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Effects of Plant Growth Regulators on Rooting Potentials of *Caesalpinia bonduc* (L) Roxb.

Cuttings

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Abstract

Over exploitation and inappropriate conservative strategies have reduced the natural population of most valuable forest tree species to a large extent. Seed dormancy of *Caesalpinia bonduc* has being a hindrance to its regeneration. The study therefore was carried out to investigate the effect of plant growth regulators on rooting potential of *Caesalpinia bonduc*. Naphthalene Acetic Acid (NAA), Indole Butyric Acid (IBA) and a combination NAA/IBA at different hormone concentrations, 0, 50, 100 and 150 mg/l were applied to stem cuttings of *Caesalpinia bonduc*. The percentage survival, sprouting and rooting ability of single node cuttings were assessed using 3x4 factorial experiments in a Completely Randomized Design. Data obtained were analyzed using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The result in terms of sprout development based on sprout count and length showed that hormonal treatment of NAA had the highest mean value of 8.25 and 1.92 cm respectively. There was no significant difference ($\alpha=0.05$) observed in the sprout development in terms of hormonal treatment. The control recorded the highest survival percentage with the mean value of 7.5% followed by cuttings treated with NAA at 150 mg L⁻¹ with a mean value of 7.08. However in terms of rooting ability, the number of roots and length was also observed to be high with NAA application with mean value of 2.25 and 2.92 cm respectively. NAA application had the highest rooting ability and can be used as hormonal treatment for macro propagation of *C. bonduc*.

Keywords: *Caesalpinia bonduc*, growth regulators, hormone concentration, rooting ability

Word count: 236



Introduction

Caesalpinia bonduc is a vine-like shrub that reaches a length of 6 m or more (20 ft) usually armed with robust prickles and scrambles over other vegetation. Plants usually have a single stem arising from the ground but often branch low on the stem. *C. bonduc* is intolerant of shade and is usually open grown or at least grown in broken sunlight. It competes well with grass and herbs and may ascend into the crowns of low trees (Francis, 2000). Traditionally extracts of its leaves, bark and roots are taken to treat fever, relieve skin eruptions and headache. The seed is claimed to be useful in colic, malaria, hydrocele and leprosy (Francis, 2000). The oil from the seeds is used in convulsions and paralysis. The seeds are ground in water and given internally in snake bite. Leaves and twigs are traditionally used for the treatment of tumors, inflammation and liver disorders (Singh and Raghav, 2012). It effectively suppresses or cures infections of several species of roundworms in children. Thus, *Caesalpinia bonduc* plays an important role as medicinal plant which is presently contributing to the healthcare system of most rural communities.

The benefits obtained from large number of different plant species have multiple effects on the livelihood of both rural and urban populace (Oladumoye and Kehinde (2011); Adewunmi *et al.* (2001)). The search for medicinal plants has improved recently and this has led to the production of most valuable and economic plant species. In recent times, habitat destruction, over exploitation and inappropriate conservative strategies have reduced the natural population of most valuable forest tree species to a large extent. At the propagation level, slow growth rate and seed dormancy period have also been hindrances to the mass production (Kazeem *et al.*, 2016). In order to enhance the germination and increase the number of seedlings available for planting, appropriate treatment must be applied for successful production of most forest tree crops and NTFPs species. Vegetative propagation among others presents a distinctive chance of preventing the challenges of raising forest tree species from seeds in tropical regions.

According to Puri and Khara (1992), vegetative propagation encourages the transfer of the genetic potential and non-additive variance of the parent to the new plant. The use of plant growth hormones



plays an important role in influencing the development of stem cuttings. Indolebutyric acid (IBA) and Naphthalene acetic acid (NAA) are being the most widely used auxins for rooting in stem cuttings and for rooting tissue-culture-produced micro cuttings (Baul,*et al.*, 2008). It has been repeatedly confirmed that auxin is required for initiation of adventitious roots on stems and indeed, it has been shown that divisions of the first root initial cells are dependent upon either applied or endogenous auxins (Baul,*et al.*, 2008; Davis and Haissig, 1990). IBA has been found to occur naturally. The formation of root primordium cells depends on the endogenous auxins in the cutting and on a synergic compound such as a diphenol.

These substances lead to the synthesis of ribonucleic acid (RNA), which act upon root initiation (Hartmann *et al.*, 2002). The application of some plant growth retardants, together with auxin, has been used to improve the rooting capacity of cuttings in some species (Davis and Haissig, 1990; Pan and Zhao, 1994). Plant growth regulators have gained wide acceptance for optimizing the yield of plants by modifying growth, development and stress behaviour (Shukla and Farooqi, 1990). Synthetic plant growth regulators, such as auxins, cytokinins and various growth retardants when applied exogenously to the plant, influence various aspects of plant development and biosynthesis of its important components (Shukla and Farooqi, 1990; Kewalanand and Pandey, 1998). Therefore, the study was carried out to investigate the effect of plant growth regulators on rooting potential of *Caesalpinia bonduc*.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

480 single node leafy stem cuttings were obtained from 6 month old seedlings. The seedlings were decapitated and stem cuttings were obtained from single node position of the seedlings. The cuttings were then treated with the following growth regulators; NAA, IBA and a combination of NAA/IBA in ratio 1:1 at the following concentrations, 0, 50, 100 and 150mgL⁻¹. The cuttings were treated with the growth regulators using the quick dip method (Akinyele, 2010) and set in washed, sterilized river sand in germination trays and laid out in 3x4 factorial experiments in a completely randomized design under the high humidity propagator. Ten cuttings were allocated to each treatment and replicated four times. Watering was done daily with a handheld sprayer while the following parameters were assessed after 60 days of the experiment; percentage survival of cuttings, sprout count, length of sprout, number of roots



per cutting and root length per cutting. Data collected was analysed using ANOVA while Duncan was used as post hoc test.

RESULTS

Effect of plant growth regulators and concentrations on *C. bonduc* stem cuttings

High rate of survival was found among the stem cuttings of juvenile seedlings of *C. bonduc* as most of the stem cuttings retain their freshness six (6) weeks after planting. The number of sprouts varied in accordance to the type of growth regulators used, though control showed little variations.

Percentage survival

Percentage survival differed among the growth regulators and their concentrations. The cuttings from control had the highest mean percentage survival of 7.5. However, there was no significant difference between the mean values of NAA, IBA and the combination of NAA/IBA (Table 1). Cuttings treated with no concentration (control) had the highest mean value of 7.50, followed by those treated with 150 mg L⁻¹ had mean value of 6.67. There was significant difference among the mean survival of seedlings treated with concentrations, 0, 50, 100 and 150mgL⁻¹ (Table 2). The growth regulators were observed to affect the survival of the cuttings.

Sprout count

The highest mean value of 8.25 sprout count was observed in cuttings treated with IBA, followed by a value of 6.00 (control). The lowest mean value of 5.33 was observed in the cuttings treated with combination of NAA/IBA. There was no significant difference in control, IBA and combination of NAA/IBA (Table 1). However, the number of sprout developed from the cuttings propagated was not significantly influenced by different concentrations but the highest mean value of 7.08 was recorded for 150mg L⁻¹ (Table 2). The sprout count was significantly affected by the growth regulator concentration but growth regulator and their interaction had no significant effect.

Length of sprout count

The cuttings with the NAA treatment had the highest mean value of 1.92 for the length of sprouts followed by combination of IBA/NAA with the mean value of 1.48. While the length of sprouts was



least in cuttings treated with IBA and control with the mean values of 1.31 and 1.14 respectively (Table 1). The length of sprout developed per sprouted stem cutting propagated were also significantly ($\alpha=0.05$) influenced by different concentrations. However, the length of sprout increased as the concentrations increases (Table 2). The effect of the growth regulator and growth regulator concentration was significant on the sprout length while the interaction between growth regulators and regulator concentration was not significant.

Number of rooted cuttings

There was no significant difference between the mean values of the control, IBA and combination of NAA/IBA. Cuttings treated with NAA, IBA and combination of NAA/IBA had a mean value of 2.58, 1.08 and 1.00 respectively (Table 1). The control had no rooted cuttings. The number of rooted cuttings was not significantly influenced by 50 and 150 mgL⁻¹ concentrations. The development of roots was significantly affected by the growth regulator concentration while the growth regulator type and their interaction had no significant effect.

Root length

Control had no rooted cuttings. Cuttings treated with NAA, combination of NAA/IBA and IBA had mean values of 2.92, 1.49 and 1.20 respectively. There was no significant difference between cuttings treated with IBA and a combination of NAA/IBA (Table 1). Root length of the cuttings was not significantly affected by concentrations 50, 100 and 150 mgL⁻¹ (Table 2). The length of the rooted cuttings was significantly influenced by the growth regulator concentration while the effect of growth regulator type and the interaction between them were not significant.



Table 1: Effect of growth regulators on the stem cuttings of *C. bonduc*

Growth regulators	Percentage survival	Sprout Count	Sprout length	Root number	Root Length
Control	7.50±0.64 ^b	6.00±0.81 ^a	1.14±0.23 ^a	0.00 ^a	0.00 ^a
NAA	6.17±0.32 ^a	8.25±0.39 ^b	1.92±0.14 ^b	2.58±0.48 ^b	2.92±0.43 ^c
IBA	5.83±0.32 ^a	5.91±0.23 ^a	1.31±0.13 ^a	1.08±0.26 ^a	1.20±0.33 ^b
NAA/IBA	5.66±0.28 ^a	5.33±0.45 ^a	1.48±0.21 ^{ab}	1.00±0.32 ^a	1.49±0.14 ^b

* Means with the same letter under each column are not significantly different from each other at $\alpha = 0.05$ according to Duncan multiple range of test.

Table 2: Effect of Hormone concentrations on stem cuttings of *C. bonduc*

Concentration (mg L ⁻¹)	Percentage survival	Sprout Count	Sprout Length	Root number	Root Length
0	7.50±0.64 ^c	6.00±0.82 ^a	1.15±0.23 ^a	0.00 ^a	0.00 ^a
50	5.17±0.27 ^a	6.42±0.42 ^a	1.35±0.14 ^{ab}	2.00±0.43 ^b	1.80±0.36 ^b
100	5.83±0.27 ^{ab}	6.00±0.52 ^a	1.45±0.92 ^{ab}	1.00±0.35 ^{ab}	1.79±0.45 ^b
150	6.67±0.28 ^{bc}	7.08±0.58 ^a	1.91±0.23 ^b	1.67±0.45 ^b	2.02±0.37 ^b

*Means with the same letter under each column are not significantly different from each other at $\alpha = 0.05$ according to Duncan multiple range of test.



