

# Looking through the Lens of Theory of Change: Long-Term Goals and Interventions as Sources of Community Volunteerism Initiatives

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## Abstract

Volunteerism with unclear goals is a problem. With this, I explored the viewpoints and standpoints of community volunteers on volunteerism initiatives. I used a descriptive qualitative study employing semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants selected through purposive sampling. Upon analyzing the information I gathered using thematic analysis, I found that many volunteers are driven by personal goals, which may overlook community needs. Yet, they remain emotionally committed despite limited support and training. Based on these findings, I recommend that local agencies design more responsive and sustainable volunteer programs to support long-term goals and initiatives. Use this study's themes and emerging subthemes as variables and indicators for quantitative research.

*Keywords: Theory of change; long-term goals; interventions as a source of community volunteerism initiatives*

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## 1. Introduction

Globally, volunteerism with unclear goals and interventions is a problem. This concern is echoed in the study by Lorente, Küster, and Vila (2024), which found that volunteer programs lacking clear objectives and ongoing support struggle to achieve lasting outcomes.

In Vietnam, a study revealed that volunteers often consider leaving when goals are unclear (Phan & Pham, 2024). Similarly, in Canada, the absence of structured goals has been identified as a significant contributor to volunteer disengagement (Gaber et al., 2022). These highlight the universal nature of the problem, emphasizing the need for well-defined goals and supportive structures to enhance volunteer engagement.

In the Philippine context, the issue is equally pressing. A study by Diokno-Sicat et al. (2020) found that while many local government units implement the Community-Based Monitoring System (CBMS), inconsistency in setting clear and long-term objectives of volunteerism remains, as there are no structured goals. Furthermore, Gallegos et al. (2023) highlighted that Barangay Health Workers in Davao City face challenges in maintaining long-term volunteer commitment, primarily from unclear program directions.

Without proper direction and structured support, volunteer motivation declines over time, resulting in the diminishing of the overall impact of volunteer-driven programs (Lough et al., 2018). This highlights the urgency of the study, as there is a limited number of published studies that critically examine this issue, especially within grassroots volunteer organizations. Addressing this gap is crucial for improving volunteer

retention and enhancing program effectiveness (Phan & Pham, 2024). It is for this urgency and gap that this study was pursued.

### *1.1. Significance of the study*

I consider this study important because it addresses a clear gap in sustaining volunteer engagement in community-driven programs. Many of these initiatives begin with strong motivation but struggle to maintain volunteer participation due to unclear long-term goals and weak intervention strategies. By exploring how these elements influence the experiences and commitment of community volunteers, this study aims to highlight the factors that contribute to or hinder long-term engagement. I hope the findings will guide local agencies and organizations in designing more structured, meaningful, and lasting volunteer programs that support both the volunteers and the communities they serve.

This research also reflects my alignment with the Cross 5.0 vision of the Holy Cross of Davao College, especially in promoting sustainable development and genuine community engagement. I see this study as part of my commitment to holistic and transformative education. By proposing a framework that addresses unclear long-term goals and inconsistent interventions in volunteer programs, I hope to help organizations strengthen their impact, retain committed volunteers, and foster a culture of lifelong learning and collaboration in community service.

### *1.2. Statement of the problem*

In my research, I explored the viewpoints and standpoints of community volunteers on volunteerism initiatives. Guided by the identified research gap, I sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the long-term goals of community volunteers in engaging in community programs and activities?
2. What are the intervention initiatives undertaken by the community volunteers towards achieving greater outcomes?
3. What are the concrete outcomes the community volunteers are expecting in engaging in community programs and activities?

### *1.3. Assumption*

In conducting this research, I assumed that community volunteers already carry meaningful experiences, skills, and knowledge even before formally joining volunteer programs gained through work, family roles, or informal community involvement. These individual differences shape their motivations, the interventions they respond to, and the goals they pursue. Guided by the Theory of Change, I believe that recognizing and aligning these starting points with clear long-term goals and well-structured interventions is essential. Doing so can lead to stronger competencies, deeper engagement, and sustained volunteer participation in community-driven programs.

