

**EXAMINATION OF THE DETERMINANTS OF VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION OF YOUTH IN
RURAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MUTOKO
DISTRICT, ZIMBABWE**

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ABSTRACT

Youth volunteering is a vital tool for development. The demand for volunteers is increasing due to worsening challenges that afflict communities such as HIV/AIDS, Unemployment and poverty, among others. However, despite this high demand for volunteers, voluntary participation of youth is decreasing. It is not clear why this is happening when the demand for volunteers is increasing. Failure to address this problem might deepen poverty, youth irresponsibility and curtail development efforts in developing countries. This paper examined the factors contributing to voluntary participation of youth in community development in Mutoko District. It was carried out in four wards of Mutoko District. A qualitative approach involving focus group discussions and participant observation was employed. Youth participants were selected using a multistage stratified random sampling technique. The Atlas Ti version 6 software was used to analyze the data.

Youth voluntary participation in community development seemed to vary with gender. Male youth were said to be participating more than female youth in community development in the District. Likewise, the factors of volunteering seemed to differ as distance increased from the main urban area. Gender and distance from the urban area in the district appeared to influence the factors leading to the decline of volunteering. There was an impression that strategies for promoting volunteering also differed as distance increased from the urban area. Suggested strategies for promoting volunteering seemed to vary with gender. It was therefore deduced that strategies for volunteering must be crafted taking into consideration gender and distance from the urban area to youth residential places. Target oriented strategies of promoting youth voluntary participation in community development were highlighted unlike the strategies generalized to the currently existing population. The need for carrying a study that tests the significance of effects of distance from urban area, gender and age of youth was evident.

Key words: youth; volunteering; participation; community development

1.1 Introduction

Many countries throughout the world encourage youth to volunteer so that they contribute to the development of their communities and the entire nation. As a result, youth volunteering is increasingly becoming an essential asset for both the non-governmental and public sectors. Volunteers are recruited to participate in the implementation of various beneficial projects and services (Voluntary and Service Enquiry Southern Africa: VOSESA, 2011). The projects mainly focus on home-based care, infrastructure development, and agriculture and youth empowerment.

Community service and youth volunteering have for a long period been deeply entrenched in societies throughout the world. They manifest themselves whenever the need arises. Taking care of the sick, home-based care activities, community work, assisting the elderly and addressing various demands both during good and difficult times are some of the activities that volunteers have often undertaken (Wijeyesekera, 2011). Since the mid-1990s, when faced with economic challenges, many governments have turned their attention to the use of volunteers (Commission on the Future of Volunteering in Africa, 2008). Special attention is now placed on engaging youth in voluntary participation. Voluntary participation of youth is an accessible and effective tool for solving many challenges that the youth face such as increasing citizen engagement, skills development and rehabilitating young offenders (Jones, 2011; VOSESA, 2011). In the developing countries of Africa there is need to recognize and promote youth volunteering because it provides a direct and productive way of achieving the Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs), including the reduction of poverty and the prevention of HIV/AIDS. These aspects also help to incorporate the inherently marginalized youth into the economic and social development arena thereby laying down a firm foundation for the harmony, stability and advancement of nations.

Volunteering has a long history in Africa. The basis of volunteering has mainly been the spirit of *Ubuntu*. The Volunteer Service Enquiry for Southern Africa (2011) notes that *Ubuntu* implies that people are related and connected to each other. For this reason, they care and help each other whenever the need arises. The sense of helping, reciprocation and caring is integral to human lives in African communities (United Nations Volunteers: UNV, 2011). The concept of extended families has traditionally facilitated community solidarity and togetherness in both

difficult and good times (VOSESA, 2011). In Africa, volunteering before the colonial period was mainly informal. Mutual understanding, family and neighbourhood relations were the main spheres of volunteering. However, during the post-colonial period volunteering has become more formalized. Voluntary organizations and government organisations have become the new spheres of volunteering. Collective efforts such as the formation of the Africa Volunteers Union and Union of Volunteers Zimbabwe were introduced to promote youth and public volunteering. The growing rate of youth unemployment and economic recession in many African countries has increased the pressure on many nations. This provides opportunities for youth voluntary participation to become a pivotal component of development. Perold (2006) noted that, volunteering for development is a good way to engage male and female youth as well as addressing gender imbalances. Thus, it can be concluded that youth volunteering is central to development in Africa's development.

