

Factors Motivating Youth in Community Development Volunteerism in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Youth volunteerism in community development is a dynamic and multifaceted field that plays a pivotal role in fostering sustainable and resilient communities. This study examined youth volunteerism in community development in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used with 150 respondents selected youth groups registered with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Akwa Ibom State. Data collection utilized structured questionnaire that ensured coverage of diverse skills, attitudes and motivational factors with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data were analysed using factor analysis. The factor analysis procedure with varimax rotational applied to the original data of factors motivating youth in community development volunteerism yielded a 7-dimension solution that collectively explained 72.065 percent of the total variance. These dimensions were: personal fulfillment and passion with 37.404 % of variation, positive role models and peer support with 10.783 % of variation, access to resources and training opportunities with 8.923 % of variation, recognition and appreciation with 8.923 % of variation, Social connections and belonging with 4.526 % of variation, inherent altruism and sense of purpose with 4.086 % of variation and feeling a sense of belonging with 3.785 % of variation. personal fulfillment and passion was the most important factor among the seven dimensions. Targeted skill development programmes, diversified volunteer opportunities, and collaboration with policymakers were recommended.

Keyword: Youth volunteerism, community development, volunteers, development programme

INTRODUCTION

Youth volunteerism, positioned at the crossroads of social development, extends beyond geographical boundaries and cultural contexts (Lalitha, 2023). In the distinctive milieu of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, the profound impact of youth engagement in community development is palpable. Nestled in the southern part of Nigeria, this region is renowned for its rich cultural diversity and socio-economic challenges, offering a compelling backdrop to delve into the dynamics of youth volunteerism. Akwa Ibom State, home to diverse communities and vibrant traditions, harbors a substantial youth demographic (National Population Commission, 2006). This demographic reality underscores the potential to harness the energy, creativity, and social commitment of young individuals for community development. The study aligns with the global recognition of volunteerism's pivotal role in achieving sustainable development, as emphasized in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015). Volunteerism

is celebrated as a catalyst for social inclusion, poverty reduction, and community empowerment (United Nations Volunteers, 2018).

Nigeria has embraced the instrumental role of volunteerism, reflected in the national policy framework on inclusive volunteerism aimed at creating an enabling environment for volunteer engagement (National Youth Policy, 2009). The National Youth Policy of 2009 serves as a comprehensive guide for the holistic development of young people in Nigeria, emphasizing their active participation in nation-building through various channels, with youth volunteerism being a prominent avenue. Community development, a multifaceted concept, involves activities enhancing the well-being and capacity of communities (Akpabio et al 2020, Ekanem et al, 2014 and United Nations Development Programme-UNDP, 1999). In the context of Akwa Ibom State, community development takes on a unique character due to diverse communities with distinct challenges and opportunities (Etuk et al ,2018). Youth volunteerism manifests diversely, encompassing education, healthcare, environmental conservation, youth empowerment, and infrastructural development projects.

However, challenges such as economic disparities, limited access to education and healthcare, infrastructural deficits, and varying cultural norms within communities exist (Etuk et al, 2012). Despite these challenges, youth volunteers, driven by a desire for positive change and a passion for community development, bridge the gap between communities and development initiatives. While Lalitha (2023) provides a global perspective on youth volunteerism, the study recognizes the need to contextualize these insights within the specific socio-cultural dynamics of Akwa Ibom State. This local-global dialogue is essential for developing strategies that resonate with the unique challenges and opportunities present in the region. In conclusion, this study rigorously explores youth volunteerism in the unique socio-cultural landscape of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, and its connection to the national policy on inclusive volunteerism and community development. It aims to provide evidence-based insights for policy formulation, community development strategies, and sustainable initiatives, contributing to a more inclusive, prosperous, and equitable society.