DISCUSSION

This study has shown that macro-propagation techniques could be utilized to rapidly enhance the rooting ability of *C. bonduc*. The stem cuttings had greater chances of survival as they were able to retain their leaves. Akinyele (2010) explained that the retention of leaves is important for cuttings as they do not possess large reserves. Fadwa and Yahia (2014) further explained that persistence of physiologically active leaves and development of buds into branches are prominent signs of rooting in cuttings. Among the growth hormones, NAA at 150mg L^{-1} was found to be more effective followed by IBA at 150mg L^{-1} in terms of mean percent survival, number of sprouts length, sprout root number and length of *C. bonduc* cuttings. This is in line with findings of Zia *et al.*, (2013) who also recorded maximum sprout at higher concentration of NAA. The NAA, IBA and combination of NAA and IBA with the concentrations of 50, 100 and 150mg L^{-1} showed considerable mean values of survival rate. The maximum number of sprouts produced in cuttings treated with NAA at 150mg L^{-1} is in contrast with the findings of Singh *et al.* (2011) who observed that the maximum number of sprouts was produced in response to treatment of IBA on *Bougainvillea*.

However, Wahab *et al.* (2001) observed better sprouting from cuttings of guava when treated with NAA at 2000ppm. Length of sprout was also observed to be highly influenced by the growth regulators and their concentration, NAA at 150mg L^{-1} identified to be the highest. For the rooting ability of the cuttings, cuttings treated with NAA had the highest mean number of roots (2.58) than cuttings treated with IBA which had a value of 1.08 and combination of the two growth regulators (1.00) while the controls (untreated cuttings) produce no roots. Hajano *et al.* (2015) reported that long soak method of covered stem cuttings at 2000 and 4000mg L^{-1} of NAA exhibited better rooting percentage. It is evident from the study that the application of different concentrations of growth regulators had different effects on the mean values of growth parameters. These findings are similar to reports given by Gbadamosi and Oni (2005) that higher concentration of NAA on the cuttings of *Enatia chlorantha* did not support rooting potentials of the species. Meanwhile, IBA at 50ppm gave high percentage of roots.



CONCLUSION

Stem cuttings of *C. bonduc* can be successfully regenerated via young single node cuttings with hormone treatment using NAA, IBA and their combination at different level of concentrations. Preferably NAA at 150 mg L⁻¹ would give better results to promote mass propagation of the species. Hence, vegetative propagation of *C. bonduc* through stem cuttings could be a sure thing and a reliable alternative to production of seedlings of *C. bonduc* aside from use of seeds.

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Labour Market and Financial Literacy Experiences of Scarborough Youth

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Abstract

This short research report explores how barriers, particularly gaps in opportunity, awareness, and achievement, impact financial literacy and labour market experiences among some underprivileged youth. The study is conducted using survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with children of immigrants (generation 1.5 and 2) between the ages of 18-24, residing in Scarborough, a dense ethnic suburb in Toronto, Canada, who face barriers such as racialization and poverty. Their daily experiences from engagements with members of their broader residential communities to close personal networks that guide them in finding jobs and managing money are all explored. The findings show that most participants feel a lack of certain financial knowledge and career networking opportunities, a notable disadvantage in terms of their finances and job prospects. Moreover, social organizations such as registered charities need to better understand financial literacy challenges unique to children of immigrants from diverse



backgrounds and to better link institutional offerings in youth employment services to financial literacy initiatives to ensure a holistic sustainable approach to youth development.

Keywords: Financial Literacy, Labour Market, Scarborough, Racialization, Children of Immigrants, Social mobility

Word count: 167

1. Introduction

Our primary aim here is to explore how gaps in opportunity, awareness, and achievement impact financial literacy and labour market experiences among some underprivileged youth. This exploratory study uses a mixed-method approach: 65 e-surveys combined with five follow-up semi-structured interviews with the children of immigrants (generation 1.5 and 2) between the ages of 18-24, residing in Scarborough (a predominantly ethnic suburb of Toronto) who are susceptible to challenges such as racialization and poverty. Financial literacy is the possession of the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions with all their financial resources. Understanding young adults' financial decisions as well as their applied financial literacy is of particular importance because educational programs within formal education and the associated interventions appear to be limited in their success (Oehler et al. 2017). Although most studies would suggest that Canadian youth are more financially literate, the level of financial literacy differs when we take into account social and institutional barriers, like race, gender, and class. For instance, a 2016 study by Statistic Canada has found that female Canadians are less knowledgeable about financial concepts than their male counterparts (Drolet 2016). Therefore, we want to find out how specific barriers can impact the level of financial literacy among youth in Scarborough who face multiple barriers.

We define financial literacy as the possession of the set of skills and knowledge that allows an individual to make informed and effective decisions with all their financial resources. Financial literacy is impacted by various factors such as the opportunity gap, achievement gap and awareness gap. But none of the factors is more crucial than the labour market. The labour in Canada vis-à-vis youth has been saturated with precarious work. "Precarious youth employment is on the rise, as jobs for young people are



increasingly contractual or temporary. Work in the "gig" economy is increasing, too, and will likely continue in the decades to come" (Alexander and McKean 2017). These issues are exacerbated for youth who come from vulnerable sections of society, such as low-income youth, Indigenous youth, youth with disabilities, and racialized youth and newcomers to Canada (Prosper Canada 2015). For instance, many indigenous peoples who reside in rural areas have difficulties accessing mainstream financial services: "While online and telephone financial services have made it easier for some people to do their banking, pressure to use these services has distanced some Aboriginal community members from mainstream banks. Some customers prefer face-to-face interaction that is more consistent with local understandings of trust" (ibid pg. 2). Moreover, financial services are often geared toward middle- and high-income individuals, and financial information that is received by low income people can be harmful, and thus results in them having ill equipped information about their finances (ibid).

The precarious nature of employment for young people requires Canadian youth to adapt and be more financially savvy as they deal with increasingly limited resources and contractual jobs with limited income stability. Such issues are particularly salient when it comes to youths from marginalized sections of society. The aforementioned study by Prosper Canada illustrates that youth who come from newcomer families' act as intermediary to help their families access information and services. Their ability to adapt quickly to Canadian languages, customs and norms alters the range of responsibilities they take on within their family. Some may even become income earners at a young age if there is a lack of sustainable income for the family. This can affect the way some newcomer youth relate to money, viewing money as a necessity to meet short term needs, rather than accumulating savings or investments for longer-term personal or family goals. Therefore, when they do get a stable job and income coming in, their past experiences greatly influence their relationship with money and its use. Furthermore, the study states that youth who are raised in newcomer families are susceptible to make decision based on inaccurate or misunderstood information, because they do not have access to the same kind of tools and resources that native-born Canadians do (ibid). These decisions can lead to years of credit recovery, lost investment gains and other financial difficulties. With the ways the labour markets currently impact youth, such financial hardships can only exacerbate the woes of competing in a saturated and competitive labour market for precarious jobs.



2. Methodology

2.1 Research Site

Scarborough is part of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) located in the east, encompassing the area between Victoria Park and the Pickering border. Scarborough is largely composed of an immigrant population, with nearly 57% being foreign born, and over half the population being working class. Scarborough is also home to many religions: Christians (49.1%), Hindus (13.1%) and Muslims (10.5%) (Statistics Canada 2013). Given the diverse makeup of the borough, the research tools we sought to implement reflected various backgrounds and identities. It should be noted that Scarborough is a big place geographically. Whereas we did have youth from different neighbourhoods in Scarborough participate in this research, many of them happened to be concentrated in the western and southern neighbourhoods given limited resources to recruit and outreach, which is discussed in the next section.

Scarborough being a suburb with a high concentration of newcomer and immigrant populations faces mainstream stigmatization and stereotypes. Basu et al. (2013) contrasts perceptions of Scarborough among mainstream media and society versus those of actual residents. Despite broader narratives of Scarborough as a dangerous and morbid place, perpetuated by the media and city planners alike, most residents view their communities amicably, referring to Scarborough as a "safe and peaceful place to live" (2013: 33-34). The researchers of this study have several decades of combined lived experiences in Scarborough and would contend the latter sentiments of Scarborough being a wrongfully stereotyped place. There are also other neighbourhoods in Toronto with high concentration of ethnic populations, predominantly newcomers and immigrants, that face stigma and stereotype as well (Bauder 2002; Zaami 2015) - particularly institutional biases against racialized youth seeking gainful employment to improve their lives, which is directly related to the concerns raised in this study.

2.2 Outreach and recruitment

Respondents from multiple Scarborough neighbourhoods were involved in this endeavour; however, our main focus were the neighbourhoods on the border of East York and West Scarborough where many of our community partners were based. These neighbourhoods comprise primarily of racialized immigrant



and newcomer population similar to many other Scarborough communities. Oakridge, where many youth participants reside, is one of the Neighbourhood Improvement Areas (NIAs) designated by the City of Toronto and a community lacking in key metrics such as employment opportunities, health provisions and infrastructure quality (City of Toronto 2016). Our research applies an intersectional framework to examine how different power systems affect participant experiences. Aside from their residential locations, we look at social stratification such as class, race, sex, age and their influences on financial literacy and labour market aspirations and experiences.

Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, we assess the perceived levels of financial literacy as well as actual habits/practices. We further assess how participants experience the labour market and employment challenges. Evaluation of study topics was done based on participant's self-rated responses (e.g. scale of excellent, good or average, somewhat; yes, no; number scale ratings; etc.) for the e-surveys. Then, the follow-up semi-structured interviews would dig deeper in an one-on-one setting to gather qualitative data to better understand aspirations and experiences. In total, we conducted 65 survey questionnaires as well as five in-depth semi-structured interviews. The youth respondents were recruited via social media channels and email blasts within community agencies operating in Scarborough as well as more traditional methods such as word-of-mouth and snowballing. The survey was offered and implemented electronically; half the youth completed it from a location of their convenience while another half did it at community centers. Purposive sampling was also used to get youth from community centers doing the surveys to follow-up one-on-one interviews, based on the level of enthusiasm and engagement in further contributing to the study.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic of Youth Surveyed

Through the survey questionnaires, it was determined that 52% of participants were male, 46% were female and the remaining participants preferred not to say (Figure 1). In figure 3, with regards to the age group, majority of the participants were between the ages of 18-21 (78.5%). Over 60% of participants were currently pursuing a post-secondary education (Figure 4). Participants predominantly comprised of youth who identified their ancestral background as South Asian. Only 38% of participants surveyed were



born in Canada, while the remaining 62% were born outside of Canada (Figure 2). In regard to religion, more than half the participants indicated they practice Islam (56%).