### *1.4. Theoretical Lens*

This study is anchored in the Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995). At its heart, the Theory of Change spells out initiative or program logic. It defines long-term goals and then maps backward to identify changes that need to happen earlier (preconditions). The identified changes are mapped graphically in causal pathways of outcomes, showing each outcome in a logical relationship to all the others. Interventions, which are

activities and outputs of any sort, are mapped to the outcomes pathway to show what stakeholders think it will take to effect the changes and when.

### *Paradigm*



Figure 1: Paradigm of the study through the Lens of Theory of Change by Weiss (1995)

In a similar vein, the Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995) views social development and capacity-building efforts as a series of interconnected steps leading to long-term impact. This model effectively illustrates how interventions, such as baseline data and targeted training, lead to immediate outputs like improved skills and knowledge (Funnell & Rogers, 2011), which then contribute to medium-term outcomes such as increased volunteer effectiveness and engagement (Connell & Kubisch, 1998). Ultimately, these changes are expected to result in long-term impacts, such as sustainable volunteerism and stronger community participation (Clark et al., 2015).

## **2. Method**

This section outlines the methods used to collect baseline data on the skills and capacities of community volunteer members. It details the research design, study locale, sampling procedures, and the development of interview guide questions. Data were gathered through in-depth interviews (IDIs) and analyzed using thematic analysis. It also explains how trustworthiness was ensured by addressing reliability and ethical considerations.

### *2.1. Research Design*

In this study, I used a qualitative research approach with a descriptive design to explore how unclear long-term goals and inconsistent interventions affect volunteer engagement in community organizations. Qualitative research focuses on understanding how people make sense of their social world. It looks closely at human experiences through detailed, in-depth inquiry. As Aspers and Corte (2019) explained, qualitative research emphasizes meaning-making, uses inductive reasoning and engages with people's real-life experiences. It involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data, such as interviews, observations, and written texts, to find patterns and insights that numbers alone cannot show. This method helped me understand the experiences of community volunteers, how they respond to current interventions, and what strategies might support their continued involvement over time.

### *2.2. Locale of the Study*

My study focused on community volunteers in Davao City. This setting provided a unique and critical context for understanding how unclear long-term goals and inconsistent interventions affect volunteer engagement and sustainability. By concentrating on this specific locale, I captured the distinct challenges and

motivations community volunteers face in their local environment. Davao City's diverse communities and active volunteer-driven initiatives offered valuable insights into how structured goals and targeted interventions can improve the long-term effectiveness of community programs and keep volunteers meaningfully engaged.

### *2.3. Sample and Sampling*

For this study, the participants were selected based on specific criteria. The sample consisted of community volunteers in Davao City who were actively engaged in volunteer-driven initiatives. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, focusing on individuals directly involved in volunteer efforts. The sample included fifteen (15) community volunteers who participated in in-depth interviews. This criterion ensured that the sample represented individuals who had firsthand experience with the goals and interventions of volunteer programs and could speak to how these elements affected their ongoing engagement and motivation.

In addition to community volunteers, facilitators of volunteer initiatives were included in the sample to provide a broader perspective on the implementation and impact of volunteer engagement strategies. These participants offered valuable insights into the design, execution, and outcomes of volunteer training and capacity-building efforts. By selecting both volunteers and program staff, I was able to gather detailed information that reflected the experiences of volunteers and the perspectives of those managing the long-term goals and interventions critical to maintaining sustained engagement in volunteer programs.

### *2.4. Interview Guide Questions*

The interview guide for this study focused on uncovering detailed insights into the long-term goals, interventions, and outcomes of community volunteers in Davao City. Key questions included:

1. What motivated you to volunteer, and what personal or community goals are you hoping to achieve through your involvement?
2. What specific actions or initiatives have you taken as a volunteer to help the community? How did you come up with or get involved in those efforts?
3. What changes or results have you seen in yourself or in your community because of your volunteer work?

