and access to necessary materials.

> "We want to do more, but sometimes we just don't have the money or the skills needed. It's frustrating because we have the will, but not always the means." - Community Elder.

This challenge is supported by literature on community development, such as Woolcock and Narayan (2000), who highlight that while social capital is beneficial, it often needs to be complemented with external resources and support to achieve substantial development outcomes.

Opportunities for Innovation and Local Solutions

Self-mobilization provided opportunities for innovation and the development of local solutions tailored to the specific needs and contexts of the community. This approach encouraged creativity and problem-solving from within the community.

> “We've come up with some unique solutions to our problems because we know our situation best. When we tackle issues ourselves, we find ways that work for us." – A religious Leader.

Rogers (2003) in his Diffusion of Innovations theory supports this finding, noting that innovations are more likely to be adopted and effective when they are compatible with the local context and when community members are involved in the process.

Challenges and Opportunities of the Self-Mobilization Approach

I. Challenges

Resource Limitations: As noted, a major challenge was the scarcity of financial and material resources. This limitation often hindered the implementation and sustainability of community projects.

Capacity Building Needs: There was a need for capacity building to enhance skills and knowledge within the community, enabling them to better manage and sustain their initiatives.

Coordination and Management Issues: Effective coordination and management of self-mobilization efforts were sometimes lacking, leading to inefficiencies and conflicts.

II. Opportunities

Enhanced Community Cohesion: Self-mobilization fostered a greater sense of community cohesion and solidarity, essential for sustainable development.

Adaptability and Resilience: Communities developed resilience by adapting to their specific challenges and leveraging local knowledge and resources.

Empowerment and Agency: The approach empowered community members, giving them agency and a voice in their development processes.

The findings on community members' perceptions of self-mobilization underscore the importance of local ownership and participation in development efforts. The sense of empowerment and ownership observed in North Wollo Zone reflects the principles of community-driven development (CDD), which emphasize the sustainability and effectiveness of locally-led initiatives (Mansuri & Rao, 2004). The increased collaboration and unity within the community highlight the role of social capital in facilitating collective action (Putnam, 2000).

However, the challenges of limited resources and capacity indicate the need for complementary external support to enhance the effectiveness of self-mobilization efforts. As Woolcock and Narayan (2000) suggest, while social capital is crucial, it needs to be supported by financial and technical resources to achieve significant development outcomes.

The opportunities for innovation and local solutions illustrate the potential of self-mobilization to foster creativity and context-specific problem-solving. This finding aligns with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which emphasizes the importance of local adaptation and involvement in the innovation process.

Key Factors Contributing to Community Mobilization Efforts

The study identified several key factors that contribute to the success or failure of community mobilization efforts in North Wollo Zone. Through thematic analysis of data collected from key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, both challenges and opportunities were highlighted.

Key Factors Contributing to the Success of Community Mobilization

I. Strong Leadership and Local Champions

Strong leadership and the presence of local champions were frequently mentioned as crucial for the success of community mobilization. Effective leaders can inspire and mobilize community members, leveraging their influence to drive collective action.

> "Our community leaders play a huge role in motivating us. When they believe in a project, it gives everyone confidence to participate." - Focus Group Participant*

This finding is supported by the work of Chambers (1997), who emphasizes the importance of local leadership in participatory development. Strong leaders can effectively communicate the vision and benefits of community initiatives, thus fostering greater involvement and commitment.

II. Community Participation and Inclusive Decision-Making

Active participation and inclusive decision-making processes were identified as key factors for successful mobilization. When community members are involved in planning and decision-making, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership and responsibility.

> "When we are included in the decision-making process, we feel that our opinions matter, and this motivates us to contribute more." - Community Member

This aligns with the principles of participatory development, as discussed by Cornwall (2008), who highlights that involving community members in the planning and implementation phases ensures that their needs and priorities are addressed, leading to more sustainable outcomes.

III. Effective Communication and Information Sharing

Effective communication and the sharing of information are critical for the success of community mobilization efforts. Transparent and timely communication helps build trust and ensures that community members are well-informed about ongoing and upcoming projects.