3.2 Youth Knowledge on Labour Market and Financial Literacy

When participants were asked about their access to technology at home and at school, over 90% responded that they have excellent access to technology, while 66% of the participants' responded excellent access to technology at school. Most participants held formal employment¹ in some capacity (84%). When it came to their financial literacy, the level of perceived (self-reported) understanding varied depending on the concepts. For instance, when it came to concepts of savings, debt, and financial net worth, over 70% responded that they can confidently explain these concepts ranging from average to excellent (Figure 5). When asked about their confidence in explaining concepts of incomes expenses and cash flow, over 70% responded average to excellent. However, over 50% of participants responded below average to poor in their ability to explain the differences and similarities between investment vehicles such as the Tax-Free Savings Account (TFSA) and Registered Retirement Savings Plan (RRSP) (Figure 6). There were mixed results when it came to the participants' ability to explain the advantages and disadvantages of chequing and savings accounts. About 20% ranked their ability as excellent, while 23% said poor, and 24% said average.

When participants were asked what their main sources of personal finance guidance were, majority indicated that they turn to their parents for such information, while schools and community organization ranked as the least likely resources that they would turn to for guidance pertaining to personal finance. In terms of labour market assistant, many youth noted that they suffer from lack of networks, having parents and relatives who face de-professionalization in Canada. When participants were asked about the kinds of financial tools they have, over 56% answered that they have both debit and credit cards. About 56% participants answered yes when asked if they currently have any investments in their own name (savings account, RRSP, TFSA, real estate). The nature of the participants spending habits varied. In a ranking question between the options (food, clothing, entertainment, educational resources and transportation),

¹ Formal work was defined as working with a company/ organization with a set pay, payroll, specified location of work and regular hours of work.



49% of the respondents ranked food as their main expenditures. When asked if social media effects their spending habits, 66% of the respondents replied “Yes”. Over 40% of the youth said they actively try to save money. When asked why, reasons varied a great deal, but 20% of participants said they are trying to save money for education purposes.

3.3 Effect of Class, Education, Age and Sex on Financial Literacy and Labour Market Experiences

There was a significant difference in the level of confidence experienced with financial literacy concepts among males and females. In general, males were much more likely to express above average or excellent confidence in explaining a broad array of financial concepts such as saving/investing, credit/debit cards and TFSA/RRSPs. In contrast, females generally expressed much less confidence in explaining the same set of financial concepts. There were no significant differences as age increased in experiences for labour market and financial literacy. Among the lowest age cohort, the 18-year-old, 35% (7 of 20) youth claimed to consciously decide to save, while among the 21-year-old participants, 50% (8 of 16) youth claimed to consciously save. When probed whether family class played a role in saving habits and attitudes, there weren't any significant differences. Most of the participants self-identified their family class as middle class, lower-middle class or upper-middle class (Figure 7).

Across all the spectrum of family classes, most youth stipulated that they attempted to save money. In the lower-middle class (13 of 16 respondents or 81%), middle class (23 of 31 respondents or 74%) and the upper-middle class (8 of 9 respondents or 89%) responded as ‘somewhat yes’ or ‘yes’ when asked whether they try to save money. There were no discernible patterns observed between professed family class and confidence with different financial concepts. Youth from self-reportedly wealthier families did not necessarily exhibit any higher confidence with different financial concepts. More so, the level of education (high school versus university) or age (18 versus 21) did not produce any significant differences. Lastly, the confidence levels with financial concepts did not increase between the age groups. As shown in figure 8, about 45% of 18-year old's (9 of 20 respondents) self-identified above average or excellent confidence in explaining cash flow and income concepts, compared to only 50% of 21 years old (8 of 16 respondents).



4. Findings and Discussions

4.1.1 Financial Literacy Successes and Challenges

The youth in the interviews generally expressed optimism in their chances of future financial success. When asked if they felt that they would be a financially successful individual, one youth interviewee responded by saying, “I definitely think I’ll be better than where I am now; hopefully because of my habits and what I’ve done in the past and what I plan to do in the future... I’ll maybe become financially successful.” Another said, “I think I will be if by financial success it means like I’m doing well for myself and I’m okay with where my financial situation is – I think I will be successful.” When asked what was stopping them from doing more, in terms of saving, investing, etc., many of the interviewed youth felt that although they were somewhat knowledgeable about financial literacy and personal finance, they still lacked much of the basic knowledge that they required. One of them said, “Personally, I don’t think I know enough about it.” Another youth stated, “...Just lack of knowledge, I didn’t study business or money, or they didn’t teach us in high school and I went through a kinesiology program, which is science based, so I have limited knowledge about saving and banking and stuff like that... I know I don’t know nothing. I know some amount.”

4.1.2 Family influences

Many of the youth also said that a lot of their financial decisions and habits were influenced by their family members. When asked about family influences, one of the interviewees said, “My dad was really strict about money, so whenever I spent something, I think about [spending] two or three times. I have a hard time spending money for myself – like if I want to get something, I would have to really think about it and be a 120 percent sure.” Another interviewee stated, “Cultural background [is a] pretty big influence on it [spending habits]. Actually, from my background there’s a lot more focus and in general the family-centric and sort of a decision-making structure, so my family plays like a massive role on making decisions – like they help me open up my [bank] account, they help me with taxes and such from that aspect. Basically, all my like large financial decisions and education and all that does go through my family.” When it comes to money management most of the participants’ guidance at a young age were from immediate family members such as their parents. Therefore, if the parents lacked financial literacy and resources, this disadvantage and mindset were also transmitted to the children.



4.1.3 Peer influence

Several respondents acknowledged that their friends and classmates were bad influences on saving habits; one respondent said “My friends are huge spenders, they're very impulsive – especially when I'm going out and stuff, so I had to really keep myself in check because of the peer pressure”, another youth said, “Sometimes my friends want to do something and I don't want to do it.” - another youth said about the influence of classmates, in addition to friends, “I would say my classmates affected me because whoever I hung around or whatever if they wanted to go out for lunch obviously I wasn't going to stay alone; I went as well.” The youth spent a lot of time at school with peers where spending decisions would be made e.g. buying lunch or buying the pair of cool new shoes that a classmate was wearing. Sometimes pressure from peers included family members and relatives such as cousins their age with shared interests and hobbies that can become costly to pursue.

4.1.4 Personal finance guidance

We also asked our participants what their main sources of personal finance guidance were; majority indicated that they turn to their parents for such information, while schools and community organization ranked as the least likely resources that would turn to for guidance pertaining to personal finance. There is perhaps a greater role for big institutional players, namely the school boards and community organizations, to promote and execute financial literacy initiatives for the youth population, especially in the communities that need it the most. In terms of labour market assistant, many immigrant youths suffer from lack of networks, having parents and relatives who face de-professionalization in the Canadian labour market (Akter et al. 2014) – these are systemic issues that will require significant political will and public pressure to bring about tangible changes.

4.1.5 Gendered patterns of confidence

We noticed significant differences in level of confidence with financial literacy concepts among males and females. In general, males were much more likely to express above average or excellent confidence in explaining a broad array of financial concepts such as saving/investing, credit/debit cards, TFSA/RRSPs, etc. Females generally expressed much less confidence in explaining the same set of financial concepts. This does not mean that their actual knowledge or attainment was any less, confidence



was self-reported and perceived. There was not any noticed correlation with other forms of identity such as family class and confidence. Less confidence may be a positive factor when seeking to making investment decisions and limited risks and in other cases it can be a problem such as not investing aggressively enough at a young age leading to lower lifetime returns on saved dollars.

4.2 Labour market success and challenges

Interviewed youth described different levels of employment; from temporary jobs in non-profits to internships at budding start-ups. When asked about how living and growing up in Scarborough may have affected their employment chances, most of the interviewed youth stated that their environment affected their choices. Participants were split on the local Scarborough job market for youth: some thought the youth around them in their communities were hardly employed, while a smaller percentage thought that the job market was fair and adequate. Most youth stressed that having social connections with professionals was vital. The youth also described challenges with their lack of job experiences, difficulty in school, and uncertainty of their own future goals. They were also finding ways to overcome these challenges through the help of job search technologies and community/university support services available to them.

4.2.1 Environmental effects on labour market choices

Most of the interviewed youth stated that their 'environment' affected their employment choices; many of them said that they faced pressures to work (and study) towards higher paying jobs and careers from family members and other co-ethnics. As one interviewee explained, "Mostly they would all [parents and relatives] expect you to be a doctor or a lawyer or something big like that so there were always these high expectations". This correlates to our survey results, which shows that over 83% of youth, that are not in high school, are currently studying in a university. Furthermore, less than 8% of youth are not enrolled in some form of post-secondary (beyond high school) education; this all shows that these youth are heavily encouraged to pursue higher education in order to get high paying jobs. When asked about how living in and growing up in Scarborough may have affected their employment chances; over 72% of the youth stated that it was hard to find a job. Many of the youth thought that their peers were hardly employed. As one interviewee explained "I find that the youth are not typically employed – especially



while I was growing up with most of my peers. When we were allowed to go to work, they weren't necessarily in work". A minority of survey participants thought that the job market was fair and adequate (24%) for youth in Scarborough, they described that many community centers were helpful with their job postings on bulletin board as well as youth career preparation programs offered through local universities, as one interviewee described "There's a lot of community centers in Scarborough and there's a lot of [places where] there's always job postings and stuff on the bulletin board".

4.2.2 Challenges with professional networks and job experiences

When asked about the main challenges the youth face when trying to get a good job, many of the youth stressed that having career professional in their social networks was important, one of them stressed this fact, "Networking is everything – you need to know someone to get into a good position"; which can be a problem for youth that live in a community without many white collar professionals and connections. As one youth explained, "...the people that have so much experience end up getting the best jobs right out the gate". This means that participants must have job experience to get a job, which results in many hardships in order to land the first job. Therefore, accessible (in their communities) networking events as well as job fairs can go a long way to help the youth; as these events can help them make connections and get relevant job experience, which in turn can lead to better connections and job experience, further helping them find better jobs.

Although most youth went to higher education not all of them were star students and sure of their aspirations and the ways to achieve them. One interviewee stated "I didn't achieve mark's high enough to become and let's say a physio which was my initial or what I entered university [to do], but that's also a challenge for people to get a good job. You need a degree... a master's, maybe even a PhD or you need to get super high marks – that's how I feel like living in today's society.". While another said, "One of the biggest challenges for me to find a good job [was] to first figure out what I wanted to do in life, so I haven't really figured that out right now.". In order to alleviate these problems; free tutoring and classes on effective studying methods can be used to help students succeed in school, while accessible career counseling tuned into their challenging contexts can help students understand what they want to do in terms of their occupational and educational trajectories.



4.2.3 Overcoming labour market realities and challenges

Access to technology, particularly related to job searches, helped even the playing field more for some study participants. 50% of the surveyed youth said that the internet was one of their top two sources for help in the job search process. This leads us to believe that community centers can effectively help youth find jobs by using the internet (websites, social media, etc.) to keep youth updated on job postings and career preparation programs. Social media may be a more effective form of employment outreach to the youth than more traditional electronic formats such as e-mail. Furthermore, while 47% of the youth said they currently have a job, 83% of the survey youth stated that they have had a formal job where they were paid routinely; this is probably because many of the youth only work in the summer, as explained by one youth, "I was only working during the summers". This leads us to believe that employment opportunities in the summer may be most effective in helping these youth. This is employment peak season for them, May to August for those in university and July-August for the high schoolers. For those who seek out community employment programs and initiatives we highly suggest a bridge to personal finance and financial literacy initiatives to help manage the money they are earning to ensure it is being used wisely.

