

## **Empowering Youth through Volunteerism: The Importance of Global Motivating Factors**

<sup>1</sup>Sani Yakubu Gombe, <sup>2</sup>Turiman Bin Suandi, <sup>3</sup>Ismi Arif Ismail, <sup>4</sup>Zohara Omar

<sup>1</sup>Federal College of Education (Tech.) Gombe, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Social Science, University Putra Malaysia

<sup>3</sup>Academy of Higher Education leadership, Malaysia

<sup>4</sup>Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia

---

**Abstract:** *Youth participation in volunteerism is a hidden approach that empowers them socially and psychologically, the positive effect in Nigeria is very high, because it promotes mutual cohesion among members of different background, level of education, ethnicity, culture, needs, aspiration and values. It also creates conscious future generation that will take the country to a greater height. However, studies regarding youth volunteerism in Nigeria are very scarce and the population of youth is increasing at alarming rate with a projected population of 2015 of about 56 million out which accounts for about 40% of the total population. Realizing the importance of volunteerism among youth in Nigeria, this paper presents an overview of motivating factors towards volunteerism across the globe and identifies specific factors that motivate youth to participate actively in volunteerism activities locally. The paper also identifies promoting mutual cohesion, enhancing capacity, motivating others to join, promoting philanthropy among the importance of volunteerism to the individual and the community at large. Altruism, level of education, collaboration, need to be with friends, self-motivation, age, gender, health status and intelligence are the major motivating factors of youth volunteerism in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** *youth, motivating, volunteerism, empowerment*

---

### **I. Introduction**

Promoting youth volunteerism is one of the basic ways of empowering them economically, socially and psychologically. Volunteerism is generally viewed as the process of giving without expecting any reciprocation in cash or in kind (Sani, 203). According to United Nations Volunteer (UNV), (2011) volunteerism can be classified into four namely; campaigning or advocacy, civic participation, service to others or philanthropy and mutual aid or self-help.

The impact of making youth become aware of the opportunities available in volunteerism work is as good as making them self-reliant, which is also facilitating good decision making process and high participation in their community development efforts. The contribution of volunteerism to nation development is high, for example a survey on volunteering activities conducted in UK revealed that, annually it contributes up to 40 Billion Pounds, which makes it the third major investor in the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). From Canada a report shows that, 7.5 million within the range of 15 years and above are into volunteering. Volunteerism was found to be an avenue for job creation. Maniam (2004) cited Independent sector (2001) that, up to 9 million full time jobs are corresponding jobs are created directly and indirectly from volunteers in the USA.

The history of volunteerism in Nigeria is not different from that of other societies. The culture, religion and values foster its manifestation and it begins commitment of individuals to charitable and religious altruism (Bichi, 2010). It is another form of response towards reducing hardships and tragedies as a result of war, political conflict, natural disasters as well as economic crisis (Ali, 2002). The overriding question is why should the study focus be on youth? The focus on youth is as result of the following data which shows 70% of Nigerians are in extreme poverty (FAO, 2006; CSDP, 2013) and 65% of Nigerian youth are living below the poverty line National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), (2011) while unemployment rate in the country is increasing by the day 19.7% in 2009, 21.1% in 2010, 23.9% in 2011, 24.8% in 2012, (NBS, 2011) and projected to reach as high as 30% in 2015 (NDE, 2014), if measures are not taken.

Moreover, majority of young graduates will not be absolved by the available vacancies; as such the youths should be empowered to contribute their quota towards the national development. Among the roles of the youth is to ensure building characters that are robust and resilient, upgrading skills and training to acquire leadership ideals to make them become assets to their societies. The aforementioned characters cannot be obtained by only listening to lectures in classes, but they should be directly involved and encourage to participate in social activities and volunteering programs, by so doing the interaction will expose them and

shape their charactersto make them more valuable human capital in their country (Nordin, 2011). In addition, Ali (2002) reported that majority of people participating in volunteer activities are old people and mostly retirees, while he noted time and vitality as the main impediments for young adults to fully participate in volunteer activities. The energy and motivation of youth is higher and can provide good returns, as such it makes recruiting young volunteers an important issue of global discourse.