Youth volunteerism, globally recognized as a catalyst for community development and sustainable growth (UNV, 2020). Youth volunteerism faces a critical challenge in Akwa Ibom State (Udoma et al 2023). Recent trends indicate a shift in youth attitudes, with an increasing reliance on government and politics for solutions, a phenomenon termed the "stomach structure" mentality. This shift raises concerns about the diminishing role of youth volunteerism in addressing community needs, presenting a challenge that extends beyond scholarly gaps. Despite the acknowledged importance of youth volunteerism in community development, empirical data on the socio-economic characteristics of youth volunteerism in Akwa Ibom State is limited (Udoma et al 2023). This information is crucial in the context of evolving political structures that seem to overshadow youth aspirations for community engagement. While existing studies such as Kuzminchuk and Tarasova, (2019) , Mcdermott et al (2019), Uzoagu (2019) and Ayoti, (2015) provided insights into global volunteer activities, there are limited researches outlining the specific sectors or initiatives where youth actively contributed to volunteerism as it is related to community

development. This gap impedes the understanding of the changing dynamics of youth engagement, its potential impacts on community well-being and factors affecting youth volunteerism.

Review of Literatures

This section reviewed empirical studies and research findings relevant to youth volunteerism, community development, and related themes.

Son and Wilson (2017) conducted an extensive review of the motivational factors behind youth volunteerism. The study delved into the reasons that compel young individuals to actively participate in volunteer activities. Son and Wilson 's research highlighted intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, including personal fulfillment, social recognition, and the desire for skill development. Caraveo (2022) investigated the role of motive and role identity in predicting volunteer activity. Their research explored how the alignment between an individual's motivations and their perceived role identity as a volunteer influenced their level of engagement. The study emphasized that motives such as altruism and prosocial personality traits were significant predictors of volunteer participation.

The synthesis of the empirical literature on the factors that motivate youth to volunteer reveals important insights- Intrinsic motivations: Son and Wilson (2017) consistently showed that intrinsic motivations, including personal fulfillment, a sense of purpose, and the desire to make a positive impact, play a crucial role in driving youth to engage in volunteerism. These internal rewards are often powerful motivators for sustained participation. Alignment of motives and role identity, Caraveo (2022) emphasized the significance of aligning one's motives with their role identity as a volunteer. When young individuals perceive that their motives are congruent with their identity as a volunteer, they are more likely to actively engage and commit to volunteer activities. The synthesis of these findings underscores the importance of aligning volunteer programme with the intrinsic motivations of youth and facilitating role identity development as volunteers. Strategies that promote personal fulfillment, skill development, and opportunities for making a positive impact can motivate youth to actively participate in community development initiatives.

Quantifying the factors affecting youth volunteerism within Akwa Ibom State is vital for comprehending the scale and scope of their contributions. However, current researches lack this critical information, especially considering the shifting landscape of youth involvement, making it challenging to develop targeted interventions. While the studies such as Nichol et al (2023) and Azunna et al (2021) broadly discussed general skills necessary for community development. There are few studies such as Udoma et al (2023) that have worked on youth volunteerism in Akwa Ibom State. This gap hinders the development of tailored strategies to reignite the spirit of volunteerism and address the contemporary challenges faced by communities in the region. The objective was to examine the factors that motivate youth to volunteer in community development

Theoretical Framework

This section delves into the theoretical underpinnings that form the foundation for understanding the role of youth volunteerism in community development within the context of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It explores relevant theoretical perspectives that inform the study, offering insights into

the motivations, attitudes, and impact of youth volunteers. By grounding the research in these theories, the study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for analysis.

Social Capital Theory

Social Capital Theory, as articulated by Putnam (2000), is a foundational framework that underscores the importance of social networks, relationships, and community connections in fostering social and economic development. It posits that individuals' engagement in social interactions and their membership in various social groups generate social capital, which can be harnessed for the collective good. Within the context of this study on youth volunteerism in Akwa Ibom State, Social Capital Theory offers a lens through which to examine the ways in which youth volunteers contribute to community development by building social capital.