5. Conclusion

The labour market and financial literacy experiences of underprivileged urban youth remain an area of great interest. There are some potential barriers to social mobility that this report highlights. There is also much to be optimistic about. In general, the youth we studied, despite being racialized generation 1.5 and 2 immigrant youth from difficult socio-economic backgrounds, they are taking the right steps and have confidence in their own future success. We can conclude that institutions such as schools and community centers need to play a greater role in promoting and enhancing financial literacy as well as the need for programs catered towards females who are likely to be less confident in their financial capabilities. These initiatives need to be socio-culturally sensitive to be able to help youth who come from underprivileged backgrounds when it comes to labour markets. In general, the level of technological access in schools can be improved so the youth can work and study better towards success. A lot of the youth studied see local ethnic small and medium enterprises, as well as non-profits, as stepping stones to gain valuable



work and volunteering experiences towards better jobs and careers. Most participants are still students, going onto higher levels of education at esteemed institutions, and they are quite optimistic of their future financial and employment success. A few are more pessimistic, feeling that they do not have adequate networks and knowledge yet to reach the stage they envision for themselves.

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Appendix

Figure 1. Participant Sex

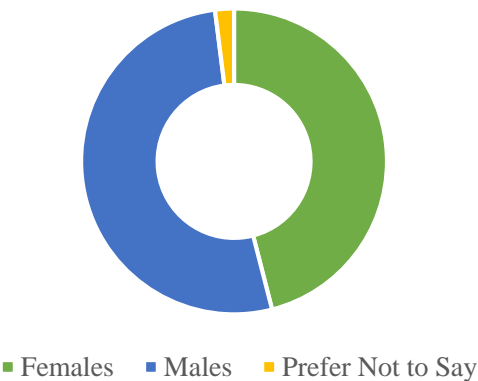


Figure 2. Participant Birth Country

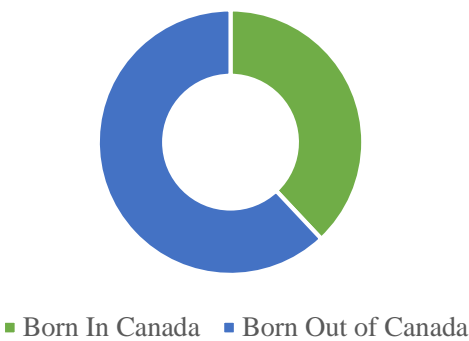


Figure 3. Participant Age

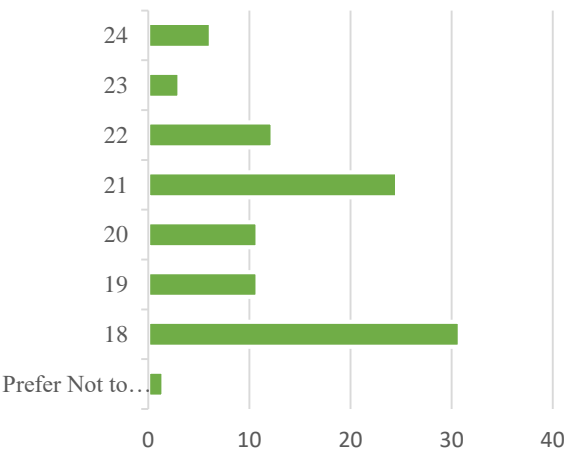


Figure 4. Current Level of Education/ Occupation

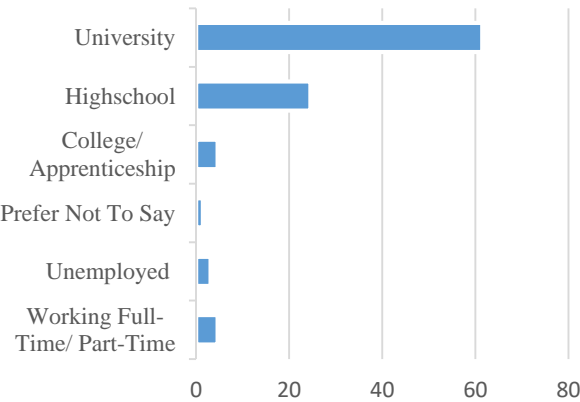




Figure 5. Participant Sex and Confidence in Explaining Savings, Debts, and Financial Net Worth

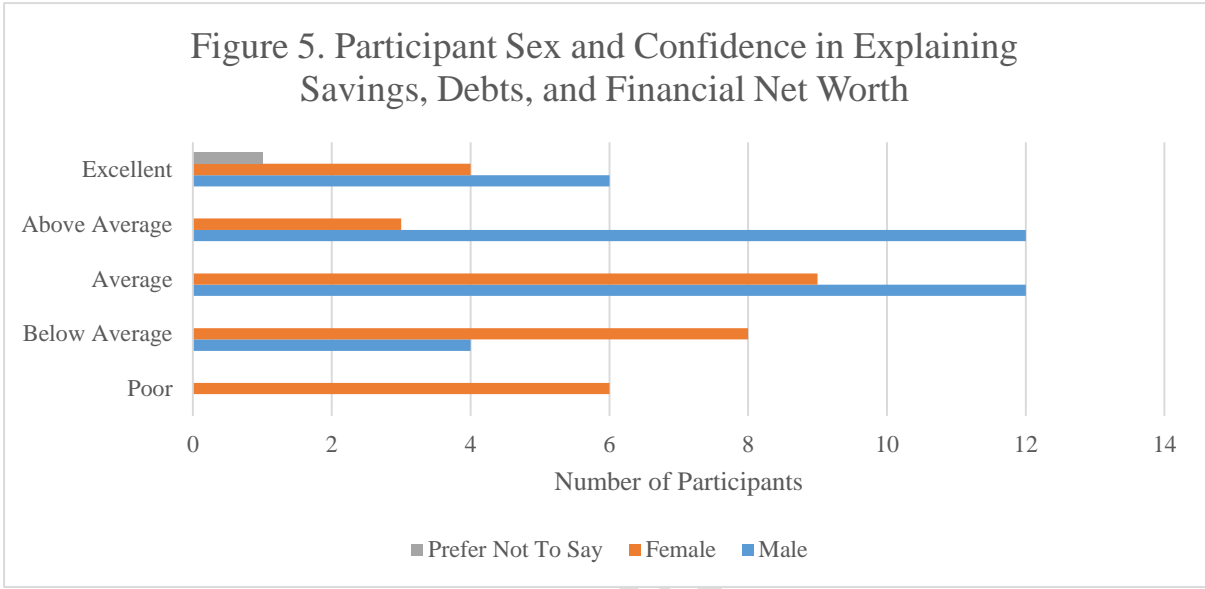
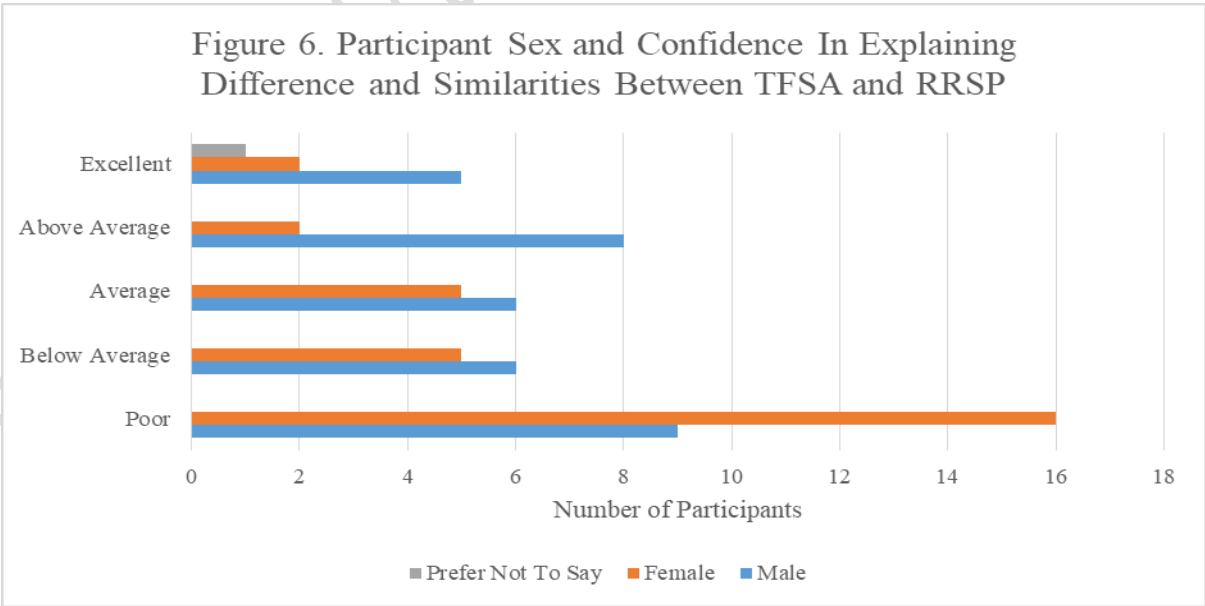
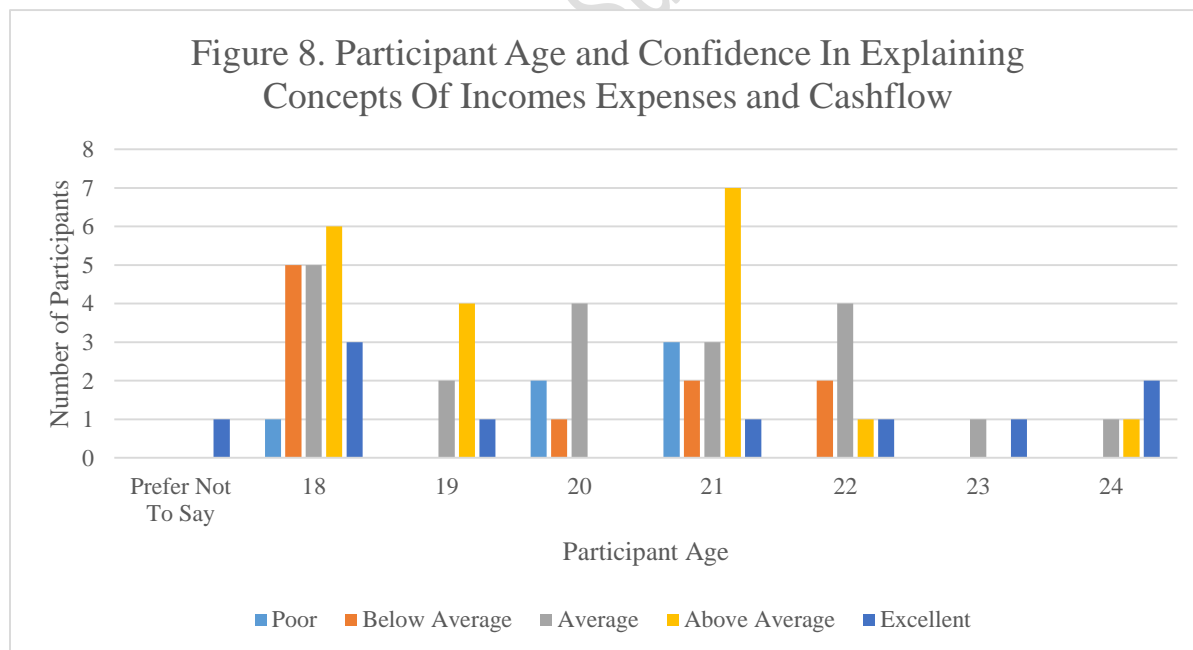
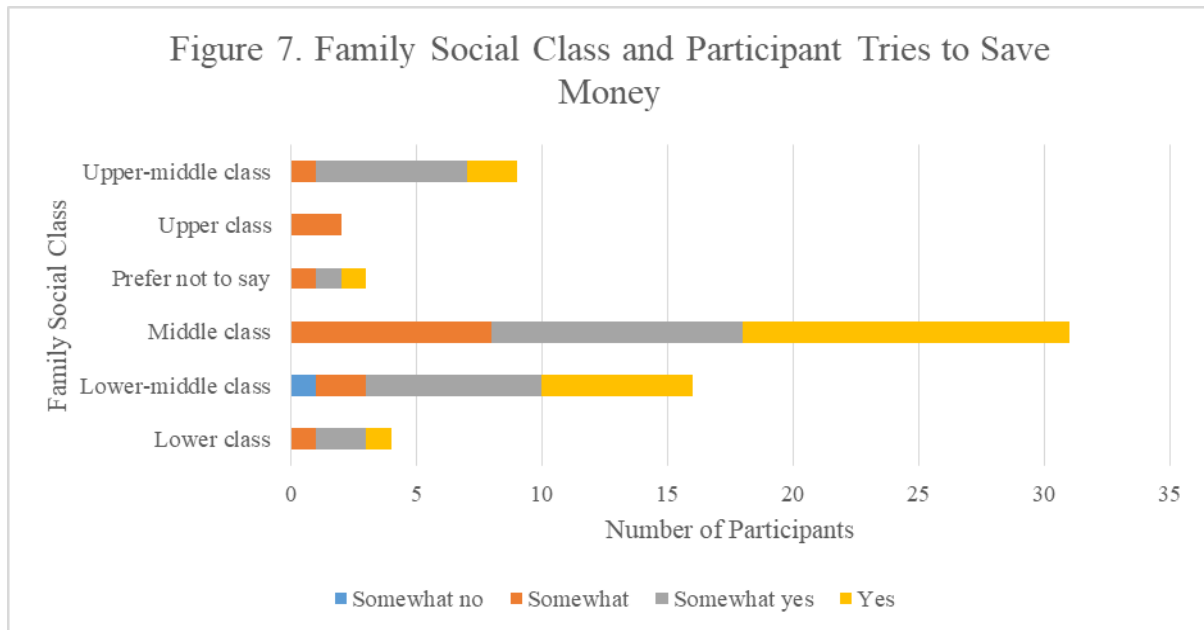