In Zimbabwe volunteering has strong roots in grassroots communities. Programmes such as the *Zunde Ramambo* (Chief's granary) and *Nhimbe* (*cooperative farming*) symbolize the existence of volunteering in the country. Kaseke and Dhemba (2006) revealed that during the pre-colonial period, volunteering was mainly a support network in extended families and communities. However, colonialism extended it to organisations and the broader communities based in urban areas. The power of voluntary participation of youth was also witnessed in nationalistic uprisings which culminated in the country attaining independence in 1980.

The post-independence government took steps to sustain youth volunteerism. The National Youth Service Programme is one such step meant to instil a sense of patriotism, civic engagement and citizenship in young people. However, the economic meltdown of the past decade has led to an increase in youth unemployment. Currently, the government is not recruiting new employees. This situation presents an environment for voluntary participation of youth to flourish. Paradoxically, however, Aisilinn (2011) points out that youth volunteering is declining in the country. Presumably, the economic meltdown in the country compelled youth to spend time on survival activities rather than volunteering. This situation made it difficult for youth to volunteer to deal with challenges such as HIV/AIDS, estimated to be 20.1% among those between 14-49 years old in Zimbabwe (Kaseke and Dhemba, 2006).

This study was based on the premise that youth voluntary participation in community development was decreasing at a time when there was an increased demand for it (Aisilin, 2011). The increase in the demand for volunteers in Zimbabwe, for example, mainly originated

from worsening societal challenges such as poverty and HIV/AIDS. Youth simultaneously faced considerable economic challenges that forced them to struggle to make a living rather than volunteering to do work for which they were not paid. The Zimbabwean government increased its support and promoted volunteerism through providing resources, funding, training and designing some policies to assist organisations where youth could volunteer their services. For example, voluntary advocacy has also been promoted through the establishment of the Zimbabwe Volunteer Link organization which assists in recruiting volunteers drawn from all parts of the country. Despite this pattern, Aisilin (2011) points out that the full potential of volunteering as a tool for development and a spur for social cohesion and nation building among youths has not yet been achieved. A large pool of youth possess energy and talents which should be harnessed in order to foster rural development through active community involvement. Given this challenge, this study was aimed at examining the factors influencing voluntary participation of youth in rural community development implemented in the Mutoko District of Zimbabwe. This was done through determining factors influencing voluntary participation of youth in community development. The study also explored whether voluntary participation of youth in community development varies due to age, sex and distance from urban areas. Attention was also given to identifying strategies for enhancing voluntary participation of youth in rural community development.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This study was mainly based on the theoretical work of Smith (1981) and Wilson and Musick (1997). Smith (1981) defines volunteering as a contribution of services, goods or money to assist in the accomplishment of some desired end. This contribution is done without coercion or direct remuneration, implying that volunteering is done on a freewill basis with the aim of helping others more than oneself. Given this definition, Wilson and Musick (1997) postulate a theory that is based on several premises. The propositions of the Wilson's and Musick' (1997) theory were central to this study. The first proposition was that volunteer work is a productive activity. It is similar to paid labour in that it leads to the attainment of development and progression in communities. Secondly, volunteering mainly involves collective action. This applies mainly to organized, formal volunteering than informal volunteering which only involves helping and caring for others. In this regard, one's thoughts, actions and perceptions affect the decision to volunteer. Thirdly, the volunteer-recipient relationship is mobilized and regulated by social factors. Given that there are factors which play a role in determining volunteering, Smith (1994) argued that volunteers tended to occupy "dominant statuses". This implied that variables such

as age, gender and race affect voluntary participation. Bearing in mind that these variables make a difference to the intervening factors, it was critical to study how they affect volunteering in a particular community. On the basis of this theoretical understanding, this study examined the factors of youth voluntary participation in Mutoko District. Particular attention was paid to gender, age and distance from an urban area as critical variables in order to identify their effect on contributory factors.

1.3 Materials and Methods

A qualitative research approach was used. A case study research design was employed to explore the study topic. The explanatory approach was ideal for identifying and unearthing the perceptions of youth in four wards of Mutoko District. Explanatory approach was appropriate in revealing and explain the factors influencing volunteering. This approach also enabled an in-depth collection of qualitative data regarding feelings, thoughts and opinions of youth towards voluntary participation. Moreover, it assisted in discovering underlying meanings and patterns of relationships between youth variables and their choice of volunteering.

