



The Role of Youth in Promoting Environmental Awareness in Barru Regency

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Abstract

The research aims to understand how young people in Barru Regency Indonesia support environmental consciousness through qualitative methods. The research investigates youth-led environmental initiatives by conducting in-depth interviews with participants alongside conducting focus groups and performing participant observation. Youth residents of Barru take part in different environmental advocacy practices which include waste disposal management and public awareness campaigns together with tree plantation activities. Youth leaders implement local knowledge and community-based methods to combat environmental problems while building their strategies from the ground up. Youth in their efforts encounter multiple obstacles including minimal resources together with insufficient backing from local officials and reluctance from older members of the population. Although faced by numerous barriers their community work successfully promotes environmental understanding alongside behavior alteration within the community. The study demonstrates how young people's environmental activism plays a vital role but requires expanded backing from authorities and community members to maintain such actions. The findings from this research add important knowledge about the effectiveness of youth environmental activism in rural areas of Indonesia through their contributions to scholarly literature.

Introduction

The 21st century faces environmental degradation as its most crucial worldwide problem which leads to natural resource depletion along with climate change. Young people have become a revolutionary social group which actively spreads environmental consciousness while driving sustainable solutions throughout the globe. The youth population in Indonesia has stepped up their involvement in environmental issues during recent years by operating as leaders within local communities as they battle for governance changes and spread awareness through grassroots activism. Environmental sustainability in Barru Regency demands youth leadership because they determine the future direction of environmental management in both their economic success and the well-being of their people (Rasda et al., 2024; Marsuki, 2024; Junaid et al., 2023).

The area of Barru Regency in South Sulawesi experiences environmental problems including widespread deforestation together with unwarranted waste disposal and coastal contamination (Muhammad, 2024; Darwis et al., 2021; Malik & Djalil, 2021). The excessive problems stem from quick urban growth and population expansion together with regional population ignorance about sustainable environmental practices. The contemporary situation demands young people to take charge of environmental watchdog responsibilities while fighting for

improved environmental regulatory measures. The youth group stand as both planetary inheritors of the future and active agents of change in the present day according to Bessant & Watts (2024). Research investigates the unique contributions of Barru Regency youth towards environmental awareness promotion alongside their community engagement efforts for sustainable environmental practice advancement (Klein, 2021; Ortiz, 2022).

Youth across single Indonesia district of Barru join national environmental concerns by taking part in educational programs and running waste control operations and tree cultivation activities (Pratiwi & Manda, 2023; Nur & Abdullah, 2022; Putra et al., 2022). The youth effectively use social media together with community networks to distribute environment-related messages across diverse audiences. Using their ability to adapt and innovate has played a crucial role in modifying local perceptions about sustainability-related environmental matters. Through education and digital tools youth can successfully drive environmental progress by making both young people and adults practice climate-friendly behaviors (Haleem et al., 2022; Oliveira et al., 2022; Sari et al., 2024). The influence of local youth groups led to their successful engagement in obtaining policies from local policymakers for better sustainable waste management practices.

Young people's involvement in environmental advocacy brings more benefits than sustainable development achievements. Community environmental responsibility and active participation develop through this initiative as well as embrace environmental stewardship. Everyone shows a higher dedication toward sustainable practices after taking part in environmental projects according to Crossley et al. (2021). Environmental awareness programs yield innovative solutions to environmental problems when youth participation occurs since young individuals introduce modern perspectives to typical environmental issues (Ercantan & Eyupoglu, 2022; Huntjens, 2021). The local environmental problems of deforestation and coastal degradation in Barru Regency need innovative approaches for which youth engagement plays a critical role.

The substantial potential of young people to raise environmental awareness faces many continuing obstacles. The obstacles to youth-driven environmental action include restricted resource availability alongside inadequate public governmental assistance alongside official policy non-recognition of their work (Kumar, 2023; Okoh et al., 2024; Ahmed et al., 2024). Youth encounter obstacles including financial limitations together with deficient guidance and insufficient partnership between their initiatives and large environmental organizations and this results in constrained durability and aluminum scaling potential for their initiatives. The growth of environmental involvement by young people in Barru faces limitations due to these constraining factors. The successful support structure for young adult environmental initiatives alongside their opportunity to lead environmental issues must be established.