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted within the boundaries of Akwa Ibom State, a region with rich agricultural landscapes that play a pivotal role in the state's economic and social development. The state's economy heavily relies on agriculture, making it an ideal context to investigate the involvement of youth volunteers in community development activities. Furthermore, Akwa Ibom State is characterized by diverse communities with varying levels of agricultural activities (Etuk and Umoh, 2014). This diversity allows for a comprehensive analysis of youth volunteerism in different community settings.

The population of the study comprised of all youth groups fully registered with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in Akwa Ibom State. The Ministry of Youth and Sports in Akwa Ibom State plays a pivotal role in coordinating various youth programmes and initiatives, making it an ideal source for accessing diverse groups of youth volunteers actively engaged in community development activities in the State. A multistage sampling procedure was used to select 150 respondents for this study. In the first stage, all the youths in Akwa Ibom State were stratified into six Akwa Ibom State Agricultural Development Programme (AKADEP). In the second stage, 10% of the functional youth groups were randomly selected in each of the zone. In the third stage, a sampling fraction of 10% of membership strength was employed to randomly select respondents in each of the selected group in each zone. Therefore, a total of 150 respondents was used for this study. The data for this study were collected using a structured questionnaire. Data was analyzed using factor analysis. The model is

$$X_1 = b_{11}f_1 + b_{12}f_2 + b_{13}f_3 + \dots - \mu + e_1 \dots \dots \dots \text{equation (1)}$$

$$X_1 = b_{21}f_1 + b_{22}f_2 + b_{23}f_3 + \dots - \mu + e_2 \dots \dots \dots \text{equation (2)}$$

Where: μ = the mean of X_1 , e_1 = the residual to the i th test after taking account of the contributing factors, $f_1, f_2, f_3, \dots, f_n$ = the values of the factors which vary from one subject to another, but have zero mean unit variance, and assumed to be uncorrelated with one another and the with the

residuals, b_{ij} = constant like regression coefficients, indicating how much each test is affected by each factor. These b_{ij} are known as factor loadings.

RESULTS

Factors Motivating Youth Volunteerism

The analysis of factors that motivate youths to volunteer in community development utilized a Factor Analysis to uncover underlying dimensions among the generated items. The suitability of the factor analysis was substantiated by the Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO) coefficient, which measured 0.731, indicating meaningful relationships among the items. Furthermore, Bartlett's test of sphericity confirmed the validity of the analysis, with Chi-Square values of 733.89, significant at $p < .05$ (Table 1).

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's test of Factors that Motivate Youths to Volunteer in Community Development

| | | |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. | | .731 |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity | Approx. Chi-Square | 733.89 |
| | Df | 129 |
| | Sig. | .000 |

The factor analysis procedure with varimax rotational applied to the original data of factors motivating youth in community development volunteerism yielded a 7-dimension solution that collectively explained a substantial 72.065 percent of the total variance. These dimensions, or factors, are indicative of the composite factors motivating youths to volunteer in community development within the study area (Table 2). The first factor was personal fulfillment and passion - Factor 1, the key variables were: recognition of volunteerism in building leadership and communication skills (Factor Loading = 0.907), networking opportunities and community development engagement (Factor Loading = 0.904) and personal fulfillment and passion for a chosen cause (Factor Loading = 0.902). The second factor was positive role models and peer support (Factor 2 with influence of positive role models actively involved in community development (Factor Loading = 0.922) and peer support and encouragement as motivators (Factor Loading = 0.876) as key variables. The third factor was access to resources and training opportunities (Factor 3) with Motivation through access to training, mentorship, and funding (Factor Loading = 0.922) and Participation driven by platforms facilitating volunteerism (Factor Loading = 0.899) being the key variables. The fourth factor was recognition and appreciation (factor 4) with the following key variables -valuing acknowledgment and recognition for contributions (Factor Loading = 0.848) and recognition as a motivating factor for continued volunteering (Factor Loading = 0.720). Social connections and belonging was the fifth factor with building meaningful social connections through volunteerism (Factor Loading = 0.796) as the key variable. The sixth factor was inherent altruism and sense of purpose (Factor 6) with inherent altruism as a motivation for volunteering (Factor Loading = 0.572) and volunteerism providing a sense of purpose and meaning in life (Factor Loading = 0.567) as key variables. Sense of belonging

was factor 7 and Feeling a sense of belonging through engagement in community development (Factor Loading = 0.676) was the key variable.