> "Clear communication helps us understand what needs to be done and why it's important. It makes coordination much easier." - Community Leader.

Valente and Pumpuang (2007) discuss the role of communication in social networks, noting that effective dissemination of information through these networks can significantly enhance community mobilization efforts.

Key Factors Contributing to the Failure of Community Mobilization

I. Resource Constraints

Resource constraints, including lack of funding and materials, were identified as major barriers to successful community mobilization. Even with strong leadership and participation, limited resources can hinder the implementation and sustainability of projects.

> "We have great ideas and willing people, but sometimes we just don't have the money or materials to get things done." - Focus Group Participant.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) highlight that while social capital is essential, it needs to be complemented with financial and material resources to achieve significant development outcomes.

II. Lack of Capacity and Skills

The lack of capacity and skills within the community was another significant factor contributing to the failure of mobilization efforts. Training and capacity-building are essential to equip community members with the skills needed to manage and sustain projects.

> "We often lack the technical skills needed to manage projects effectively. Capacity building is crucial for our success." - In-depth Interview Participant.

This finding is in line with the literature on capacity building in community development, which emphasizes the need for continuous training and education to empower communities (Eade, 1997).

III. External Interference and Dependence

Dependence on external actors and resources can undermine self-mobilization efforts. When communities rely heavily on external support, it can diminish their initiative and ability to sustain projects independently.

> "We need external support, but it should be in a way that strengthens our ability to manage on our own, not make us dependent." - Key Informant.

Chambers (1997) argues that development initiatives should focus on empowering communities rather than creating dependency, emphasizing the importance of building local capacity and resilience.

Leveraging and Addressing These Factors for Effective Community Mobilization

To promote effective community mobilization, the identified factors need to be leveraged or addressed strategically:

I. Strengthening Leadership and Building Local Champions

Investing in leadership development programs can help nurture strong local leaders who can inspire and mobilize their communities. Encouraging and supporting local champions can also enhance the impact of community initiatives.

II. Enhancing Participation and Inclusive Decision-Making

Creating inclusive platforms for community participation and decision-making can foster a sense of ownership and responsibility. Ensuring that all community members, including marginalized groups, have a voice in the process is crucial for sustainability.

III. Improving Communication Channels

Developing effective communication strategies can ensure that information is disseminated clearly and promptly. Leveraging social networks and local media can enhance the reach and impact of communication efforts.

IV. Mobilizing Resources and Building Capacity

Collaborating with external partners to mobilize resources while focusing on building local capacity can address resource constraints and skill gaps. Capacity-building programs should be tailored to the specific needs of the community.

V. Promoting Self-Reliance and Reducing Dependence

Encouraging self-reliance by focusing on sustainable practices and reducing dependence on external actors can strengthen community resilience. External support should aim to empower communities rather than create dependency.

The findings from North Wollo Zone highlight the critical factors that contribute to the success or failure of community mobilization efforts. These factors are consistent with the broader literature on community development and participatory approaches.

Strong leadership, community participation, and effective communication are essential for successful mobilization, as supported by Chambers (1997) and Cornwall (2008). However, resource constraints, lack of capacity, and dependence on external actors can undermine these efforts, echoing the concerns raised by Woolcock and Narayan (2000) and Eade (1997).

Addressing these challenges through strategic interventions, such as leadership development, capacity building, and resource mobilization, can enhance the effectiveness of community mobilization. By leveraging local strengths and fostering self-reliance, communities in North Wollo Zone can achieve more sustainable and resilient development outcomes.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

The research conducted on the practices and challenges of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in North Wollo Zone, with an emphasis on the self-mobilization approach, offers valuable insights into the dynamics of community-driven development. The study employed a qualitative exploratory research design, incorporating key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews, which were analyzed thematically to extract meaningful findings.

Essential Role of Social Networks

Social networks play a pivotal role in community mobilization by disseminating information, building trust, mobilizing resources, resolving conflicts, and fostering innovation. These networks enhance communication and coordination within the community, ensuring that members are well-informed and motivated to participate in development initiatives. The findings align with existing literature on the importance of social capital in facilitating collective action (Putnam, 2000; Valente & Pumpuang, 2007).