Youth between the ages of 16 and 30 from Nyamuzuwe, Nyamukoho, Nyamakope and All Souls wards of Mutoko District participated in this study. Youth below 16 years were not targeted because they were still attending schools hence their less involvement and understanding of voluntary work in the District. Multi-stage stratified random sampling was employed to select 40 participants from the District. Participants were drawn from two wards situated nearby the urban centre and two wards situated far away from the urban centre. This was done to determine if distance from the main service centre (Mutoko centre) had an effect on the voluntary participation of youth in community work. From each Ward, villages were further clustered depending on their proximity to each. In each cluster of villages, youth meetings were arranged through youth mobilization by community leaders and the researcher. Participants were selected to represent various villages present. The number of participants was determined by the number of attendances from each village. In cases where some village clusters were totally not represented, other data collection meetings were arranged to ensure representation of those villages. However, given the fact that this was a qualitative study a limited number was sampled. Significantly, participants were interviewed until data saturation was reached. In these groups, male and female youth were further categorized into 16-20 year olds and 21-30 year age groups. These groups were then given a set of semi-structured interviews to answer in their

reflective circles. While in their groups, participants were also interviewed individually using the same set of questions in order to get all their ideas verbatim.

Semi-structured interviews were preferred in this study due to their flexibility in allowing for probing and clarification of questions. This ensured a deep exploration of the research questions. Likewise, reflection circles were ideal for discussions as they created a conducive and power balanced environment for the participants to open up and actively participate in the discussions. Moreover reflective cycle encourages a clear description of the situation, analysis or feelings, and evaluation of experiences of youth regarding voluntarily participating in community work.

The qualitative data was analysed using the ATLAS ti 6 version software. Firstly, data from the field was fed into a computer. It was then tabulated, coded and organized using the ATLAS ti6 version software. This software was ideal for analysis in this study due to the fact that it was able to systematically organise complex data into themes. In addition, this software assisted assist in interpreting and evaluating and the complex data collected using semi-structured interviews. The software also managed to group the data into families representing variables such as gender, age and distance from the urban area. Data networks were established to determine the relationship between different sets of data. The results were then logically presented in the form of main themes and sub-themes.

1.4 Results

1.4.1 Youth contribution to community development

In this subsection, the factors promoting volunteering taking into account age, gender and distance from Mutoko town are described. The desire to contribute to development was the major factor motivating youth to volunteer in the district. Twenty five participants noted their desire and passion to upgrade local areas as a motive for volunteering. Participants defined it as a process through which the standards of living of the community people are raised as well as infrastructural improvement. While adult male youth echoed the aforesaid view younger youth resonated that their motive is mainly the desire for skills development. The age difference was probably due to the fact that older youth were matured enough to take community development responsibility rather than their younger counterparts. One participant put the aforesaid view into perspective as follows:

“I take volunteering as an opportunity to develop my community and change the poor situation seen around this place”.

Male youth, 26 years, Nyamukoho Ward

On the other hand, although supportive of the aforementioned developmental motive, 15 female youth specified that the sense of caring and Ubuntu drove their desire. Regarding this view, distance did not play a crucial role as the responses cut across geographical locations. Therefore, the desire for development by the youth was not necessarily influenced by their location but rather by their gender and age in the District.

1.4.2 Lack of job opportunities

The high rate of unemployment also emerged as one of the major contributing factor to youth volunteerism in Mutoko District communities. 16 out of 23 male youth reported that they were not formally employed hence they have ample time to volunteer. More so they expected to get employment opportunities through volunteering experience. However, a gender disparity exists regarding this view as female youth do not consider it as a motive. The patriarchal belief which compels male to seek job opportunities while females remain in their homesteads especially in deep rural areas of the District explains the discrepancy. The above mentioned preceding compels male youth to volunteer in anticipation for future employment after volunteering. The impact of the above mentioned fact increased as one moves to the District peripheries. This is mostly due to the diminishing rates and expectations of job opportunities and limited industries in the rural areas. What follows is a quote drawn from the interviews expressing the aforementioned contributing factors to volunteering.

“Most of us are unemployed and volunteering work opens paths for getting to other jobs in big cities like Harare where you can get more money”.

Male, 22 years old All Souls Ward.