Figure 6. Participant Sex and Confidence In Explaining Difference and Similarities Between TFSA and RRSP







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Conducting an Evaluation Audit as a Quality Improvement Approach for Non- profits: A Canadian Case Study

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Abstract

To assess compliance of current practice with evaluation policy and its embedded standards, this audit systematically reviewed the evaluation activities of a Toronto non-profit organization. A mixed method explanatory sequential approach was applied to gather quantitative data from 26 programs and qualitative data from 16 key stakeholders. Triangulation of the data revealed that the quality of evaluation activities varied, and was positively influenced by the presence of a logic model. Supportive leadership, organizational culture, and quality data were key drivers for evaluation practices. This initiative demonstrated that an evaluation audit is not only conceivable, but also achievable for non- profits.

Keywords: *Evaluation audit, Logic model, Organizational culture, Accountability, Standards of evaluation, Supportive leadership, Data quality, Quality improvement*

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INTRODUCTION

An evaluation audit represents a quality improvement initiative (House, 1987) to measure adherence of the evaluation process to a set of accepted standards, and the outcomes of the evaluation activities against pre-determined objectives. The two main steps involved in an evaluation audit are gathering information from relevant stakeholders around the practice of evaluation and the discrepancy between the agency policy on evaluation and actual practices, (Diffen, 2018). Essentially, an audit does not carry out any experiment or intervention; rather, it assesses evaluation activities without interfering with the practices of any user or staff of the agency or involving any additional risk (Wirral Council Public Health Research & Development Team, 2014). One key assumption is that the scope of such an audit validates the evaluation process and practices at the non-profit organizations with regards to the reach, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. Consequently, an evaluation audit is assumed to improve the quality of the evaluation practices, and helps to remove any skepticism around the non- intended outcomes (Jabeen, 2017).

EVALUATION OF HEALTH AND WELLNESS PROGRAMS OF NON-PROFITS MATTERS

The non-profit sector in Canada works within an evidence-informed framework to help improve the health and wellness of the public, and provides a considerable social safety net to help ensure that the unmet social, political and emotional needs of individuals living in impoverished communities are catered to (Quarter et al., 2002). In Canada, there are over 85,000 non-profit organizations with charitable status employing over two million workers (Hall et al., 2005). This sector contributes nearly 76 billion dollars to the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), accounting for 8.5% of the nation's economic activity (Hall et al., 2005). The non-profit sector is operating within an era of increased accountability, and due to its extremely important role, it is crucial that strong, effective evaluations help organizations improve their commitment towards the public and the people they serve.

The vast majority of funders require some form of evaluation of the programs they fund to explain how they will ensure that the goals of their project are met. Boards, especially those with a keen understanding of their fiduciary responsibility, often require leadership on behalf of the organization to be shown how programs and services are being evaluated. It is also in the interest of community



members, those who may or may not access services but who live in the service area and belong to the neighbourhood, to ensure that service providers in their community are delivering the programs/services they were meant to deliver. The practice of evidence-informed planning and evaluation within community health centres (CHCs) in Ontario, although acknowledged as a critical component of needs-based program/service delivery, is still a developing area, as demonstrated through the baseline assessment of a provincial capacity building project with CHCs on equity-focused planning and evaluation, led by Access Alliance from 2017-2018. There are a number of factors which often prevent CHCs from carrying out quality evaluations, or even restrict their appreciation of the need to do so, namely, limitations in capacity, resources, or budget to prepare comprehensive evaluations. This often leads them to the point where actual data collection and analysis may be hindered (McNamara, 2002).

Within this context, Access Alliance led the pack by conducting such an evaluation audit. This audit comprises an attempt to practice 'lateral accountability', i.e. whereby an organization demonstrates its ability to fulfill its own mission-based activities (Christensen, 2002), in addition to the conventional accountability to patrons (vertical accountability upwards) and clients (vertical accountability downwards) (Najam, 1996). Access Alliance adopts a transformative approach for evaluating its community programs, one that deviates from the traditional testing of whether or not a particular strategy or intervention worked at a program's conclusion (Whitehead, 2002). Pawson & Tilley (1997) introduced a theory-based realist practice that considers the outcomes (i.e. whether or not it works) as well as the mechanism (i.e. what works, how, for whom, in what contexts, to what extent, etc.). This organization follows that approach. As such, the evaluation process begins with a theory of change (delineating the pathway between the context-mechanism-outcome); this is embedded within a formative evaluation model to assess a program's outputs and process, and/or a summative evaluation model to identify a program's effectiveness, impact, and sustainability. Each model has its own set of appropriate evaluation tools.

This organizational approach to evaluation is captured within the *Program Planning and Evaluation Policy* (2019), which emphasizes the importance of generating high quality evidence and developing



the elements of an effective evaluation plan through accepted standards. The policy highlights:

1. The evaluation process that starts at the pre-planning stage (formative evaluation), continues throughout the program cycle (process evaluation), and also after the completion of the program to identify the impact, effectiveness, and next steps (summative evaluation).
2. The four standards (utility, feasibility, accuracy, and propriety) which are consistent with global ethical protocols (CDC, 1999; JCSEE, 2016).
3. Staff compliance for using a program planning template, program-specific logic model, and the evaluation framework. McLaughlin et al. (1999) consider the logic model as a valuable tool linked to quality evaluation practices.

The evaluation framework used for the audit is a live document supporting the Program Planning and Evaluation Policy, and contains agreeable standards, ethical discourse (CES, 2014; Bowen, 2017; TCPS2, 2017), and guidelines for use of evidence-informed planning tools such as the logic model, the creation of a business case, etc. This evaluation audit focused on the Program Planning and Evaluation Policy, whereby the evidence generated through this process was assumed to describe any gap in compliance between this evaluation policy and current practice, as well as to prompt a useful dialogue within the organization around the challenges and opportunities surrounding future changes in program planning and evaluation.

The Ethics for Research-like Activities Policy 2017, another relevant policy of the organization, is geared towards ensuring that program evaluations, client or community consultations, needs assessments, and chart reviews follow all ethical protocols in order to minimize risk/harm and maximize benefits for the vulnerable populations served by Access Alliance.



OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION AUDIT

The goal of the evaluation audit was to advocate for this process as a means of enhancing quality of evaluation within the non-profit sector, including the community health centres. Moreover, it aimed to support the case that an organization-wide evaluation audit is not only conceivable but also achievable.

The objectives of this evaluation audit were:

- To prepare an inventory for the evaluation ‘status’ of the programs and services of the organization (i.e. current practice around the use of evaluation tools, and recent evaluation history);
- To identify the drivers that influence evaluation in such a non-profit organizational context;
- To assess the compliance and quality of the evaluation activities with regard to set organizational standards (as captured in the *Program Planning and Evaluation Policy*)
- To design an evidence-informed evaluation strategy of the organization; and
- To scale up the tools and techniques for utilization within the broader sector.

METHODOLOGY

The theory of change for this evaluation audit is that conducting such an audit will enhance organizational capacity for evidence-informed planning by identifying and understanding the facilitators for quality evaluation, and bridging the identified gaps between policy and practice. In order to generate credible in- depth evidence, this audit utilized an explanatory sequential mixed-method approach (Figure 1), whereby quantitative data were analyzed in order to establish a ‘current state’ of evaluation practice among staff; this was followed by the collection of qualitative data to contextualize the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2014). Quantitative data were gathered from 26 programs and qualitative data from 16 key stakeholders of varying positions in the organization (i.e. staff, managers, etc.). No personal or health information was collected through this audit, and no harm to any participating individual or to the organization is expected to result from this process. Compliance to organization confidentiality and privacy was maintained.

