

THE EFFECTS OF PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNITY GARDENING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SENSE OF COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

Community gardens play a significant role in not only addressing food issues but also more importantly in facilitating social connections among community members. This study investigated the effects of participation in community gardening on developing Sense of Community (SOC), which represents a combined feeling of belonging, concern for others, and shared faith among members. Therefore, SOC emphasizes citizen's psychological bond with their communities to maintain and conserve the society.

The hypotheses are as follows: (a) the participation in community gardening will have a meaningful influence on creating sense of community; (b) SOC will represent differences according to the various categories of the participation, which include types, level, and duration of the participation. To verify the hypotheses, the survey on both 34 participants, who has cultivated the products at Hale Y community garden in Blacksburg, Virginia operated by the YMCA, and 31 non-participants of community gardening, who were randomly selected in Blacksburg community, was conducted and analyzed by T-test, F-test, and multiple regression analysis. The study concluded that the more active and longer they participate in community gardening, the higher the SOC.

This study has significance in proving the benefit of community gardening for sense of community quantitatively, which was rarely examined in previous studies. Based on the results of this study, we are able to verify the effectiveness of community gardens as a means of community vitality. Besides, the implication in this paper suggests that community garden-related policies need to be established to facilitate local communities.

Keywords

Community Garden, Sense of Community Index, Participation