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Youth-led Citizenship and Social Transformation: A Case Study of the CMCA Program at SNDT Women's University

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Abstract

This research paper examines the role of the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA) Catalyse Program in fostering active citizenship, gender sensitivity, and social justice among undergraduate students of SNDT Women's University. The program engaged 25 students through eight interactive workshops and collective action projects. Using an experiential learning approach, the initiative aimed to develop empathy, civic responsibility, and leadership skills. Findings indicate a significant improvement in students' awareness of civic issues, inclusivity, and gender equality, with measurable outcomes observed in pre- and post-assessment evaluations. The study underscores the transformative potential of citizenship education in empowering youth for sustainable social change.

Keywords: Children's Movement for Civic Awareness, Catalyse Program, active citizenship, gender sensitivity

1. Introduction

Citizenship education plays a vital role in preparing young people for participatory democracy and inclusive development. In India, civic apathy and youth disengagement often weaken the effectiveness of democratic institutions. The Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA), a 24-year-old non-profit organization, has pioneered innovative initiatives to nurture young people into responsible and active citizens.

This study focuses on the implementation of the CMCA Catalyse Program with undergraduate Social Work students of SNDT Women's University during 2024–2025. Through eight thematic workshops and "Together for Change" action projects, the program addressed governance, empathy, equality, and gender sensitivity. The present paper analyses the outcomes of this initiative and its contribution to empowering students as agents of transformative social change.

2. Objectives

1. To examine the structure and implementation of the CMCA Catalyse Program.
2. To evaluate the role of experiential workshops in fostering citizenship values among youth.
3. To analyse the program's impact on students' understanding of governance, equality, and gender issues.
4. To assess the effectiveness of action projects in developing leadership and community participation.
5. To recommend strategies for integrating citizenship education into higher education curricula.

3. Methodology

- **Research Design:** Case study approach.
- **Participants:** 25 undergraduate Social Work students enrolled in the Catalyse workshops.
- **Program Structure:** Eight workshops on themes such as Youth Leading Change, Bridging Citizens and Governance, Equality, Gender Sensitization, and Collective Action Projects.

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Data Collection

- Pre-intervention (baseline) and post-intervention (endline) assessments using CMCA's CTC (Can They Change) and HTC (Have They Changed) tools.
- Observation of student participation and project outcomes.
- Reflection reports and group presentations.

Data Analysis: Comparative analysis of pre- and post-program data, supplemented with qualitative insights from student reflections and project reports.

4. Data Analysis**Quantitative Findings**

- Increased civic awareness and knowledge of governance structures.
- Improved understanding of gender stereotypes and social inequalities.
- Strengthened teamwork and problem-solving skills through action projects.

Qualitative Findings

- Students reported greater empathy and responsibility toward community issues.
- The neighbourhood walks and governance session provided firsthand exposure to civic challenges.
- Gender-focused workshops challenged stereotypes and encouraged dialogue on gender-based violence.
- The *Together for Change* projects demonstrated students' capacity to design and implement community-level interventions.

5. Findings & Discussion

The CMCA Catalyse Program successfully fostered critical thinking, inclusivity, and collective action among participating students. Its interactive and participatory pedagogy provided a safe and engaging space for learning. The integration of classroom sessions with experiential projects deepened understanding and enhanced engagement. The findings affirm that structured citizenship education not only strengthens civic knowledge but also cultivates leadership and collaborative problem-solving. Nevertheless, challenges such as limited resources and the need for stronger institutional support remain barriers to expanding the program across a wider network of higher education institutions.

6. Conclusion

The study demonstrates that citizenship education, when delivered through interactive and experiential methods like the CMCA Catalyse Program, has the potential to shape students into socially responsible and active citizens. By instilling values of empathy, equality, and civic responsibility, the program equips youth for participatory democracy and sustainable development. Embedding such models into higher education curricula can help build a generation of empowered changemakers.

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