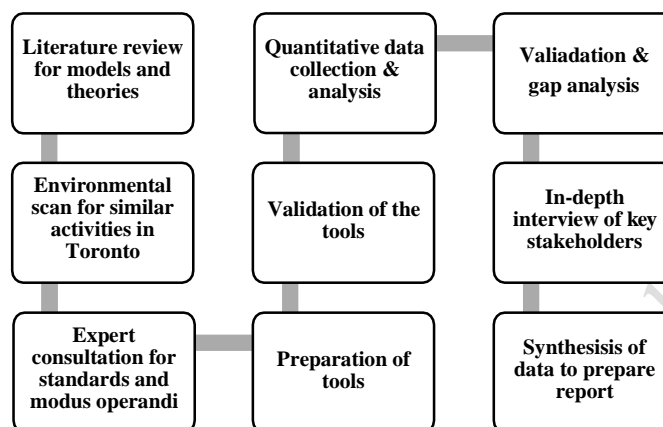


Figure 1: Explanatory Sequential Mixed-Method Approach

Over the period of February 2015 to April 2015, data from all of the on-going programs at that time were collected using a survey tool. The survey was filled out by the program leads and signed off by the respective managers. The survey contained the key questions like: (1) whether or not the program(s) had a program-specific logic model, and (2) whether or not the program had been evaluated during the period 2012-2015. Reports from 21 out of 26 programs were considered for analysis; those with incomplete survey data and/or were programs that did not run continuously were excluded. In-depth interviews with the responsible members of the management team were conducted to gather contextual and policy-level insight on the evaluation activities and associated challenges. Qualitative data were organized into pre-selected primary codes which were reinforced by secondary emerging codes. These were converted into categories and ultimately into themes. This coding methodology was informed by Saldana (2013) and Creswell (2013). All data (quantitative and qualitative) were then triangulated thematically to interpret the findings.

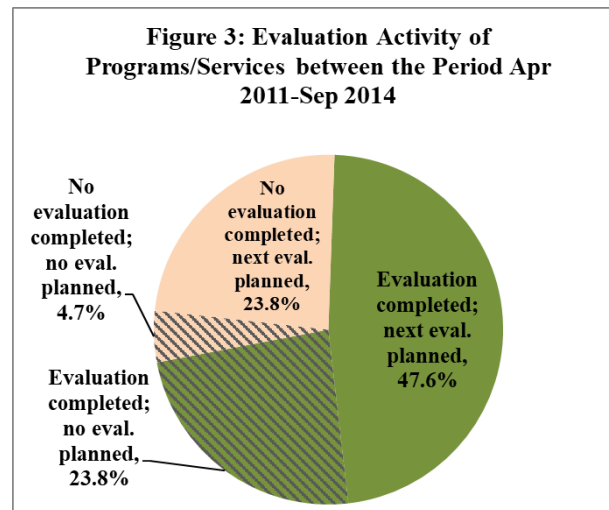
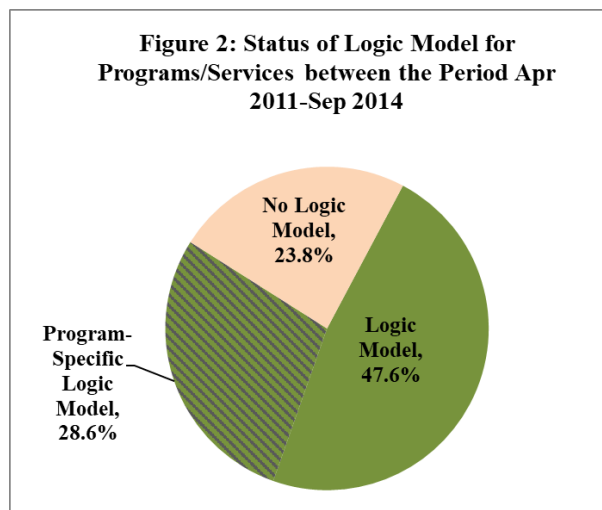
Key evaluation questions, of the audit were: i) How does the organization ensure quality of the evaluation practices? ii) What are the facilitators that influence the quality of evaluation? and iii) How are the traditional evaluator roles being engaged in developing new approaches (e.g. appreciative enquiry, art-based methods, etc.) to conduct evaluation in non-profits? Credibility, fittingness, and auditability were set as the quality indicators for the audit for internal validity,



external validity, and reliability, respectively (Brannen, 2005). Quality assurance in evaluation was checked in the audit, whereby that the breadth, validity, reliability, consistency, and prioritization of tools at Access Alliance are consistent with the data quality dimensions (relevance, accuracy, comparability, timeliness, and usability) set by the Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI, 2009; Laberge & Shachak, 2013). A systematic literature review was conducted to identify the relevant theories as well as models upon which to develop the foundation for the audit process. In addition, an environmental scan was carried out among CHCs across Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for their experience, tools, and reports around such an evaluation audit.

FINDINGS

The environmental scan for evaluation audit activity among comparable organizations in GTA could find no documents as evidence. Twenty-one programs reported using evaluation tools which included indicators that are required by: (i) the funders, (ii) the sector, for comparison between organizations, and (iii) the organization's continuous quality improvement strategy and learning goals. Among these programs, 76.2% (n=16) used a logic model, while 23.8% (n=5) did not. Six of those 16 programs used program-specific logic models, while the remaining ten used departmental logic models (Figure 2). Overall, 71.4% (n=15) of programs had been evaluated (Figure 3) within the period of the last three years at the time of the audit (2011-2014), 23.8% (n=5) had scheduled their evaluation, leaving one (4.8%) program which had neither been evaluated nor planned to do one. Thirteen of the fifteen (86.7%) programs which had been evaluated used logic models. Cross-tabulation of the total number of programs with a logic model, program-specific or otherwise, and the total number of programs with a history of evaluation calculated that there is an 80% positive predictability of programs having undergone an accountable evaluation (i.e. using organizational tools, approach, etc.) if they use a logic model.



After merging primary and emergent codes, the qualitative interview findings revealed three broad thematic areas as representative of facilitators of quality evaluation practice: (i) Leadership, (ii) Organization culture, and (iii) Access to quality data for use.

(i) *Strong Leadership for Evaluation*

Interviewees identified a leadership role which integrates the skills of the internal evaluation team with the priorities of the senior management as a critical driver for quality evaluation in the organization. They described the value in having the evaluation team engage the senior management and relevant (departmental) management teams at all relevant phases of the evaluation activities. This approach guarantees the necessary support for making evaluation impactful within the programs and services of the organization, i.e. through the design and implementation of meaningful planning to integrate new knowledge. During the ‘reporting back’ sessions, departmental teams expressed a call for more support to develop skills around evaluation methodology, evaluation tools, statistical software, and the triangulation of mixed data, with one interviewee asking, “How do we synthesize results from a variety of stories into a cohesive story?” These topics can inform next steps in the capacity building process.



Interview findings generated the concept of the evaluator as a leader as working on two levels: internally, in providing both technical and abstract evaluation support to staff, and also externally, in playing a dynamic role in sharing knowledge, policy advocacy, as well as in securing and advocating for organizational resources. The external leadership role is characterized by participation as a system partner in regional (Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network), provincial (Evaluation Framework Indicator Validation Working Group), and system level activities (Canadian Evaluation Society). In summary, the identified critical success factors for strong evaluation leadership within the organization were micro (staff) to macro (sector) level engagement of the evaluation team for supporting skills development among staff, assisting in the implementation of evaluation activities, engaging with senior management to nurture a culture of evaluation in the agency, and participating in external knowledge sharing and policy advocacy activities.

(ii) Building a Culture of Evaluation

In-depth interviews with management revealed how evaluation permeates the organizational fabric of Access Alliance to become an evidence-informed service-model (the 'Access Model') to strengthen program and service planning and delivery processes. The model is supported by several key structures: (i) organizational policies on Planning and Evaluation as well as Ethics for Research-like Activities, an evaluation framework, (ii) a program logic model template, and (iii) measurement tools conducive to quality evaluation in the agency. As is evident from the existence of two explicit policies pertaining to evaluation as well as an evaluation framework document, senior management and the trusteeship board put quality evaluation at the forefront to generate credible evidence for monitoring quality, accountability and functionality. Furthermore, the promotion of planning and evaluation by senior management as a standing agenda in team meetings was motivational for the staff members to learn more around the importance, scope and complexities in evaluation processes at the agency. It is also evidence of an organizational culture that is supportive of evaluation at the operational level, as well as at the strategic (board) level.

Such motivation was reflected in interviews with staff, who asked questions (as a proxy indicator)



showing their interest in evaluation activities of the agency: “Should entire departments be evaluated, or should individual programs be evaluated with less intensity...how frequently?” They also asked questions around ‘What to evaluate?’ (i.e. individual services or programs, a department as a whole, indicators of interest, etc.); ‘How to evaluate?’ (i.e. methodology and tools); ‘How much should be spent?’ (i.e. a dedicated budget for program evaluation activities); ‘Who is the audience?’ (i.e. clarity on who will be reading the evaluation report and how the findings will be used), and ‘What is our (staff) part?’ (i.e. clarity around the role of the organization’s evaluation team in facilitating the evaluation). Staff suggested using a longitudinal program evaluation calendar over several years allowing for sufficient time to effectively measure any changes put in place. Another strategic suggestion was to adopt more participatory evaluation approach, meaning to have the evaluation team fully integrated into all stages of the program cycle. Such an idea is consistent with the realist evaluation approach which aims to understand the context and mechanism of the change.

(iii) Access to Quality Data for Use

The interviews identified that effective evaluation practice requires access to credible valid evidence in order develop useful products from the evaluation activity. Data collection and data input were viewed as resource intensive processes, and represents an operational challenge for an organization that provides a multitude of services to a high number of clients. The time contributed by volunteers and students, in support roles, was viewed as a valuable resource in this process. Another developmental area identified was around challenges in retrieving data whereby various storage locations with different permissions may be used; it is imperative that everyone stores data in the designated place which is accessible to the end users. Effective organizational support and a clear purpose for data collection help to ensure data quality. Here, the availability of high quality data was identified as critical for effective program planning and service delivery. For example, one staff cited how administrative data on clients’ preferred language could be used to hire a set of peer outreach workers. Clearly communicating the potential applications of the data can help staff not only understand the importance of data quality, but also promote good practices in data collection. Lastly, training and education of the staff handling data (collection and analysis) are also critical components that the audit revealed through discussions with the managers and the evaluation team.



