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**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.

The aim of the study was to examine 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. Moreover, there were indications that age of youth did not influence the choice of volunteering. 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