1.4.3 Desire to socialise

Nineteen participants echoed viewed their desire to socialise as a motivator for volunteering. Worth noting was the observation that mostly female youth indicated the desire to volunteer for developing some social networks, share gossips and personal relationships with other youth. However, the significance of socialising as a factor of youth voluntary participation was more apparent in peripheral rural areas. In support of this motive, some participants had to say the following views.

"I usually have good time to talk to my friends without being shy of my parents and relatives when I am volunteering with other youth".

Female youth, 21, Nyamukoho Ward

"I usually meet new people from other villages when we volunteer and we share gossip and we talk female stuff and problems".

Female 23 years, Nyamukoho Ward

1.4.4 Need for benefits and incentives

There was general consensus among youth regardless of gender and age that the desire to gain material and non-material benefits motivated them to volunteer. 29 out of 40 youth indicated their desire for material rewards as a pre-requisite to volunteering. Despite the knowledge that volunteering did not entail payment, the study observed that youth still expected to yield something out of their volunteering efforts. Financial rewards, food parcels, clothing and skills attainment are some of the main benefits which reportedly attracted youth participation into volunteering. These rewards were viewed by youth as mere tokens of appreciation rather than real payments for volunteering. The current economic hardships in the district were singled out as a trigger for their quest for money after volunteering. However, the aforementioned observation was made in peripheral areas of the district thereby revealing the influence of distance from the urban area on the factor. This is mainly due to the high intensity of economic hardships moving further away from the town. The aforementioned view was well articulated in the following phrase:

"Getting money after volunteering is always good. We want to buy some good phones so where will we get money if they do not give us some money"

Male 25 years, Nyamuzuwe ward

However, the study revealed that out of the 29 participants who mentioned their desire for incentives, 19 were male while the remaining were females. They reasoned that, community beliefs place family responsibility on male youth hence their need for incentives as little income to support their needy families.

1.4.5 Desire to acquire new skills

Apart from above factors, the prospect of gaining new skills such as home based caring, bridge and road construction and soft skills from working in community based organisations motivated 12 youth to volunteer. Youth residing near the urban area showed more desire for skills development than to those residing far from the urban area. This is due to the fact that in urban areas they are exposed to work opportunities hence they know what is required in the labour market in order for one to be employable. Observantly, no gender or age desperate existed regarding this factor. Table 4.1 shows the descriptions of the main factors promoting voluntary participation of youth in community development.

Table 4.1 Descriptions of the main factors promoting voluntary participation of youth in community development

Issue	Suspected factors of youth volunteering		
	Geographical	Age	Gender
1) Influence of community leaders	X		
2) The desire for benefits e.g. incentives	X	x	x
3) The need to socialise	X		x
4) Contribution to development	X		x
5) Lack of job opportunities	X		x
Key			
x Factors influenced by geography, age or gender			

1.6 Factors Inhibiting Youth Voluntary Participation

Despite the existence of many motivating factors, study results showed that there were various factors discouraging youth in Mutoko District from voluntarily participating in community development work. In most cases these factors varied with sex, age and distance from the urban area. The main factors included lack of rewards, lack of community problems and lack of knowledge. However among the minor factors is restriction by husbands and guardians, lack of employment prospects after volunteering and others to be discussed in the following write up.

1.6.1 Lack of volunteering rewards

Thirty four participants reported lack of rewards of volunteering as a major factor that discouraged youth volunteerism in their communities. Clothes, food and financial incentives were some of the main benefits that the youth cited. The economic hardships that were faced precipitated their desire to earn a living from volunteering through gaining material rewards. The desire for material rewards in order to volunteer cut across sex, age and distance from the urban area. However youth residing in areas far away from the urban area indicated their desire for any form of reward while those residing near the urban centre resounded their longing for financial rewards only in order to volunteer. The discrepancy was probably due to the difference in needs that existed among youth from different geographical locations in the District. The reality of the matter can be seen in the following verbatim words:

“The feeling of being used without getting any incentives or benefits discourages us from volunteering, zvinobhowa”

Male, 18 years Nyamuzuwe Ward

“When youth join volunteering they expect results in form of stipend but eventually this is not the case and many are tempted to dropout of such projects looking for money”

Female, 22 years, All souls Ward.

Table 4.1 describes the factors promoting volunteering of youth in community development work in Mutoko District.

Variably 4 youth indicated that they do not mind working without rewards, however they got frustrated by being promised and eventually not receiving anything. In this regard, raising youth expectations without fulfilling promises derailed youth volunteerism prospects.