DISCUSSION

A scoping review of evaluation capacity-building among Ontario public health units identified several key themes considered important for building a culture of evaluation within an organization, including ‘leadership support’ and ‘an organizational environment conducive to evaluation’ (Hotte et al., 2015). Schwartz & Mayne (2005) also explore the influence of ‘organizational and political impediments’ to successful implementation of evaluative activities, and Roche et al., 2012 describe evaluation as politics of ‘power and relationship’. These same themes emerged through this audit process, where careful triangulation of data identified three drivers of quality evaluation, two of which that are comparable to this literature — leadership, organizational culture, and access to quality data. In terms of leadership, it was determined that a cohesive value-based team (evaluation team and the senior management) was optimal to facilitating the overall evaluation process. Organizational culture and access to data quality will be discussed below.

Schwartz & Mayne’s (2005) meta-analysis reviewed the practice of quality assurance of evaluation practices across jurisdictions, whereby one of their key concerns was credibility of evaluative information produced. One type of approach to assuring quality in evaluation is structural, which would involve the setting of ‘organizational/governmental guidelines and standards’. Hotte et al.’s (2015) scoping review also discusses the value of a ‘comprehensive organizational evaluation framework’ within an organizational environment (culture) that is supportive of evaluation, beyond that simply at the individual staff (micro) level. At Access Alliance, such standards for evaluation activities are embedded within its organizational policies around Program Planning and Evaluation and Ethics for Research-like Activities, and are supported by guidelines captured in the evaluation framework. These two features can ensure the structural credibility and foundation of quality of all evaluation activities.

During interviews, management identified data quality as a critical facilitator for generating credible evidence for planning, which is ensured by measuring completeness and consistency of data. Five criteria are set for measuring completeness of data at Access Alliance: (i) percentage of missing data (errors of omission), (ii) precision, (iii) accuracy (reliable), (iv) usefulness, and (v) validity



(credibility). The criteria for consistency at the organization are: (i) comparability (of indicators, tools, methods etc.), (ii) auditability (of processes and methods), and (iii) reproducibility (universality). Access to evidence by the end-users is another paradigm recognized by staff to be addressed. The current practice at the organization is to store all evaluation reports and findings in a shared folder of the agency which is accessible to all staff, volunteers, and students. Finalized reports are published on the Access Alliance website as well as distributed to partner organizations, e.g. Ontario Community Health Profiles Partnership.

Lastly, findings from the audit found that programs are evaluated at different points in time as required by (i) the funders, (ii) sector agreements, or (iii) as a part of the organization's continuous quality improvement strategy. However, in order to make the best use of resources and evidence for planning processes, a calendared evaluation schedule of the agency is optimal.

Audit results also indicated that over 76% of the programs studied in this audit used a logic model, and over 86% programs were found to have been evaluated during the study period, whereby the probability of evaluation was found to be higher for programs with customized logic models. In order to further promote and enhance uptake of systematic evaluation practices, the organization requires meeting staff interests in two key ways: (i) an effective communication strategy on evaluation pathways, process, consequences, and a description of the end-users, and (ii) organizing targeted capacity building training sessions, as well as through individual consultations and meetings, with relevant stakeholders around expressed training needs. An immediate tangible solution involves the expansion of existing policy to include explicit program evaluation expectations (frequency, methods, etc.), as well as an articulation of the level of support provided by the evaluation department. Another solution could be having evaluation- to-practice (E2P) as a standing agendum in all of the team meetings as a means to determine the resulting planning implications from an evaluation activity. Taking a two-tiered approach, the evaluation staff can provide expert professional guidance, insight, and recommendations to support evaluation activity for programs at the micro level. Such an effort, combined with the evaluation framework containing a set of explicit organizational guidelines (meso level), can help to build and mobilize a culture of evaluation at Access Alliance.



The audit process began with an anecdotal assumption that such an activity will identify gaps, facilitators, and barriers in the current evaluation activities at a population-based non-profit agency, and will improve capacity of staff to carry out evidence-informed evaluation in the future. Through an exploration of the state of evaluation practice within Access Alliance, it was determined that a program evaluation audit is indeed achievable in small to moderate-sized non-profit agencies. Moreover, conducting such an audit can strengthen the accountability process of non-profits.

IMPACT OF THE EVALUATION AUDIT

The experience and the findings of the audit can be used (i) at micro level to inform the practices of the service providers of the agency by integrating into all stages of program planning and operations, (ii) at meso level to design a strategic evaluation calendar for the programs of the organization at operational or governance level, and (iii) at macro level to share in a broader group (region and sector) as a capacity building and quality improvement initiative.

CONCLUSION

Learning from own experience with this initiative, Access Alliance considers an evaluation audit as a critical monitoring approach for non-profits representing a novel initiative that strengthens the opportunity to improve future evaluation practices founded on generated evidence. This audit assessed the 'current state' of evaluation activities in the interest of strengthening compliance with existing policy and standards, and informing future planning efforts. The evidence was used to create a dialogue around the gap between current evaluation practices to plan an evidence-informed 'future state' of evaluation practice. Correct integration of the leadership support for building an evaluation-focused organizational culture and data quality management skills can be instrumental to build an efficient evaluation culture in non-profits. An effective communication strategy for staff on explicit guidelines and expectations surrounding evaluation practices along with a comprehensive accountability framework were identified as enablers for this process. Although scope and budget represent a source of risk for the sustainability of the organization's evaluation practices, opportunities remain to share knowledge and to build partners' capacity on evaluation research.



Finally, experiential learning from such a case study suggests that having a program-specific logic model, ensuring access to quality data, as well as training of the staff members on evaluation, data quality, and data policy will be instrumental to improve the process and utility of evaluation. This report recommends that non-profits conduct a systematic evaluation audit to improve the quality of all programs and services, to help leverage resources rationally, and to support the organization's evidence-informed practice.

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International Investment Law and Policy in Africa: Exploring a Human Rights Based Approach to Investment Regulation and Dispute Settlement

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Abstract

Today, sustainable development is an unavoidable paradigm underpinning all human actions from the local through the global level in both the public and private sectors. The principle of integrating economic growth, environmental protection, and social progress is a key constituent of sustainable development. However, international investment law that serves the purpose of facilitating and governing transnational investment activities often fail to strike a balance between the competing priorities of economic and environmental considerations. Limiting the scope of state regulatory power by the means of applying bilateral investment treaties (BITs) in investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) is a barrier for pursuing sustainable development within the investment sector. In his provocative book, International Investment Law and Policy in Africa: Exploring a Human Rights Based Approach to Investment Regulation and Dispute Settlement, Fola Adeleke aims to address the following central question: how can corporations be held accountable through investment treaties in the absence of a global treaty on business and human rights while protection the rights of investors? He then considers the public interest regulation theory to critically examine how ISDS tribunals hinder developing countries, in particular African countries, to achieve sustainable development and human rights protection. He assesses the regulatory framework of ISDS tribunals with the aim of assisting African



countries to attract sustainable foreign investments and offers alternatives on more sustainable reforms of current African BITs that have been concluded with capital exporting countries.

1. Introduction

Bilateral investment treaties (BITs) have been in existence since the 1960s, though it was not until the 1990s that they were increased in number and rendered as a key substance of the global investment governance regime. The root of the proliferation of BITs can be traced back to the end of colonialism, a process that was initiated by colonizer countries to protect their interests in their former colonies. New independent states have also embraced concluding BITs to increase the flow of foreign investments into their countries.

Despite the growing prominence of BITs, the discussion remains in regard to whether they can support the investment and environment nexus. On the one hand, “BITs have gained notoriety for preferencing the interest of corporate foreign investors, limiting state regulation that can advance public interests and adopting secretive dispute resolution processes that erode the rule of law” (Adeleke 2018:1). On the other hand, BITs show enormous potential for imposing sustainable development obligations on foreign investors and holding them environmentally responsible.

With regards to the significant role of BITs in sustainable development, this book examines the global investment governance regime in the context of African experiences and the global trend shaping development in Africa. The author seeks to study how corporations could be held liable for sustainable development management in the investment sector lacking a global treaty on investment and human rights. To make BITs a useful tool for sustainable development management in African, Adeleke explores the current objectives of attracting investment, depoliticize investment disputes and promote the rule of law. Instead of suggesting that African states should avoid their investment protection obligations in favor of non-investment obligations, Adeleke recommends the evolution and development of the international investment governance regime through increasing the transparency of investment arbitration, enhancing the language of investment agreements and increasing preference for domestic dispute settlement law.



2. Book Review

Fola Adeleke is a Visiting Senior Researcher at University of Witwatersrand and a fellow on social and economic inequalities at the London School of Economics. He is also a trained lawyer and legal researcher in the field of international economic law and human rights with an interest in the duty of corporations to protect human rights and how to hold global corporations accountable in the absence of a global treaty on business and human rights.

In light of such expertise, Adeleke engages with the scholarly literature criticizing the global investment governance regime from the sustainable development perspective. He argues that among numerous backlashes against the substantive procedures of the current international investment law regime, limiting the scope of state regulatory power and constraining the domain of applicable law in investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) are the most detrimental to the sustainable development values of the host states. Adeleke establishes its argument on a premise that BITs are popular among African states under the false foundation that they promote foreign direct investments (FDIs) and consequently strengthen sustainable development in host states.

Adeleke suggests that “African countries continued to sign BITs that negatively affected their interests due to a lack of awareness and understanding of the financial implications in the event of breach an agreement” (2018: 2). Such misunderstanding as well as poor knowledge of BITs language that increases the liability of host states for investment protection continued to affect the interest of African states. With this in mind, the author seeks to prove his premise by rethinking the role of ISDS tribunals in protecting environmental and human rights in Africa.

As an attempt to analyze the trends emerging from ISDS tribunals’ awards dealing with the sustainable development affairs of African countries, this book is comprised of seven substantive parts. Following the first chapter that demonstrates the importance of ISDS tribunals in sustainable development, the remaining parts consider how foreign investors could be held accountable through



BITs, examine the current deficiencies of ISDS tribunals in human rights protection, identifies alternatives for ISDS, and discusses the future trend for dispute settlement in Africa.

In chapter two, Adeleke engages with the scholarly literature that explores the role of ISDS tribunals in considering the public interests for sustainable development. This chapter has been evolved around discussing how the public interest regulation theory is applied in ISDS tribunals and how the investment obligations of states might be infringed as a result of other competing obligations of the host states. The public interest regulation theory seeks to accommodate domestic sustainable development policies into ISDS tribunals for reaching a more equitable outcome for both the foreign investors and host states, and thus to address the legitimacy concern relating to the manner in which arbitrators interpret BITs obligations.