These questions aim to better understand the goals of volunteers, the efforts they make, and the outcomes they see. This helped me identify skill gaps, measure how effective and sustainable the support systems are, and learn how these experiences shape their roles and impact in the community. By doing so, the study goes beyond numbers, it captured the real stories and lessons shared by the volunteers themselves.

### *2.5. Data Gathering Technique*

I employed a data-gathering technique designed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the challenges in sustaining volunteer engagement and the effectiveness of capacity development interventions. Interviews were conducted with selected community volunteers in Davao City, including program coordinators and facilitators, to gather detailed data and expert insights into the long-term goals, interventions, and motivations that shape volunteer experiences. These interviews provided in-depth information from individuals with direct experience in volunteer-driven initiatives, offering nuanced perspectives on how interventions and clear goal-setting influence volunteer engagement and program sustainability.

In-depth interviews facilitated conversations among community volunteers, allowing them to share their experiences and collective views on training and capacity development interventions. Additionally, all

invited participants received informed consent forms before the interview, ensuring they understood the study's purpose and any potential risks. The voluntary nature of participation and the right to withdraw at any time were clearly explained. Participants signed a consent form before the interview. Those who consented were scheduled for interviews at their convenience. Their responses remained confidential, accessible only to the researcher.

## 2.6. Data Analysis

For data analysis, I employed thematic analysis to identify and interpret patterns within the qualitative data. This process involved coding the information collected from in-depth interviews (IDI). The codes were systematically categorized into sub-themes and broader themes that captured key issues, experiences, and insights related to long-term volunteer engagement and the effectiveness of capacity development interventions. By analyzing these themes, I uncovered common challenges and perceptions among community volunteers in Davao City, gaining a deeper understanding of how well-structured goals and consistent interventions influenced their ongoing participation. Thematic analysis facilitated the drawing of meaningful conclusions and the formulation of practical recommendations for enhancing volunteer engagement and program sustainability.

## 2.7. Trustworthiness

The thoroughness of a study refers to the level of confidence in its data, interpretation, and methods to ensure quality (Pilot & Beck, 2014).

*Credibility* establishes whether the research findings represent plausible information drawn from the participants' original data and is a correct interpretation of the participants' original views (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this research, credibility is established through interviews, allowing for cross-verification and an accurate representation of the experiences of community volunteers. Participants received 200 pesos and snacks as a token of appreciation, and interviews were scheduled based on their availability to show respect for their time and convenience.

*Dependability* is ensured by clearly documenting the research process, including participant selection, data gathering techniques, and analysis procedures, to maintain consistency over time. Clear documentation makes it possible for other researchers to understand how the study was carried out and how decisions were made throughout the process.

*Transferability* is the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents. The researcher facilitates the transferability judgment by a potential user through thick description. Transferability is addressed by providing detailed descriptions of the study's context, participants, and findings, enabling others to assess the relevance and applicability of the insights to similar volunteer-driven programs in other communities.

*Confirmability* means the findings are based on evidence, not personal bias (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this study, confirmability was upheld through clear documentation, participant validation, and expert review. An audit trail, a transparent and traceable record of the research process, was maintained to allow others to review how decisions were made during the study (Anney, 2014). This helped ensure that interpretations were grounded in the data. Anonymity and data security were maintained using

pseudonyms and in compliance with the Privacy Act of 2012. All personal data were stored securely to be destroyed after use to protect participants' privacy and further support the objectivity of the research.

### 3. Results

I presented the experiences gathered from the responses of my study participants. I have also included a modified paradigm, which I developed based on the overall themes and sub-themes, and I have explained how these are aligned with the fundamental concepts of the theory used in this study. The presentation is organized to highlight the three major elements drawn from the Theory of Change: long-term goals, interventions, and outcomes.