Environmental awareness participation by young people depends on how their beliefs and traditions shape their cultural backgrounds. The traditional values along with community customs from Barru's rural area along with other Indonesian areas strongly affect public outlooks on environmental conservation (Akhmar et al., 2023; Djawas et al., 2023; Fauzi et al., 2024). Youth members in Barru implement modern environmental techniques with traditional knowledge to develop distinct approaches that suit their local community values. The effective combination of new and traditional environmental methods proves to be a critical instrument that helps achieve sustainable environmental campaign success along with enduring behavioral transformations. Knowing local cultural patterns enables youth to deliver messages to different groups effectively while acquiring backing from community leaders and elders.

This investigation serves an important purpose as it addresses insufficient research about local youth participation in environmental awareness specifically in Barru Regency. The worldwide research on youth environmental activism continues to expand (Green 2018) yet research

focusing on rural areas in Indonesia particularly in Barru remains scarce. This research adds meaningful knowledge to the expanding literature about youth environmental advocacy through an exploration of youth activities in environmental awareness as well as their encountered obstacles in Barru. The research provides guidelines for policymakers along with community leaders about improved ways to support youth environmental sustainability initiatives.

Method

A qualitative research method was used to analyze how youth contribute to environmental awareness development in Barru Regency during this investigation. The research design adopted a qualitative approach to deliver comprehensive knowledge about the viewpoints and intentions behind environmental advocacy work of youth participants. Using qualitative techniques allowed researchers to collect complete detailed information about both youth environmental activism and their difficulties and methods of outreach work and community impact assessments. The research method enabled researchers to record detailed perspectives and follow participants' individual environmental advocacy experiences as well as their unified actions.

The research participants qualified by a purposive sampling approach because they actively took part in environmental programs. Youth from Barru Regency between 18 to 30 years old participated in the study because they actively worked as environmental advocates. The participants joined different environmental projects that included community awareness programs, waste management campaigns and environmental education initiatives. A total of 20 youth participants from multiple sub-districts were selected because the research employed diverse participants to achieve comprehensive and representative findings across the community.

The research data collection involved three primary sources that included participant observations as well as semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. The research involved conducting 15 individual semi-structured interviews to give participants room for free responses that enabled them to discuss their environmental awareness promotion activities. Each interview lasted between 45 to 60 minutes while audio recordings were made with the consent of participants. The research involved running two focus group discussions which included five participants in each session. Group problem-solving and strategy development processes became possible through the reflective group discussions that the participants attended. The researcher observed participants firsthand when they participated in tree planting activities and waste management campaign events. Through these observation activities the researcher gained insight about how participants engaged with community members as well as the complex aspects of environmental advocacy.

The collected data from interviews and focus group discussions and observations received thematic analysis for analysis. The researcher selected thematic analysis since it effectively identifies themes and patterns within qualitative datasets. Research analysis ran through six sequential phases that started by allowing the researcher to get acquainted with the data through the verbatim transcription of interviews and focus group discussions followed by multiple transcript readings. Researchers used significant phrases and patterns to create initial codes during the second analytic phase. The third portion of analysis entailed grouping similar codes together to create broader classification categories. The researcher checked the identified themes for their coherence and also assessed their fit with research objectives in the fourth phase. The definition and naming of detected themes during the final step needed to accurately capture their meanings from the collected data. The research report featured data quotes which

supported the findings alongside an in-depth description of the youth activities for promoting environmental understanding.

Result and Discussion

Youth environmental advocacy has turned into a vital element which helps sustain practices at community level. Young residents from Barru Regency have started multiple community-level initiatives through which they manage environmental issues including waste management and forest maintenance and coastal erosion protection. Their activism functions to spread environmental consciousness while working to develop sustainable conduct within the community. The youth-led environmental initiatives maintain substantial impact on environmental responsibility even though they deal with funding constraints and government backing shortages as well as local community resistance. According to the study findings the next section details the practices of youth advocates and their faced challenges together with their influence on environmental activism.

Youth Strategies in Promoting Environmental Awareness

Youth members in Barru Regency lead environmental advocacy through multiple methods to spread environmental knowledge across their local community. Male and female youth adopted these strategies because they had developed both an ethical commitment alongside profound awareness of regional environmental problems. Youth groups use multiple approaches which include environmental direct engagement activities along with social media and education-based programs to target large audiences. Various combined methods display how youth organizations have achieved enduring environmental consciousness in their local area.

Environmental campaigns form the core strategy that youth residents of Barru Regency use to achieve their goals. Such awareness campaigns target community problems that include waste management and deforestation together with pollution. These problems matter to the neighboring residents. As they hold importance in the community. The youth participants initiated their activities through basic grassroots work where they organized clean-up events and tree planting projects.