1.6.2 Community Leaders use of force

Results demonstrated that the use of force by community leaders was among the major factors disheartening young people from volunteering. Although young people recognized coercion as one of the factors forcing them to volunteer, 14 participants indicated that it was also one of the factors which demotivated them from voluntary work involvement. Most of them echoed that they found ways of avoiding volunteering due to the feeling of being manipulated and disrespected by community leaders. Worth noting is the fact that this view was common among youth residing further away from the urban centre. This highlights the fact that, coercion of youth to volunteer was seemingly dominant in deep rural areas where traditional leaders were situated as indicated by responses. More so coercion was reportedly disheartening those with the desire to volunteer from volunteering in their community. Variably out of the 14 participants who echoed this concern only 4 were female. This was mainly due to the fact that male youth were expected to volunteer more than female in rural communities. Below are selected quotes from interviews that illustrated youth frustrations:

“Youth need to be persuaded instead of being forced by community leaders to volunteer, we are tired of being treated like kids”.

Male 21 years, Nyamukoho Ward.

“Use of force by community leaders demotivates us from volunteering, we feel used”.

Male 28 years Nyamuzuwe Ward.

Apart from the above mentioned fact, 8 older youth believed that lack of community appreciation for volunteers discouraged volunteers regardless of gender. Proximity to the urban centre did not have any influence about how youth feel regarding the lack appreciation by their community leaders. This was testimony to show that lack of recognition of the volunteers contributed to the decline of youth involvement in voluntary work in the district. To articulate their view, one of the participants said the following:

Sometimes the communities fail to respect the job well done by the youth that’s why we dodge volunteering when they need us to volunteer.

Male 24 years, Nyamukoho Ward.

1.6.3 Insufficient knowledge on volunteering

Nine female youth expressed their lack of information regarding the benefits of volunteering as a demotivating factor towards volunteering. Regardless of distance from the urban area, 13 participants noted that they do not value volunteering as a helpful aspect in their lives. Female youth dominated this idea thereby shading light on gender discrepancy regarding the factor. Below are some of the verbatim words by participants in support of the aforementioned fact.

“Female youth lack knowledge about the good things of volunteering. This makes us lazy to participate in community work when we are supposed to do something”

Female 19 years old, Nyamakope Ward.

“I don’t even know if there is any opportunity to volunteering in this area, maybe when I know I will try to volunteer”

Female, 20 years, Nyamuzuwe Ward

Given this quote, it was clear that female youth did not have enough information bases to take informed volunteering decisions hence their lack of Interest. On the other hand only 3 females indicated that, even though they knew the importance of volunteering, they lacked information about the opportunities which exist in their local areas.

Other factors which merged from the present study but were not prominent include occupation with home chores, disapproval by husbands especially for married youth as well as disapproval by parents who believe volunteering was for male youth. These factors applied to female youth regardless of their geographical location. Below is what one female youth said in emphasizing their view.

“For us who are married, our husbands banned us from volunteering as they believe volunteering is for man”

Female 22 years old, Nyamukoho Ward.

This implied that patriarchal beliefs in the community were playing a part in discouraging female from volunteering. Peer pressure, lack of volunteering resources such as transport and lack of job prospects after volunteering were also some of the factors affecting a minority population of

youth in Mutoko district. Figure 4.1 shows the factors that either promoted or hindered youth voluntary participation in community development.

1.6. 4 Youth Perceptions towards Voluntary Participation in Community Development

The perceptions of youth about volunteering in the District. It was revealed that male youth volunteered more than female youth. Variations in their perceptions indicated the aforementioned fact. While 30 participants reported that male youth volunteered more in community work only 10 believed women volunteered more. The study observed that male youth perceive volunteering as their social responsibility as patriarchal norms portray while female youth do not carry that responsibility hence their limited involvement in voluntary work. More so it was apparent that the availability of more manual work related volunteering opportunities favours male dominants in volunteering. Alternately female youth suggested that they preferred care related opportunities such as home based care which were limited in the district hence their limited participation.

Youth residing far from the urban area participated more to do community development than those residing near the urban area. In this regard 31 participants believed that youth residing far away from urban areas were volunteering more than their urban counterparts. Social togetherness, norms and caring values which are the basis for volunteering were still more apparent in communities far from the urban centre. This instilled a sense of responsibility in youth residing in those areas. Contrary to the above, cultural mixtures, lack of community ownership and eroded community norms probably enhanced individualism among youth near the urban area. This ultimately reduced community responsibility and voluntary participation among youth residing near urban areas. Limited job opportunities in areas situated

far from the urban area also create ample time for youth to volunteer. In light of the above facts it was plausible to deduce that the variation of volunteering among youth residing far and near urban areas was apparently due to the conditions and circumstances they are exposed to.