## **II. Importance of Youth Volunteerism in Nigeria**

Youth volunteerisms in Nigeria assist immensely in making youth become more productive physically and mentally. Spanier (2010) observed that even though the cardinal principle of colleges and universities existence is to educate the students mainly within the youth age, but this cannot be achieved holistically as long as the spirit of sacrifice for the sake of others is not inculcated. Attaching the normal teaching and learning with experiences that will enhance the students and strengthen their civic participation will further expand their educational horizon thereby given them better opportunities to serve their communities.

In Nigerian context many volunteering activities were being initiated both at the school and the community level to enable the youth acquire pre-requisite experience to be self-dependent in terms of giving their time and energy without expecting a reward from anybody. Such activities include monthly environmental sanitation, awareness campaigns, voter education exercise, and career talks (Bichi, 2010). Moreover, the component of National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) program mandated on each and every graduate is aimed at promoting unity and increasing national integration among youth from different parts of the country.

In addition, according to the United Nations Volunteer (2011) including volunteerism in the process of youth training in conventional schools or any vocational pursuits help to promote social activism and increase social inclusion of the marginalized youth. These will increase their potentialities to possess more capacity in terms of acting as reservoirs of knowledge, which can be used to enhance community development and participation.

Moreover, Kondari (2010) reported that London-based universities gives priority to volunteerism efforts by both staff and students, as such the eight volunteerism federating units link up with each other to measure the direct impact of volunteerism spirits among students in 2009/2010 academic session, specifically the study deals with (i) Holistic personal development; (ii) Communication; (iii) Academic achievement; (iv) Career prospects and (v) Impact of social components of their studies. The result clearly shows a significant relationship between volunteerism spirits, academic achievements and holistic development. However, the findings also confirmed linking volunteerism spirit development with conventional studies in those universities provides acquisition of wide range of skills that will help the student prosper in his future career development not minding age or class of degree.

To the youth of Nigeria today, volunteerism assist immensely towards awareness creation, imbibing the spirit of helping/assisting others through direct sacrifice, enhances their patriotism, create mutual cohesion in the society, promotes philanthropic activities, provide direct social and psychological empowerment and leads to motivation for others to adopt the culture. Thus, it can be concluded that, volunteerism add value to educational experiences acquired, increased socio-economic capacity and inculcate the readiness to also serve the community voluntarily in all ramifications.

## **III. An Overview of Motivating Factors for Youth Volunteerism across the World**

Global considerations of the factors that lead youth to submit themselves for voluntary activities will immensely help towards encouraging and managing the volunteers. However, the driving factors may differ from one locality to the other based on some indicators such as necessities, geographical location, distinct differences, social status, economic standard and culture. There are many factors influencing volunteerism (Sahri, Khairudin, Asmidar & Sirajudin, 2013). According to Burns (2005) the major factors influencing volunteerism in the United States of America (USA) includes enhancing and enriching personal development, avoiding undesirable moods, acquiring new techniques, utilizing abundant resources not put into use and altruistic believes. Similarly, another study in US by Holdsworth (2010) indicated that, factors like learning opportunities, enhancing CVs or employability, personal values and acquiring skills are more prominent among youth motivators towards volunteerism.

A study conducted in China in 2009, a case of World games volunteers shows that, the principal motivating factor is "participation". By participation as volunteers they will have the opportunity to see, feel and enjoy all events that will also lead them towards learning new things such as skills and new attitudes from other participants (Liao, Chang & Tsai, 2012). This clearly shows that youth can easily develop interest in volunteerism as long as it provides direct benefits to suits their need.

In another study conducted in Turkey with 175 youth, the results shows that, the most influential factor that motivate them to volunteer is altruism. Moreover, the subjects involved in the study recognized need for

personal improvement as another motivating factor, so also affiliation, but recognition has low significance as a motivating factor especially by contrast with factors (Boz, 2007)

Similar study was also conducted in Australia, but the results here are divergent in content and context, because the respondents comprises of both older volunteers and new. However, they all accept that need to acquire skills, zeal of serving the community, affiliation with friends and other personal interest are their major motivating factors (Moffat, 2011).