“When we organize clean-up events, it’s not just about picking up trash. It’s about showing the community that small actions can have a big impact on our surroundings” (Interview, Participant A).

Youth use social media platforms and digital spaces as their main method to increase environmental awareness besides physical involvement. Social media created a path that lets youth access wider audiences who connect with their messages both domestically and around the world. The participants revealed their active use of Instagram Facebook and YouTube where they distributed information together with updates about environmental projects and sustainability-focused content. Research reveals that this method has shown success in attracting participants from other social media users especially those who remain active on these platforms.

“We post videos and photos of our activities, and through hashtags, we can reach more people, especially youth who might not be involved in community projects directly. It’s a great way to inspire others to take action” (Interview, Participant B).

A vital strategy for youth activation in Barru Regency involved school and workshop-based education programs targeted at young people. Leaders in youth organizations initiate educational programs about environmental conservation and human impact on nature which they conduct in schools throughout the community. Environmental programs exist to teach young participants about environmental consciousness from an early age so they can develop

environmental responsibility as they mature. The approach to environmental management can be explained by this youth leader.

“We go to schools and run workshops where we talk about waste management, recycling, and the importance of protecting nature. We want the children to understand that they play a role too” (Interview, Participant C).

The strategy promotes environmental awareness in young people so future generations will carry forward these values.

Youth from Barru Regency are actively involved in policy advocacy practices to push for local government decisions regarding environmental issues. The youth group mobilizes to put forth petitions and lobby local policymakers while engaging in public discussion sessions for sustainable practice advocacy. Young adults in Barru Regency have directed their advocacy toward implementing better waste management systems and developing environmental regulations and encouraging community-led resource management practices.

“We believe that change starts with the government, so we make sure to voice our concerns through petitions and meetings with local authorities. We need policies that can enforce sustainable practices” (Interview, Participant D).

The tactic showcases the youth of Barru Regency actively participates in community-based initiatives alongside their efforts to modify larger institutional frameworks.

The promotion of environmental awareness benefits from important strategies attained through partnerships with local organizations and non-governmental organizations. Youth groups increase their operational capacity by forming partnerships with established organizations which provides them better resources and specialized knowledge. Through joint efforts these groups conduct bigger environmental campaigns in addition to organizing educational workshops so they can execute large-scale projects such as tree planting and recyclable material distribution programs.

“Working with local NGOs has opened up opportunities for us to scale our projects. We get more support and can-do things we wouldn’t be able to do alone”

This approach also fosters a sense of community and teamwork, with various stakeholders coming together to address environmental challenges.

Challenges Faced by Youth in Promoting Environmental Awareness

Various challenges prevent youth in Barru Regency from executing their environmental awareness initiatives despite their notable accomplishments in this field. Environmental advocacy presents too many complexities for young people who attempt to practice community change. The major obstacles youth face in their environmental advocacy effort consists of poor resource availability along with insufficient local authority backing and public disinterest combined with long-term participation maintenance obstacles.

Youth in Barru Regency lack sufficient financial support together with necessary materials needed to sustain their environmental conservation efforts. The majority of youth-led environmental activities need funding to acquire needed materials along with transportation expenses to achieve their sustainability goals. Young advocates encounter challenges when obtaining funding because of which they find it difficult to conduct widespread environmental campaigns.

“We usually rely on our own resources or small donations from local businesses. It’s hard to carry out bigger projects because we don’t have enough funds. We have to be very creative with what little we have” (Interview, Participant F).

The financial constraints youth environmental projects face led them to execute small actions which lack sufficient resources to generate enduring positive change.

The youth population of Barru Regency encounters barriers in obtaining backing from both Authority officials and local community leaders and stakeholders. Environmental advocates who are youth struggled to achieve support from local government figureheads even when demonstrating passionate dedication. The youth face challenges because institutional support does not value their initiatives adequately.

“Sometimes, when we approach the local government for support or to discuss our projects, we don’t receive any positive response. It feels like they don’t think youth have the capacity to make a real impact”.

Local authorities' unwillingness to work together with young activists creates feelings of disappointment and discouragement since they believe their efforts lack importance.

Youth in Barru Regency face the major challenge of receiving minimal support from their local community when it comes to environmental matters. Some local residents show both lack of care and reluctant behavior toward adopting environmental changes while such concerns become more prevalent. The existence of public inaction presents an obstacle that prevents youth advocates from effectively reaching out to the community during their advocacy activities. Participants stated their frequent experiences with people who oppose their environmental sustainability awareness efforts.