Table 2: Rotated Component Matrix on Analysis for Factors that Motivate Youths to Volunteer in Community Development

| Pre-Disposing Factors | Component | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | Fac. 1 | Fac. 2 | Fac. 3 | Fac. 4 | Fac. 5 | Fac. 6 | Fac. 7 |
| I recognize the value of volunteerism in building leadership and communication skills | .907 | | | | | | |
| I see the networking opportunities that come with engaging in community development. | .904 | | | | | | |
| Making a positive impact on my community is personally fulfilling. | .902 | | | | | | |
| Engaging in community development activities brings me a sense of satisfaction and passion for a cause. | .883 | | | | | | |
| I am motivated to volunteer because I am passionate about a specific cause | .875 | | | | | | |
| Addressing social issues that matter to me is a driving force for my volunteerism. | .873 | | | | | | |
| Engaging in community development activities enhances my skills and abilities | .872 | | | | | | |
| Collaborating with like-minded individuals and organizations is a motivation for my volunteerism | .872 | | | | | | |
| I feel a strong sense of social responsibility to contribute to my community | .826 | | | | | | |
| Volunteerism provides opportunities for my personal growth and development | .782 | | | | | .25 1 | .339 |
| Volunteering aligns with my personal values and beliefs | .778 | | | | | | |
| Volunteering strengthens my connection to my community. | .577 | .291 | | | | .47 2 | |
| Working alongside community members towards shared goals is important to me | .573 | | | | | | .306 |
| I am influenced by positive role models who are actively involved in community development | | .921 | | | | | |
| Seeing my peers engaged in volunteer activities inspires me to get involved | | .876 | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------|
| Peer support and encouragement play a role in motivating my volunteerism | | | | | | | | .865 |
| Access to training, mentorship, and funding is a motivating factor for my engagement | | | | | | | | .922 |
| Having platforms and programme that facilitate volunteerism motivates me to get involved | | | | | | | | .899 |
| The availability of resources and opportunities encourages my participation in volunteerism | | | | | | | | .859 |
| I value acknowledgment for the contributions I make to community development | .318 | | | | | | | .848 |
| Recognition motivates me to continue volunteering and making a difference | .281 | .324 | | | | | | .720 |
| Being recognized and appreciated for my volunteer efforts is important to me | | | | | .263 | .706 | .278 | .355 |
| I believe in the power of volunteerism to create positive change in areas I care about. | | | | | | | | .577 |
| Volunteerism allows me to build meaningful social connections with others | | | | | | | .796 | |
| Helping others is an important part of who I am | | | | | | | | .572 |
| Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose and meaning in life | | | | | | | | .567 |
| I feel a sense of belonging when I engage in community development activities | | | | | | | | .676 |
| Eigen Value | 10.09 | 2.911 | 2.409 | 1.714 | 1.22 | 1.10 | 1.02 | |
| | | | | | 2 | 3 | 2 | |
| Percentage (%) of Variation | 37.40 | 10.78 | 8.923 | 6.347 | 4.52 | 4.08 | 3.78 | |
| | 4 | 3 | | | 6 | 6 | 5 | |
| Cumulative Percentage | 37.40 | 48.18 | 57.11 | 63.45 | 67.9 | 72.0 | 75.8 | |
| | 4 | 7 | 0 | 7 | 83 | 69 | 54 | |