Empowerment Through Self-Mobilization

Self-mobilization efforts empower communities by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility. Community members in North Wollo Zone expressed a strong belief in the sustainability and effectiveness of initiatives that originate from within the community. This sense of empowerment and agency is crucial for the success of community-driven development, as emphasized by Mansuri and Rao (2004) and Cornwall (2008).

Challenges Hindering Success

Despite the strengths of self-mobilization, the study identified significant challenges, including resource constraints, lack of capacity and skills, and dependence on external actors. These challenges can undermine the effectiveness and sustainability of community mobilization efforts. Addressing these barriers requires strategic interventions that complement the strengths of social networks and community participation (Woolcock & Narayan, 2000; Eade, 1997).

Opportunities for Innovation and Resilience

The self-mobilization approach provides opportunities for innovation and the development of local solutions tailored to the community's specific needs. By leveraging local knowledge and resources, communities can create resilient and adaptable development strategies. This aligns with Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory, which highlights the importance of local adaptation and involvement in the innovation process.

Implications for Policy and Practice

To enhance the effectiveness of community mobilization in North Wollo Zone, policymakers and practitioners should consider the following:

I. Strengthening Leadership and Local Champions: Investing in leadership development programs can nurture strong local leaders who can inspire and mobilize community members.
II. Enhancing Participation and Inclusive Decision-Making: Creating inclusive platforms for community participation can foster a sense of ownership and ensure that development initiatives address the needs and priorities of all community members.
III. Improving Communication and Information Sharing: Developing effective communication strategies that leverage social networks can ensure that information is disseminated clearly and promptly, building trust and facilitating coordination.
IV. Mobilizing Resources and Building Capacity: Collaborating with external partners to mobilize resources and provide capacity-building programs can address resource constraints and skill gaps, empowering communities to manage and sustain their initiatives.
V. Promoting Self-Reliance and Reducing Dependence: Encouraging self-reliance by focusing on sustainable practices and reducing dependence on external actors can strengthen community resilience and ensure the long-term success of development efforts.

Future Research Directions

Further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of self-mobilization on community development outcomes and to identify best practices for leveraging social networks in different contexts. Comparative studies across different regions and cultural settings can provide a broader understanding of the factors that influence the success of community-driven development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this research on the practices and challenges of social networks in facilitating community mobilization in North Wollo Zone, the following recommendations are proposed to address the identified challenges and gaps:

Strengthening Leadership and Building Local Champions

I. Develop Leadership Training Programs:

Implement targeted leadership training programs to nurture strong local leaders who can effectively inspire and mobilize community members.

Contextualized Action: Partner with local educational institutions and NGOs to create tailored leadership curricula that address the unique socio-cultural context of North Wollo Zone.

II. Support and Recognize Local Champions:

Identify and support community members who demonstrate leadership potential and a commitment to community mobilization.

Contextualized Action: Establish community recognition programs and provide small grants or resources to empower these local champions to lead initiatives.

Enhancing Community Participation and Inclusive Decision-Making

I. Create Inclusive Decision-Making Platforms:

Develop structures that ensure all community members, including marginalized groups, are included in the decision-making process.

Contextualized Action: Organize regular community meetings and workshops that use participatory methods such as Appreciative Inquiry and Participatory Rural Appraisal to gather input from diverse groups.

II. Encourage Grassroots Participation:

Foster a culture of grassroots participation by educating community members on the importance of their involvement in development initiatives.

Contextualized Action: Utilize local media, community radio, and social media platforms to raise awareness about participation opportunities and success stories.

Improving Communication and Information Sharing

I. Develop Effective Communication Strategies:

Enhance communication channels to ensure transparent and timely dissemination of information within the community.

Contextualized Action: Leverage existing social networks, local influencers, and traditional communication methods to spread information about community projects.

II. Utilize Technology and Social Media:

Incorporate technology and social media to facilitate better communication and coordination among community members.

Contextualized Action: Train community members in the use of mobile phones and social media for community organizing and information sharing.