1.7 Strategies for Promoting Youth Volunteering

Given the aforementioned barriers to volunteering in various communities in Mutoko District, various strategies were suggested by the youth participants. These included provision of incentives, Acknowledgement of volunteers, provision of education, provision of job opportunities, and provision of supportive resources. What follows is a detailed explanation of

the strategies to enhance voluntary participation of youth in rural community development work in Mutoko district.

1.7.1 Provision of incentives and benefits

This aspect emerged as the most significant strategy widely held by 35 youth. The introduction of rewards such as money, clothes and food were reportedly crucial ingredients for effective and sustainable voluntary participation in the District. This view was regardless of gender, age and distance from the urban area. The economic hardships prevalent in the district mainly prompted youth to call for incentives as a way of survival. Despite youth advocacy for the introduction of sound incentives and benefits in voluntary work, 5 participants indicated their preference for non-material and future oriented benefits such as development of skills and work experience. This was common especially among young youth who had less home responsibility and much eagerness for personal development. Worth noting was the fact that there was no significant change in opinion as distance increased from the urban area to the peripheral wards. This indicated the universality of this particular view among youth across the District hence its significance. To elaborate the aforementioned facts, selected participants had the following to say:

“We need money to survive, things are tough here so we need something because working without money looks like wasting time i should have been doing part time job”

Male, 24 all souls Ward

“As youth we are used to working without money but for how long should we be working for nothing, we need just something to thank us be it food or something for survival because life is difficulty in the villages”

Female, 22 Nyamukoho Ward

1.7.2 Provision of volunteering knowledge and awareness campaigns

Disseminating information regarding volunteering was also highly recommended by 20 participants as a volunteering promotion strategy. Information about available volunteering opportunities, benefits of volunteering as well as its importance to the community were some of the main matters which were reported as crucial for volunteering to flourish. Worth noting was the fact that 14 female youth mirrored their need for education about volunteering more than male youth regardless of age. This also mainly applied to youth residing far away from urban

areas who categorically put across their lack of exposure to information as a cause of concern. The fact that female youth did not often volunteer in community work might account their lack of knowledge about the volunteering field.

“In this community girls need to be educated on the importance of volunteering because they think it is for man, (Taneta nekushanda vakagara), meaning we are tired of working while they are sitting”.

Male, 20 years, Nyamakope Ward

In the statements above, it was apparent that there seemed to be power struggle between male and females. While male youth felt burdened by volunteering, female youth felt frustrated by their omission in the decision making process about volunteering thus both parties lacked the zeal to volunteer due to social norms. In this respect, education about the need for everyone to participate and involvement of both female and male in initiative stages of community development plans could serve as a motivator for voluntary participation of youth in their communities.

1.7.3 Societal recognition of youth volunteers

Regardless of the provision of incentives and knowledge, 13 youth noted their quest for satisfaction of social need. Among the most prominent aspects were the rendering of respect and acknowledgement of youth volunteering efforts. Participants lamented that they were forced to volunteer while receiving no acknowledgement upon completion of tasks. This had a boomerang effect to all the efforts of promoting voluntary participation. The study further observed that, the feeling of uselessness and manipulation present among youth curtailed their willingness to develop communities as they consistently feel like inferior and onlooker stakeholders in the process of their community upgrading. Predominantly both male and female participants from peripheral areas of the district echoed the above concern. Below are statements which reflect some participants' views during interviews.

“We need to be respected, that is proper communication whenever leaders are talking to us or when we are volunteering in order for us to be proud of our work”.

Male 26, Nyamukoho Ward

“Providing stipend, good treatment, acknowledging their work, awarding young people with certificates after completing their projects are some of the main things youth want”.

Female 28, ward youth officer, Nyamuzuwe Ward.

Despite the provision of respect, 9 respondents noted their desire for participation certificates as a sign of appreciation and evidence of participation. This view was universal across age groups, gender and distance. A certain female youth had the following to say in support of the aforementioned view:

“I wouldn’t volunteer knowing that there is no appreciation of my sweat, working for free can only be beneficial if i will have a certificate of appreciation at the end of it. Without a certificate, I rather sell fruits than work for nothing”.