#### Modified Paradigm

The Theory of Change (Weiss, 1995) explains how specific interventions lead to long-term outcomes by outlining the steps needed for change. In community volunteering, they have long-term goals, interventions, and outcomes. These efforts lead to stronger engagement and better retention, which, over time, contribute to sustained volunteerism, empowered communities, and improved social development. By linking actions to outcomes, the framework shows how targeted support can create a lasting impact.

This study, grounded in the Theory of Change by Weiss (1995), identified three key themes based on the experiences of community volunteers: (1) the long-term goals of community volunteers, (2) interventions and strategies for sustainable impact, and (3) outcomes of volunteer training in enhancing skills and community engagement. These are further supported by relevant sub-themes. The modified paradigm presented in the study not only strengthens its theoretical foundation but also provides a practical guide for designing capacity-building programs that reflect the motivations, needs, and realities of community volunteers.

The modified paradigm illustrating these findings is presented below:

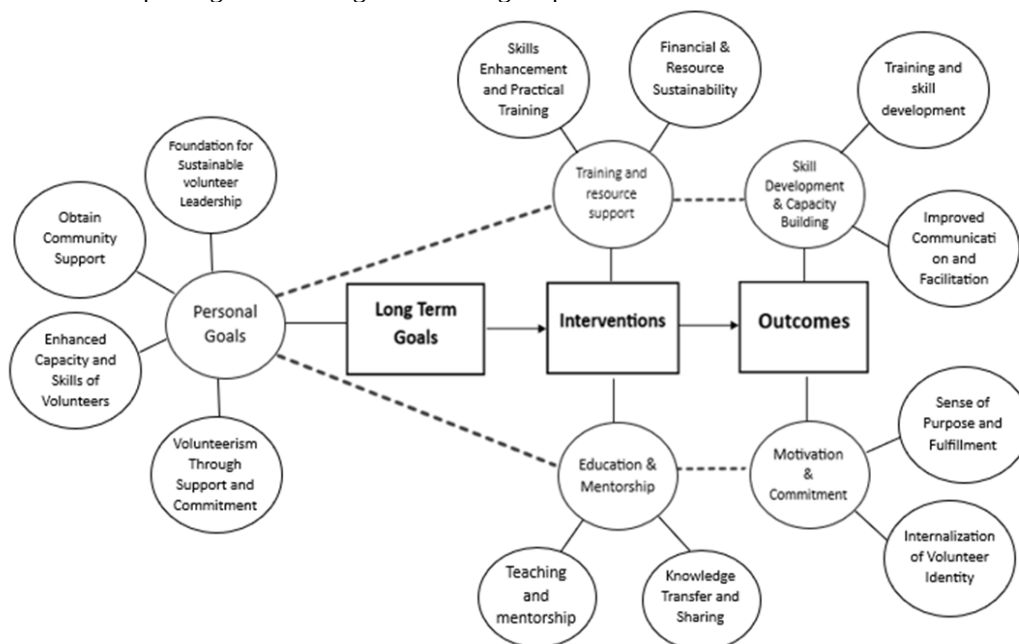


Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Results through the Lens of Theory of Change by Weiss (1995)

### *Long-term Goals of Community Volunteerism*

Community volunteers exhibit strong and enduring leadership by selflessly caring for others and taking action without expecting anything in return. Many aspire to become role models for the next generation, hoping that their dedication will inspire younger people to engage in service as well. Others volunteer to protect the environment, even in the absence of financial compensation. What fuels their commitment is not material reward but a deep love for their community and a strong sense of responsibility. These values also reflect their long-term goals. As I spoke with them, I noted that their goals are mostly personal in nature.

*On Personal Goals in Volunteering.* Volunteers are often driven by deeply personal motivations, whether it is a desire to give back, to grow as individuals, or to serve as role models in their communities. These goals are more than aspirations; they shape how volunteers engage and sustain their involvement over time. Many shared how their commitment is rooted in personal values, life experiences, and the hope of creating lasting change.