Determining the scope of state regulatory sovereignty is of paramount importance, but it highly dependants on the interpretation power of ISDS tribunals that influences host states' regulatory measures for public interest considerations. ISDS case law shows that investment tribunals are reluctant to consider the sensitivity of the environmental claims when drawing a line between a lawful exercise of the state police power and an illegal breach of the investment agreement. Consequently, pro-investment provisions of IIAs are taking precedence over national environmental regulations in governing investment disputes (Van Harten 2013). Such decisions are justified by the notion that BITs are not a proper discourse in considering environmental values (Chi 2018), and when states enter into a BIT, the investment-protection provisions therein would govern investment disputes. However, this approach is characterized by Weil as "an exercise in prejudiced assumption, and those who supported the application of international law to investment relations were accused of sacrificing the interests of the Third World countries to Western multinational corporations" (Weil 2000: 407). In the next four chapters, Adeleke expands on this approach by noting that how the sustainability and human rights of African nations are undermined by the procedural biases of ISDS tribunals negotiated in BITs.

Chapter three that is titled the rule of law and depoliticization of investment disputes re-emphasizes the view that constitutionalizing investment rules leads in superseding such rules over domestic constitutional norms and impairs the sovereign power of a state to pursue its sustainable development goals. Adeleke advances the scholarly argument initiated by Schneiderman on how



constitutionalism treats foreign investors as a minority group and legally constrains the government of host states from taking actions that might adversely affect investment interests (Schneiderman 2008). In the context of South Africa, Adeleke refers to the South Africa's constitution that recognizes expropriation for the public interests. Its rule for compensation is also just and equitable to reflect a balance between public values and the interests of those affected. However, in ISDS tribunals, these rules are subordinate to the constitutionalized investment rules that prohibit expropriation and require prompt compensation in the event of an investment seizure. As a result of which not only sustainable regulations of host states have been wrecked, but also foreign investors have been subject to more lenient sustainable development and human rights regulations that South African investors who are subject to domestic regulations.

In this chapter, Adeleke also examines how the current structure of ISDS has failed the sustainable development capacity of African countries and constrained their public policies on human rights protection. In the context of African countries, recurring investment disputes are categorized into six groups: ordinary regulatory disputes, extraordinary crisis disputes, transition disputes, tax dispute, culturally sensitive disputes, financially disproportionate disputes. In all these types of disputes, regardless of the notion of the issues disputed, Adeleke notes there is an apparent deterrence of domestic regulations in the face of investor claims. This all is due to the perceived bias of some arbitrators, colonial background of investment governance regime, pro-investment provisions of investment agreements, and lack of competence of local courts are among issues challenges the legitimacy of ISDS tribunals.

The notion of perceived bias, for instance, that means arbitrators are more likely to be appointed based on their previous experiences and their relationship with the parties is one the main issues that impair the legitimacy of ISDS tribunals. The perceived bias of some investment arbitrators that criticizes ISDS tribunals from the structural perspective has been initiated by Van Harten with a reference to the impartiality of appointing authorities designated under BITs. Since this authority is exercised by the World Bank's ICSID Convention, judges leaning towards investor interest are often appointed as the presiding arbitrator of ISDS tribunals. Consequently, the circle of arbitrators is closed to those favoring foreign investors (Adeleke 2018).



Adeleke states that the current structure of ISDS has been developed by capital exporting countries to safeguard foreign investors and their investment. To attract foreign investments, developing countries might give up their public concerns, whereas developed countries like the US take advantage of their strong bargaining position to secure their investors. Sornarajah argues that the legal norms of the international investment regime embedded in colonialism have been manipulated to protect the commercial interests of capital exporting countries in the advancement of exploiting host countries. After a colonial period, “the need for a system of protection of foreign investment came to be felt by the erstwhile imperial powers which now become the exporters of capital to the former colonies and elsewhere” (Sornarajah 2010: 21). In consequence, host countries that might be suffered from irreversible damages caused by foreign investors are unable to rely on this regime to safeguarded national values and be compensated financially.

Moreover, since ISDS is the most crucial institution to promote foreign direct investments, developing states, in expectation of investment flows, limit parts of their sovereignty to offer external protection from ISDS tribunals to foreign investors. Adeleke asserts that ISDS tribunals settle investment claims based on the pro-investment standards included in BITs. These provisions then confine host states’ sovereignty by prohibiting “expropriation” of foreign investments, by prescribing “fair and equitable treatment” for investors, and by providing “no less favorable” treatment to foreign investors that offered to its domestic counterparts. Indeed, ISDS tribunals may challenge regulatory measures intended by states to protect the public welfare, if the measure directly or indirectly affects the value of the investment. This threat of ISDS is now seen by many to have an informal “chilling effect” on states adopting public welfare regulations appeared to be inconsistent with IIAs.

Finally, Adeleke criticizes the private approach of investment arbitrators to ISDS. He notes that “a commercial arbitration perspective of ISDS sees investment arbitration as a private dispute between parties, which would justify confidentiality and an isolation of the issues to only matters brought up by the parties” (Adeleke 2018: 52). However, since ICSID tribunals are established by the sovereign act of states, they should be considered to be a consensual adjudication between investors and host states as well as a mechanism of adjudicative review in public law.



In the following chapter, the author conducts a comparative study among potential alternatives to ISDS tribunals. These alternatives are suggested as a replacement for the current ISDS to address the above-mentioned issues challenging the sustainable development and human rights protections values of host states. Domestic legal systems, state-state dispute settlement, political risk insurance, regional human rights courts have been analyzed in this chapter with the aim of understanding how these replacements could increase the investment flows, depoliticize investment disputes, promote the rule of law, and provide financial remedies. To make a comparison among potential alternatives to ISDS tribunals, Adeleke considers nine notable features: transparency, non-disputing party participation, correctness, cost, impartiality, efficiency, accessibility, deficiencies, interaction with the rule of law. He finally comes to the conclusion that “all the alternative proposals to ISDS have some level of credibility and advantages but they also have flaws” (Adeleke 2018: 109). Therefore, the approach of dispute prevention that is proposed by Roberto Echandi might be a better institutional mechanism than any replacements to ISDS tribunals.

To address the backlash of the broad scope of BITs’ interpretation that exceeds investor protections and limits state regulatory sovereignty, Adeleke, in chapter five, seeks to “understand how investment agreements can be drafted and interpreted to ensure that public policy interests to promote sustainable development ... are taken into account in investment rule making” (2018: 110). This chapter focuses on how investment arbitrators could apply relevant rules of international law such as human rights law and thus host states can justify the use of other international obligations as a permissible infringement on investment protection.

According to the Article 31 of Vienna Convention, arbitrators should interpret any agreements based on “good faith”, “ordinary meaning”, “context”, “object and purpose of the treaty”, “the text of the treaty including its preamble”, “agreement or instrument made in connection with the treaty”, “subsequent agreement or practice between parties”, “relevant rules of international law”, and “intention of parties”. In the context of investment tribunals, a good faith reading of BITs calls for a balance to be struck between investor protection and state regulatory power. Such good faith interpretation needs investment arbitrators to consider the ordinary meaning, text, object, and purpose of the treaty. Understanding the meaning of a BIT requires a cross reference to other provisions in that treaty such as



its preamble that provides a consistent meaning to what the parties intended to achieve throughout the investment treaty. In order to understand the ordinary meaning of a treaty and determine the true intention of the parties, investment arbitrators should consider the context in which the treaty has been negotiated. This consideration enables them to resolve the dispute in light of the primary object and purpose for concluding the applicable agreement.

The rise of investment treaties and investment disputes faces ISDS tribunals with a number of challenges. Among them, shrinking the domain of state regulatory power, inconsistent jurisprudence, and the inability of non-disputing parties to influence the ISDS proceedings are the significant ones that question the legitimacy of investment tribunals. A consideration of the relevant rules of international law “can be a useful way to determine the meaning of broad standards of protection in investment treaties” (Adeleke 2018: 116). Investment arbitrators are reluctant to interpret BITs in light of other relevant rules of international law, which results in an interpretation approach minimizing the conflict between the competing obligations of states. Therefore, using such interpretation statements allows a direct application of sustainable development and human rights regulations and then balance various elements and interests.

In chapter six, Adeleke considers the investment regulatory framework of three African power blocs, South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya, and the extent to which such regulations contribute to sustainable development. Three regulatory frameworks, including the SADC, ECOWAS, COMESA are mainly discussed in this chapter and their roles in promoting investment flows, the rule of law in the governance of investments, as well as the depoliticization of investment disputes have been examined.

In Nigeria, for instance, the ECOWAS Supplementary Act contains investment rules were passed to recognize investment protections of national treatment, most favored nation treatment, and minimum regional standards. The ECOWAS rules are one of the well-articulated agreements that adopt a rights-based approach to development. These rules allow free transfer of assets to promote domestic development, but in the context of sustainable development, they require foreign investors to provide environmental and social impact assessment reports. Furthermore, investor-state disputes should be resolved at a national court, or tribunal, or the ECOWAS Court of justice.



Regardless of these investment rules, the majority of African countries give up their economic dominance to their advantage when concluding BITs with developed countries. Adeleke notes that “the BIT regimes of most African states are distorted because they often reflect the agenda of developed countries” (Adeleke 2018: 156). One explanation is the lack of experience and expertise in developing states to negotiate BITs that could make a balance between the economic interests of both parties. Moreover, the lack of recognition by developing countries that BITs play a significant role not only in facilitating the flows of foreign investments but also in shaping the nature of investments. Consequently, African countries who are the primary recipient of foreign investments carry the burden of succumbing to the will of their developed partners such as investment protection by limiting state regulatory power.

In the final section of *International Investment Law and Policy in Africa: Exploring a Human Rights Based Approach to Investment Regulation and Dispute Settlement*, Adeleke reaffirms the need for African states to safeguard their public interests while creating a competitive environment to attract FDI. Although the flow of FDI to Africa continues to increase due to the population growth and economic diversity, African states must be careful about the negotiation of BITs and development of investment regulations that ensure the attraction of sustainable foreign investment. So, they need to adopt regulations that sustainable development and to impose environmental obligations on investors. moreover, states should avoid arbitrary measures that erode the investment protection rights of foreign investors.

3. Conclusion

To make a balance between the competing priorities of economic growth and environmental protection, Adeleke has written an excellent scholarly work to suggest three ways of making ISDS tribunals more compatible with the sustainable development values of developing countries. First, BITs are the main supplier for governing investment disputes. Thus, more “balancing provisions” and “good governance provisions” could enhance the supply of sustainable development norms in ISDS tribunals. The adoption of such provisions prevents investment arbitrators to view investment treaties purely as investor protections rights and needs them to impose sustainable development obligations on investors. Second, increasing the transparency of ISDS tribunals through the better access of non-disputing parties to information could not only enable investors to obtain relevant evident affecting their investments, but also involve various stakeholders on the level of negotiating new BITs. In this context, investor



arbitrators should recognize the importance of adopting interpretation tools that favor both foreign investors and third parties affected by FDIs by considering public interests in their decision making. Third, since a major backlash against ISDS is stemmed from the lack of public participation and procedural integrity, proposed alternatives to ISDS tribunals that often have these relevant features of democratic ideals could fill the gap of human rights considerations in investor-state disputes.

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