Female, 25 years, Nyamuzuwe Ward

The above statement illustrated the frustration reserved by youth due to lack of certificates after volunteering. In light of the above mentioned fact, issuing certificates might significantly motivate youth who would have evidence for volunteering to use even in their job hunting endeavours.

1.7.4 Creation of favourable environment for youth volunteering

Fifteen participants residing far from Mutoko urban area largely advocated for a change of attitude among community members and community leaders towards youth volunteers. Coercion by community leaders to volunteer was largely viewed as a setback to volunteering. To overcome the aforementioned hindrance, participants suggested that, community leaders need to persuasively mobilize them, showing them the need and importance of volunteering while at the same time allowing them to enjoy the benefits of volunteering such as skills development. This could be done through specifying tasks to youth rather than treating youth as jack of all trades. Five female youth residing in peripheral district rural areas also suggested that, opportunities favourable for them as opposed to manual work need to be availed. The following extract illustrates a suggestion made by a certain participant:

“As a girl, it is difficult to work in repairing roads and bridges, I can work happily in soft tasks such as sewing, home based care or even office work if it becomes available”.

Female 23 years, Nyamukoho Ward

The provision of first preference assurance for job opportunities within the rural communities far away from Mutoko urban area were also advocated by 5 males. A particular male illustrated his concern in the following quotation.

“It surprises us that you work daily in the roads and dams for nothing, people laughing at you. But when jobs come, only those in town are called to take them. Please our leaders should consider us for jobs because we are able to work also”.

Male 28 years, Nyamukoho Ward

1.7.5 Provision of supporting resources

The provision of resources depending on the task was also recommended by 7 participants. This was regardless of geographical location. The study therefore observed that, organisations recruiting volunteers need to provide resources such as transport, safety equipment especially for health related tasks and other relevant materials. This would reportedly reduce the burden on volunteers which usually deter youth from volunteering in their various communities. The universality of the aforementioned view across the district indicated its relevance as a motivating tool towards promoting youth participation in voluntary work for the upgrading of rural communities.

1.8 Discussion

The study revealed that gender seemingly influenced the choice of youth volunteering. Incentives and the desire to contribute to development were reported as the main motives for volunteering among male youth in Mutoko District. The socialization of males as breadwinners prompted them to favour paying volunteering opportunities than the entirely free ones. This supported the assertion by Melville and Musevenzi (2008) and Torgler (2008) that men usually become more involved in adventurous, incentive oriented activities and in decision making positions. On the other hand female youth were reportedly influenced to volunteer by the desire for socialization and caring for others. Gibson (2008) found the same results elsewhere in Europe that female youth are more involved in care giving related activities such as home based care. Significantly male youth seemingly volunteered more than female youth in the district. This was mainly due to the manual nature of volunteering opportunities which favoured males. More so patriarchal beliefs in existence encourage male volunteering than female volunteering. Youth residing far away from the urban area appeared to volunteer more than their urban counterparts in the District. Youth responsibility to develop local areas was instilled by community beliefs of togetherness and norms as distance increase from the urban area. Even though the spirit of Ubuntu is fading, communities situated far from urban areas were still moulded by togetherness and caring for each other. This concurs with the claim that the concept of extended families has

traditionally facilitated community solidarity and togetherness in both difficult and good times in most African countries (VOSESA, 2011).

The decision to volunteer in community work was reportedly not primarily influenced by the age group of an individual within the youth age bracket. The observation diverted from Goethern, Hoof, Aken, Raaijmakers, Boom and Castro (2012) findings that older youth are more likely to volunteer than young youth regardless of their educational level. Hindrances to youth voluntary participation appear to differ between male and female youth. Aspects such as coercion to volunteer by community leaders, insufficient incentives, unfavourable recruiting strategies and lack of recognition were the main hindrances to male volunteering in the District. However female youth were seemingly derailed by lack of favourable volunteering opportunities and lack of information regarding volunteering. This was due to the patriarchal beliefs which mainly support male volunteering. It is crucial to note that the current noted unfavourable volunteering conditions might be the chief cause of the decline in volunteers as observed in African countries by (Aisilin, 201). Hindrances to youth volunteering also seemingly differed with distance from the urban area.