Discussion

Personal fulfillment and Passion-Factor 1 accentuates the profound personal and emotional facets of volunteering. The high loadings on variables related to recognizing the value of volunteerism in skill-building, personal fulfillment, and passion suggest that intrinsic, heartfelt motivations are pivotal drivers. This aligns seamlessly with existing literature emphasizing the importance of personal satisfaction and a sense of purpose as cornerstone motivators (Niebuur2020; South et al., 2022). Factor 2-Influence of positive role models and peer support explained the influence of role models and peers as significant motivators. The substantial loadings on variables related to positive role models and peer inspiration highlight the inherently social nature of volunteerism motivation. This resonates with studies showcasing the impact of social networks on volunteer decisions, emphasizing the influential role of positive role models and peer encouragement (Fourtané, 2022; Rozmiarek et al., 2023).

Access to resources and training opportunities showed the pragmatic dimension of motivation, emphasizing the importance of access to resources and training opportunities. This aligns with the notion that providing tangible support, such as training and mentorship, enhances motivation and sustained engagement (Jones & Bamberger, 2017; South et al., 2022). Here, the availability of resources emerges as a facilitator rather than a direct motivator. Recognition and appreciation factor delved into the significance of recognition as a motivational factor. The high loadings on variables related to valuing acknowledgment and recognition for contributions underscore the importance of external validation in sustaining volunteerism (Chen, Wang and Tang, 2022). Recognition serves as a crucial component in the volunteer experience, influencing sustained engagement. Social connections and belonging factor showed the role of social connections as a motivator. The variable loading high on building meaningful social connections signifies that the relational aspect of volunteerism is integral to motivation. This dimension aligns with studies emphasizing the social benefits and sense of belonging derived from volunteer activities (Lalitha, 2023; Rozmiarek et al., 2023). Inherent altruism and sense of purpose Factors 6 and 7 delved into the altruistic and existential dimensions of motivation. Helping others and finding purpose in volunteerism emerged as intrinsic motivators, echoing the altruistic nature of youth engagement in community development (Niebuur, 2020; South et al., 2022).

Implications for Community Development Initiatives

Tailored support programmes: The diverse motivational dimensions call for tailored support programme. Initiatives that provide both intrinsic satisfaction and external support, such as training opportunities and recognition, can enhance motivation.

Promoting positive role models: Given the influence of role models and peers, community development initiatives should spotlight positive examples. Creating mentorship programme and showcasing success stories can inspire and guide aspiring volunteers.

Holistic recognition strategies: Recognizing the importance of external validation, community programme should implement holistic recognition strategies. Public acknowledgment, certificates, and highlighting individual contributions can enhance motivation.

Fostering inclusive social spaces: Recognizing the significance of social connections, initiatives should focus on fostering inclusive social spaces. Building a sense of community and belonging can amplify the motivational impact of volunteerism.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study identified key factors motivating youth involvement, emphasizing the importance of personal fulfillment, positive role models, access to resources, and a sense of belonging. Building upon the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered to enhance youth engagement in community development and agriculture in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria:

Tailored skill development programmes: The Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with educational institutions and NGOs, should design and implement targeted skill development programmes focusing on areas identified in the study, such as project management, leadership,

and problem-solving. These programmes should be tailored to enhance the capabilities of youth volunteers.

Promotion of agricultural initiatives: The Ministry of Agriculture, in partnership with agricultural extension services and financial institutions, should encourage and support youth involvement in agriculture by providing resources for initiatives like community farming, agri-entrepreneurship, and sustainable agricultural practices.

Community-based environmental awareness campaigns: Local government authorities, environmental agencies, and community leaders should initiate community-based environmental awareness campaigns to enhance youth participation in activities related to environmental conservation. This could include tree planting initiatives, sanitation drives, and educational workshops on environmental sustainability.

Strategic social welfare programmes: Government agencies responsible for youth affairs, in collaboration with local authorities, should develop strategic social welfare programmes that align with the interests and motivations of youth volunteers. This might involve creating platforms for political engagement, sports, and awareness campaigns on social issues.

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