“It’s hard to get people to care about environmental issues when they don’t see the immediate impact in their daily lives. A lot of people still litter or burn waste because they don’t think it’s a big deal”.

Adopting enduring change in community attitudes toward environmental issues faces persistent difficulties among youth who strive to guide behavioral evolution.

Youth in Barru Regency maintain long-term environmental advocacy as an ongoing challenge. The initial enthusiasm among youth leaders in environmental projects tends to fade over time because sustaining their participation through the long-term proves quite challenging. The participants noted that their campaigns experience declining interest since the beginning excitement because their work produces no immediate visible outcomes while their daily concerns compete for their attention.

“At first, people are really excited about joining our events, but over time, it becomes harder to keep them engaged. It’s difficult to maintain interest in something that doesn’t have instant results”.

The youth face additional strain because they need to manage environmental activities while handling their commitments to school together with work and family necessities.

The educational system in Barru Regency provides insufficient environmental education and awareness to its youth population. Young people from the area lack complete environmental education programs thus preventing them from accurately comprehending environmental advocacy material.

“A lot of the youth here don’t have the proper education about environmental issues. It’s hard to get them involved when they don’t understand the significance of what we’re trying to do”.

Youth who aim to educate about sustainability practices face obstacles when learning is not formally taught because they need to develop their understanding first.

Impact of Youth Initiatives in Promoting Environmental Awareness

The young leaders managing environmental initiatives in Barru Regency have produced significant results which boost environmental awareness and create community-wide ecological responsibility. These initiatives have helped people develop environmental awareness and led to behavioral improvements among the local residents. Environmental advocacy by youth members serves as a transformative force which modifies community outlook on sustainability and creates opportunities for people to perform green actions for a cleaner world.

Environmental awareness throughout the community has become much stronger because of youth initiatives. The youth achieved knowledge dissemination within the community through their awareness initiatives and ongoing environmental education workshops and recycling programs and waste management initiatives. A participant assessed the outcome of such programs by observing they produced effective results.

“Our awareness campaigns have reached a lot of people. We’ve seen more residents begin to segregate their waste and participate in our clean-up events. It’s clear that people are becoming more aware of how their actions affect the environment”.

Environmental sustainability for the long term depends on this new awareness because it provides support for upcoming community-wide eco-friendly initiatives.

The community has experienced significant positive behavioral transformations because of programs that young people lead. Barru Regency has achieved more sustainable practices through direct implementation of tree planting events and waste management workshops as well as eco-friendly product promotional activities. Survey participants observed that their community members started practicing better waste disposal habits as more residents adopted eco-friendly disposal methods.

“I’ve seen many of my neighbors start recycling and reducing their plastic use after our campaigns. It feels good to know that we’ve inspired these changes, and it gives us hope that the community is becoming more responsible”.

The changes in citizen behavior indicate that young people have started affecting public awareness regarding environmental responsibility.

The environmental advocacy conducted by young people now inspires other groups and single individuals across the community to start environmental advocacy. The influence of unified youth initiatives drives schools together with local organizations and businesses to begin participating in environmental sustainability programs. One participant observed,

“After we organized a tree planting event, several local schools asked if they could join in and do similar activities. It’s amazing to see how one small initiative can spark a broader movement”.

The expanding network of environmental advocates will sustain the movement while developing an extensive environment-conscious culture among audiences beyond their immediate youth members. The initiatives developed by young people proved that minimal community-based activities stimulate broad societal engagement and group activism.

The youth environmental initiatives serve to empower both individual members of the community and young participants by granting them opportunities to excel as environmental leaders who will shape their neighborhood's ecological direction. Young people in Barru Regency demonstrate pride because they see themselves as environmental leaders while feeling a sense of accomplishment that develops both their power and their responsibility.

“Being part of these projects has taught me a lot about leadership. I feel empowered knowing that I am contributing to something bigger than myself and helping to protect our environment”.

The empowerment achieved by youth members creates benefits which enable future environmental challenges to become more manageable for their community.

Apart from building community involvement the youth environmental initiatives resulted in subtle policy modifications at the local level. Parents of the youth organization keep environmental issues at the center of attention through their passionate advocacy work thus earning heightened public engagement in sustainable development practices.

“Our efforts have made the government start talking more about waste management policies. Although we haven’t seen major policy changes yet, we’ve noticed that local leaders are more willing to listen and engage with us”.