The study established that male youth were volunteering more than female in community development work. This was mainly due to the influence of Patriarchal beliefs favouring male dominance. These beliefs socialised male youth to take responsibility for community development. On the other hand female youth were socialised mainly to be responsible for house chores hence their low participation in voluntary work. In this regard, male and female youth perceived volunteering differently. This differed with Gibson (2008) view that there is a gender imbalance in youth volunteering in favour of female regardless of education and age. Youth residing far away from the urban area volunteered more than those residing near and in urban Mutoko. The spirit of Ubuntu still apparent in areas situated far from the urban area instilled the sense of responsibility to volunteer among youth in those areas.

The study revealed that youth preference for strategies to promote their voluntary participation differed as distance increase from the urban area. Among the main strategies which were not universal to the whole district were the need for recognition and appreciation of volunteers by the community, provision of information regarding volunteering, and availability of lenient and persuasive recruitment strategies by community leaders. These strategies commonly applied to youth situated far away from the urban area. This variation was due to the fact that youth residing in different geographical areas had different experiences, exposure and needs. These

different experiences, exposure and needs shaped their perceptions as well as their expectations out of volunteering. Given this testimony, it holds water to comment that strategies to promote youth volunteering should target various youth for them to be efficient tools in overcoming the declining rates of youth volunteers. This fact concurred with the Bussell and Forbes (2002) suggestion that an understanding of the target group needs is crucial to recruiting and retaining of youth volunteers.

Male and female youth had different needs hence strategies to woo them into volunteering must differ respectively. For instance female youth revealed their preference for soft and caring opportunities like home based care while male youth were attracted to manual and adventurous work. Another crucial reason for the variation in the choice of strategies was the type of skills required by various youth. For instance male youth who inspired to follow the construction carrier preferred building opportunities while female youth interested in pursuing health related careers preferred home based care activities. The aforementioned facts supported McBride (2009) suggestion in a study done in Europe that volunteering programmes should be based on youth interest in order to attract more youth volunteers. Given this verdict, provision of a wide range of opportunities in the district would be capable of increasing the choices available to youth hence an increase in their active participation. This study provided an insight into the types of opportunities youth prefer.

1.9 Conclusions

The factors promoting and hindering youth volunteering varied primarily due to gender and distance from the urban area in the District. While male youth volunteered mainly for developing local areas and gaining incentives, female youth volunteer mostly for socialising and caring purposes. On the other hand though female youth were mainly inhibited from volunteering by the manual nature of volunteering tasks, male youth were demotivated mainly by lack of incentives. The study also established that male youth were volunteering more to do community development work in the district apparently due to the manual nature of the work and patriarchal nature of the communities which in turn instilled the sense of responsibility. Worth noting was the fact that as distance increased from the main urban area, youth volunteering seemingly increased. Community togetherness which was still apparent in those areas fostered social responsibility to volunteer among youth. The strategies to enhance youth volunteering were also found to differ with gender and distance from the urban area. While male youth advocated for the introduction of more incentives and respect from their respective communities, female youth

favoured the introduction of more soft and care related opportunities as well as education and awareness campaigns regarding volunteering. More so youth residing far from urban areas advocated for more lenient recruitment strategies. Variably, those residing near urban areas preferred the introduction of a wide range of opportunities and provision of after volunteering job opportunities among other benefits. Worth noting was the fact that the study did not establish probable influence of age differences among youth on voluntary participation.

1.10 Recommendations

The present study recommends that direct policies targeting youth voluntary promotion should be put in place in Mutoko District and Zimbabwe at large. The strategies to enhance youth volunteering should take into consideration that youth desires differ with gender and distance from the urban area hence they should be target group oriented. The present study also appeals to the community members to develop a positive attitude towards youth volunteers. More so the study recommends that community members take a leading role in educating and encouraging youth regardless of gender to volunteer. To organisations and government sectors offering youth volunteering opportunities, the study recommends the introduction of a wide range of opportunities to increase the choices available for youth. More so a trend of promoting youth volunteers into employees in the respective organisations should be developed in order to mirror the importance and benefits of volunteers to other youth. Future studies must explore the factors inhibiting and promoting volunteering from all sectors offering volunteering opportunities. This will provide concrete solutions to the problem of declining youth volunteering from both sides involved in the volunteering arena. More so future studies focusing on determining whether indeed gender, distance from urban area and age of youth influence their desire to volunteer are desirable. Tools to assess youth volunteerism also need to be developed.

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