In Malaysia, also similar studies were conducted and the findings is in line with earlier reported studies and can be summarized as follows: altruism (Hj Hussin & Mohd Arshad, 2012), self-motivation, academic purpose and income (Johar, 2008; Ishak, 2007), age and level of education (Mohd kasim, 2008; Mohd Yasin, 2005), affiliation, collaboration, intelligence, need for involvement and recognition (Borneo Post, 2011) are the major factors motivating youth to participate actively in volunteerism. However, some studies in Malaysia discover that race also play a vital role in promoting volunteerism as reported by Ahmed Salim (2005) in his research involving 254 undergraduate multiracial students, were he found 51% of Chinese and India are not directly involved in volunteering activities and not willing to participate at all.

A report from some studies conducted in Africa has not shown any significance difference on the factors motivating youth to participate in volunteerism globally. For example, in Tanzania 50 youth volunteers were studied in 2011, among the questions they were asked was "what motivate them to volunteer? The result indicates recognition and respect as the major factors of motivation. However, education, need to effect change and longing to serve as a community volunteer were also rated high (Wijeyesekera, 2011).

In addition, similar studies were conducted in Nigeria regarding the factors motivating youth to participate in volunteerism activities, the results were to some extent similar with the other studies conducted in the world. However, there are some explicit distinguishing factors on the approaches and instruments used (Kabiru, 2011). Moreover, it was clearly shown that youth volunteers in other countries are recruited by both government and non-governmental organizations basically from lower and higher levels of schooling, this differ with the practice in Nigeria, majority of youth volunteers studies shows that, they recruit themselves by forming self-help groups in schools.

The functions of such groups were found to be mainly for tutorials, consultations on how to perform a particular assignment or task. Also, such self-help groups conduct some minor sensitization to their immediate communities about certain issues related to sanitation, health, education and marriage (Sani, 2013). Moreover, in Nigeria from 1998-2013 youth volunteerism activities has increased tremendously, and some of the factors associated with includes sustained democratic dispensation, increase in government intervention, developmental partners intervention, interest, literacy level, needs of the community and altruism (Liddle, 2010; Boz, 2007).

In concluding this part, factors militating against volunteerism by community youth was considered, the prominent among them was the survey conducted in 2009 were participants indicated that workload that leads to being too busy, not interested, difficulty in finding a volunteer group, linkage of the volunteering experience with future career, orientation, family background, exposure, not related to the course of study and government support are the major impediments (Mohd Yasin, 2005).

#### **IV. Youth Volunteerism in Nigeria**

Youth volunteerism in Nigeria is traced back to the olden days of pre-colonial stage when the traditional community leaders encourage youth within their communities to be assisting each other in all their affairs, this encouragement from the elders are seen as words of wisdom from the elders and it therefore encourages the formation of youth groups that voluntarily undertake some projects for the development of the community at large. Moreover, it makes the social interaction higher thereby increasing bonding among the community members, it was also found to have direct and indirect economic benefits to the participating younger people coming up (Shehu, 2000).

Many studies were conducted in Nigeria to identify, discuss and asses the factors that influence youth to form voluntary organizations or participate actively in volunteerism (Yahaya, 2011). However, due to different culture, religion, values, needs and aspirations of the communities (Akinwumi, 2010), the results shows divergent views. The major factors that motivate youth to participate in volunteerism includes needs for recognition and desire to participate in community services (Shitu, 2011), psychological influence of peer groups (Bichi, 2010), high level of intelligence possessed by the volunteer (Ahmad, 2008), fear of depression, neglect and low level academic performance (FAO, WFP, IFAD, 2012).

Moreover, a study conducted by Community and Social Development Agency (CSDP), (2013) identified desire to contribute towards the development of the community, collaboration and high involvement due to level of education attained as the major motivating factors. Affiliation and need towards personal improvement are found to be additional motivating factors for volunteerism among youth of northern Nigeria, while need to defend their old aged parents and community against any external force (especially Boko Haram

insurgents) was found to be the major factor motivating youth to form vigilante group called “KATO DA GORA” in Borno and Yobe states in North-eastern Nigeria (Adesoji, 2010; Danjibo, 2009).