Mobilizing Resources and Building Capacity

I. Resource Mobilization and Fundraising:

Collaborate with external partners to mobilize financial and material resources needed for community projects.

Contextualized Action: Establish community fundraising committees that seek grants, donations, and partnerships with NGOs, government agencies, and private sector entities.

II. Capacity-Building Programs:

Implement capacity-building programs to enhance the skills and knowledge of community members in project management, financial management, and technical areas.

Contextualized Action: Offer regular training workshops, peer learning sessions, and mentorship programs focusing on practical skills relevant to community development.

Promoting Self-Reliance and Reducing Dependence

I. Encourage Sustainable Practices:

Promote sustainable development practices that reduce reliance on external actors and foster self-reliance within the community.

Contextualized Action: Introduce and support projects that focus on sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and local entrepreneurship.

II. Strengthen Local Institutions:

Support the development and strengthening of local institutions that can provide long-term support and continuity for community projects.

Contextualized Action: Collaborate with local governments to build institutional capacity and ensure that local development plans align with community needs and priorities.

Addressing Resource Constraints

I. Innovative Resource Utilization:

Encourage the use of innovative approaches to resource utilization, such as community pooling of resources, time banking, and bartering systems.

Contextualized Action: Facilitate community discussions and workshops to explore and implement these innovative resource-sharing models.

II. Partnership Development:

Develop strategic partnerships with NGOs, international organizations, and the private sector to leverage additional resources and expertise.

Contextualized Action: Create a partnership liaison role within the community to actively seek and manage external partnerships and collaborations.

Enhancing Capacity and Skills

I. Technical and Vocational Training:

Provide technical and vocational training programs that are tailored to the specific needs and opportunities within the community.

Contextualized Action: Partner with local technical schools and vocational training centers to offer courses in areas such as agriculture, carpentry, and small business management.

II. Continuous Education and Lifelong Learning:

Promote continuous education and lifelong learning opportunities to ensure that community members can adapt to changing needs and technologies.

Contextualized Action: Establish community learning centers that offer a range of educational programs, from basic literacy to advanced technical skills.

Reducing External Dependence

I. Empowerment Through Local Initiatives:

Design external support to empower local initiatives rather than create dependency, ensuring that external assistance builds local capacity.

Contextualized Action: Ensure that all external interventions have a clear exit strategy that focuses on transferring knowledge and skills to the community.

II. Local Resource Generation:

Encourage the development of local businesses and income-generating activities to reduce dependency on external funding.

Contextualized Action: Support microfinance initiatives and cooperative business models that enable community members to start and grow their own enterprises.

Implementing these recommendations requires a concerted effort from community members, local leaders, external partners, and policymakers. By focusing on leadership development, inclusive participation, effective communication, capacity building, and sustainable practices, the community of North Wollo Zone can overcome the challenges identified in this study and achieve more effective and sustainable community mobilization. These efforts will not only enhance the resilience and self-reliance of the community but also ensure that development initiatives are more aligned with the actual needs and aspirations of its members.

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Author contributions

The second author, B.T., was responsible for developing the research plan, collecting the data and transcribing and translating the recorded audio data. The first author contributed by writing the initial manuscript draft. The third author contributed by, editing the draft manuscript, and improving the language and citation format. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Ethical Declarations

This study received ethical clearance from the Organizational Review Board of Woldia University. All participants were above 18 years of age, and informed consent was obtained prior to their participation. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in the study.

Competinginterest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this research.

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Data availability

The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to the sensitive and identifiable nature of qualitative data involving human participants. Data may be available from the corresponding author on reasonable request and subject to ethical approval.

Declarations Ethical approval and consent to participate

This study received ethical approval from the Woldia University Institutional Review Board (IRB) under protocol number WDU/IRB/012/2022, approved on 20 June 2022.

Prior to data collection, informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews. The purpose of the study, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures were explained in their native language. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw at any time without consequence. **Consent for publication**

Explicit written and verbal consent was obtained from all participants for the use of their an onymized responses in publications arising from this research. Participants were assured that no personal identifiers would be used and that all data would be reported in a way that preserves their anonymity and dignity.

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