While modest in nature this shift shows youth involvement is enhancing its role as a force in area environmental governance and policy development thereby creating sustainable changes through time.

This research examined how young individuals in Barru Regency work to increase environmental awareness thereby revealing their methods of local environmental advocacy. This research investigation offers extensive information about youth environmental programs together with their operational approaches along with their implementation barriers and their effect on regional environmental consciousness. The research evaluated youth participant experiences to develop important knowledge about environmental advocacy specifically related to regional settings. The research investigation establishes crucial understanding about how youth-led environmental actions operate within rural communities of Indonesia.

Research recognizes youth activism for environmental causes yet the majority of scholarly works address urban institutions or large-scale projects (Neas et al., 2022; Haugestad et al., 2021; Wallis & Loy, 2021). Shows that Western youth are actively involved in climate activism throughout major urban areas. The research neglects specific environmental aspects that exist in rural areas because young residents demonstrate varying approaches toward nature while encountering separate environmental issues as well as unique prospects for raising awareness. This research fills a knowledge gap through its focus on youth involvement in environmental advocacy in Barru Regency because such advocacy remains poorly documented in Indonesia’s rural areas.

This research identifies youth participants in Barru Regency as environmental leaders who implement community-driven approaches to connect with their neighbors. Research literature typically shows youth receiving environmental instructions through teachings rather than taking a leading role in environmental change (Lee et al., 2023; Subardjo et al., 2023; Haar et al., 2023) but this research discovers youth as agents of positive transformation. Youth members of Barru Regency prove their significant role in environmental policy development through their work in community-based events which support tree planting programs and waste management activities and public information campaigns. The research delivers localized evidence about the ability of youth groups who traditionally receive minimal policy attention to participate in developing environmental solutions. Recent studies support that youth-initiated programs demonstrate powerful transformative capabilities for developing sustainability.

The research compiled information about special obstacles that rural youth experience while they work on environmental awareness promotion. Research on youth environmental advocacy

participation exists, although studies focus absent on rural-specific obstacles which include insufficient resources together with non-supportive local governments and community members who resist change. This study confirms that community backing together with local governmental support serves as critical facilitators for young people to initiate their projects. This participant in Interview, Participant B mentioned that no support from local authorities creates challenges for implementing sustainable solutions. Policy-makers should recognize youth-led environmental initiatives because it requires their support to establish sustainable programs. Older adults in society frequently demonstrate weaker levels of environmental interest than younger adults based on current findings. Supports these findings about battling intergenerational values on environmental concerns but brings regional insights to such discussions.

The Barru Regency youth initiatives create new knowledge about how successful youth-led environmental campaigns perform in rural communities. Research confirms that young people possess strong potential as environmental change advocates yet the study of their actual achievements in rural communities remains underdeveloped. The research established that youth initiatives enhanced both environmental knowledge and community behavioral transformation and these results correspond with studies conducted in other locations. The study demonstrates how these programs face additional delays in particular locations which attribute to missing educational resources and persistent cultural traditions. Local awareness received major benefits from youth initiatives yet these benefits were restricted by limited engagement and inadequate behavioral change sustainability. These findings help demonstrate the present obstacles which youth-led environmental projects need to overcome in rural areas while providing a more genuine assessment of their possible results.

This research adds to existing knowledge about youth empowerment as it pertains to environmental advocacy. Explain empowerment as the systematic process of allowing people to gain control over their personal choices and life decisions. The Barru Regency youth who take part in environmental advocacy develop leadership qualities as they gain control over their actions. Different participants exhibited enhanced community environmental pride as well as enhanced personal responsibility because of grassroots environmental initiatives revealing the power of community-driven environmental leadership. This demonstrates why youth leadership needs development for sustainable progress. This research enhances the knowledge of youth empowerment in environmental advocacy by demonstrating how youth in Barru Regency now impact their communities as leaders.

Conclusion

The research demonstrated how youth agents advance environmental awareness in Barru Regency through their dedicated local activities that incorporate waste management programs and tree planting initiatives together with basic awareness education projects. Despite resource constraints and anti-change attitudes from established generations and inadequate support from local administrators the youth of Barru demonstrate resourcefulness to tackle environmental problems. They successfully raised public environmental understanding which fostered high involvement in sustainable practices toward the achievement of sustainable development objectives. The study highlights how vital it is to both empower young people and give them essential support to keep up their positive environmental work because youth-led initiatives have the power to transform rural communities.

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