Other factors that motivate youth to participate in volunteerism includes wealth, age, gender, health status, place of abode, level of socialization, type of school attended/attending, low involvement, personal feelings, inherent behavior, need to be with friends, family status and upbringing culture (Sani, 2014). Moreover, high level of academic load, commitment with chores, assisting with domestic work, absence of immediate benefits and non-availability of voluntary organizations within the community are some of the factors behind low participation of youth volunteerism in Nigeria (Sani, 2013; CSDP, 2013; Adesoji, 2010). In addition, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs and Youth Development in Nigeria was highly criticized by International Development Partners notably IFAD, FAO and SFH for not having a specific collaboration with institutes of higher learning towards motivating youth volunteerism and also for not having a synergy with small voluntary groups in local environment to reach out with their programs (GSADP, 2014).

## V. Conclusion

In Nigeria today, the need of having large number of volunteers especially youth in all nook and crannies of the country is very important, this is to help reach out and also increase the capacity of the community towards self-dependence and promote sustainable development. The overdependence on government for towards socio-economic development will be reducing in the presence of high volunteerism spirit among youths in Nigeria. Moreover, it is also very pertinent to have a strong collaboration between federal, state, local governments and voluntary groups to assist each other in facilitating holistic community development. Removing all impediments and reviving the old youth organizations such as Man’O war club, Muslim students society (MSSN), Fellowship of Christian Students (FCS), Boys Brigade (BB), Girls Guide (GG), Debating clubs, Young Farmers Club (YFC) and the likes in our primary, secondary and post-secondary schools will help immensely towards increasing volunteerism spirit among youth and will eliminate fear of volunteering towards community development.

## VI. Recommendations

From the discussions above the following recommendations are made:-

- (1) Youth groups in Nigeria should incorporate entrepreneurship development skills among their activities to facilitate self-reliance.
- (2) Government and other non-governmental organizations should identify formidable youth groups and link up with them for volunteering capacity building and other trainings that will ensure sustainability in their development efforts.
- (3) Communities should in collaboration with the youth groups foster culture and values promotion, with the view of reducing external culture of infiltration.
- (4) Curriculum planners should make volunteering as mandatory course from the kindergarten to inculcate the spirits from the tender age, this will go a long way in expanding the horizon of catch them young paradigm.

## References

- [1]. Adesoji, A. (2010). The Boko haram uprising and Islamic Revivalism in Nigeria. *Africa spectrum*,45(2). {Online} at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25798918>, retrived on 23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2015.
- [2]. Ahmad Salim, A.-H. (2005). Student involvement in volunteering activities: a case study at the Faculty of Human Ecology UPM. *Universiti Putra Malaysia*.
- [3]. Ali, H. (2002). Volunteerism and the Development of Malaysian Social Care System. *International Council on Social Welfare* , 101-109.
- [4]. Bichi, A. A (2010b). Issues and trends in community development and participation. *Trends in Education Research*. Zaria, ABU Press.
- [5]. Borneo Post, (2011). Spirit of Volunteerism Declining. Retrieved from Borneo Post Online: <http://www.theborneopost.com/2011/11/06/%e2%80%98spirit-of-volunteerism-declining%e2%80%99/#ixzz29cNCvQBa>
- [6]. Boz, I. (2007). Factors influencing the motivation of Turkey's community volunteers. *Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* .
- [7]. Brewis, G., Russell, J., & Holdsworth, C. (2010). Bursting the Bubble: Students, Volunteering and the Community Research Summary. *Institute for Volunteering Research*.
- [8]. Burns, D. J., Toncar, M., Reid, J., Anderson, C., Wlells, C., Fawcett, J., et al. (2005). Volunteering: A Comparison of the Motivations of Collegiate Students Attending Different Types of Institution. *The Journal of Volunteer Administration* , 32-40.
- [9]. Community and Social Development Program (CSDP) (2013). Profile Study of Women Youth Self Help Groups in Gombe State. *Journal of Community Development*, 2(1).
- [10]. Danjibo, n. D. (2009) Islamic Fundamentalism and Sectarian Violence: The “Maitatsine” and “Boko Haram” Crises in Northern Nigeria Peace and Conflict Studies Programme, Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.
- [11]. FAO, WFP and IFAD. (2012). The State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012. Economic growth is necessary but not sufficient to accelerate reduction of hunger and malnutrition. Rome, FAO.
- [12]. Food and Agricultural Organization (2006) Issues and Opportunities for Agricultural Education and Training in the 1990s and Beyond. Rome, FAO
- [13]. GSADP (2014). Gombe state Agricultural Development Program, Newsletter of 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2014.

- [14]. Hj Hussin, Z., & Mohd Arshad, M. R. (2012). Altruism as Motivational Factors toward Volunteerism among Youth in Petaling Jaya Selangor. *IPEDR* , 225-229.
- [15]. Holdsworth, C. (2010). Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations for Student Volunteering. *British Journal of Educational Studies* , 421-437.
- [16]. IM4U. (2013). IM4U. Retrieved May 12, 2013, from IM4U: <http://www.1m4youth.com.my/>
- [17]. Isak, S. (2007). The influence of personality traits and motivation toward prosocial involvement of volunteering activities among students of UPM. Universiti Putra Malaysia
- [18]. Johar, N. (2008). The influence of personality traits and motivation toward prosocial involvement of volunteering activities among students of UPM. Universiti Putra Malaysia
- [19]. Konidari, S. (2010). Reach Bulletin. Retrieved 2015 15-May from Reach London Metropolitan University: reach.londonmet.ac.uk
- [20]. Liao, L.-C. C., Chang, H.-M., & Tsai, T.-F. (2012). Study of volunteers' participation motivation, work satisfaction and perceived value in mega-sports event: case of the 2009 world games. *International Conference on Innovation and Information Management. IPCSIT*.
- [21]. Liddie, K. M. (2010). What motivates people to volunteer: A case study using coastal cleanup day in san luis obispo california. California Polytechnic State University.
- [22]. Maniam, V. A. (2004). Volunteerism for Youth Development. *INTI Journal* , 306-317.
- [23]. Moffatt, L. (2011). Engaging young people in volunteering: what works in Tasmania? *Volunteering Tasmania*.
- [24]. Mohd Kasim, M. (2008). The involvement of students in private higher education institutions working community volunteerism: a case study among students UNITEN and Liu College. Universiti Putra Malaysia.
- [25]. Mohd Yasin, F. N. (2005). Knowledge and involvement in community volunteer work: one case study among students UPM. Universiti Putra Malaysia. National Higher Education Strategic Plan: Laying the Foundation Beyond 2020.
- [26]. National Directorate of Employment (NDE) (2014). Gazette on unemployment trends and pattern in Nigeria, 2010-2020, NDE Working document
- [27]. Nigerian Bureau of statistics (2011). Poverty alleviation indices and its effects on youth and women development in Nigeria, June, 2011 Newsletter. Abuja, Nigeria
- [28]. Nordin, K. (2011). Student: Move to Malaysia. *Utusan . Malaysia*. September 29<sup>th</sup>
- [29]. Shitu, M. B. (2011) Teaching competencies needed by extension workers in transferring agricultural technologies to Kano state farmers. *Journal of Agricultural Technology*, 3(4).
- [30]. Sani, Y. G. (2013) Emerging issues in farmers' cooperative societies towards sustainable interest free micro-credits in North-east region, Nigeria. *Journal of Vocational Education*, 3 (2)
- [31]. Spanier, & B, G. (2010). Creating Adaptable Universities. *Innovate Higher Education* , 91-99.
- [32]. Tansey, L., & Gonzalez-Perez, M.-A. (2006). University Platform and Student Volunteering: Harnessing Student Civic Engagement through Volunteering. *Community Knowledge Initiative National University of Ireland* .
- [33]. United Nations Volunteer (UNV) (2011). State of the World's Volunteerism Report. United Nations.
- [34]. Wijeyesekera, D. (2011). The State of Youth Volunteering in Africa. *International Forum on Development Service*.
- [35]. Wilson, J., & Musick, M. (1999). The Effects of Volunteering on the Volunteer. *Law and Contemporary Problems*.
- [36]. World Bank (2013) Annual report on poverty level and its implication to developing nations. Rome, Italy.