Their involvement goes beyond simply joining programs; they become living examples of core values, responsibility, and community spirit. This commitment lays the foundation for sustainable volunteer leadership, guided by a long-term vision where today's efforts aim to nurture a lasting culture of service. As Belle shared:

*"Tungod kay magtutudlo ko sauna, nakatabang ko sa pag-tudlo sa mga bata ug nakahatag ko og dugang nga bili sa programa." -IDI,P11*  
*(Because I was a teacher before, I was able to help teach the kids and give additional value to the program.)*

Listening to Belle's story made me reflect deeply on my journey as a teacher. It touched me and made me ask myself if I am also using what I have to make a difference. Coming from an academe like her, I felt a strong connection to her shift from the classroom to volunteer work. It reminded me that being an educator does not end with formal teaching. It continues wherever we choose to serve. Belle now helps children through volunteer programs, still planting seeds of knowledge, just in a different setting. Her story made me realize how our backgrounds can become a real strength in helping others. This sentiment was echoed by Liza:

*"Ang akong ge lantaw is ang sunod na henerasyon aron usab mahimo ta nga ihimplo nga mao ilang masunod sa sunod pa nga henerasyon." -IDI,P3*  
*(What I'm looking at is the next generation so that we can become examples for them to follow.)*

Looking around, I was quietly moved by how well the place was cared for, and it felt like every corner carried someone's love and effort. Then I looked at Liza, and the passion in her eyes caught me off guard. It was the kind of look that comes from doing something not out of duty but from the heart. I could sense that what she was doing was not just a task; it was part of who she was. At that moment, I realized that for them, volunteering is about more than the present. It is about setting an example planting something meaningful for those who come after. That thought stayed with me. It made me reflect on how even the smallest efforts, when done with love and hope for the future, can leave a mark that lasts. They are not just helping; they are building something. And just as that realization settled in me, Rica added:

*"Kun dili imong sarili imong idepensa sa kinaiyahan, kanang bukid mahurot nana... Mao ng bisan walay sweldo, mo serbisyo gyud mi," – IDI,P7*  
*(If you don't defend the environment yourself, those forests will be gone... That's why even without pay, we still serve.)*

I could feel her sincerity when he said, "imong sarili imong idepensa." It was a quiet but powerful reminder that true service starts from within. That moment stayed with me. There was no need for big words or drama, just honesty, and a strong commitment. I felt how much they cared for the land and how serving the environment had become part of who they were. It was never about money or recognition but about protecting what truly matters, even when no one is watching. Their dedication shows that real advocacy is rooted in the heart and that love for the environment can inspire people to serve in ways that are quiet yet deeply impactful.

This deep sense of purpose becomes even more meaningful as volunteers grow in their roles. Growth is an essential part of the volunteer experience. Many community volunteers begin with a simple willingness to serve, but over time, they develop new skills and gain valuable insights through both structured training and real-life experiences. As they are exposed to different roles and challenges, they learn by doing and by working closely with others. This process helps build their confidence and strengthens their commitment. May highlighted this by stating:

*"Mas nalipay ko sa among pagtinabangay kay nakakat-on ko ug daghang bag-ong abilidad ng gusto unta nako na magpadayun ni." – IDI,P9*  
*(I am happier working together because I have learned many new skills, and I hope this continues.)*

When I heard her story, I felt something deep in my chest, like a quiet ache but also a warmth. It hit me in a way that made me want to cry because I could feel how much it resonated with my own experiences. I have been there, stepping into something, not knowing where it would lead, just wanting to help, and then realizing how much I have grown in ways I did not expect. It is like you give a piece of yourself, and in return, you find parts you never knew existed. I thought about how, sometimes, the smallest acts of service can completely change us and help us discover strengths we did not know we had. It made me feel so grateful but also so emotional because I realized how much of myself I have found through helping others. Those quiet moments of service have shaped me, and I'm left with this overwhelming sense of growth and gratitude that brings tears to my eyes.

*"Para nako, tinuod gyud nga dako ang epekto sa volunteer work, labi na sa pagpanalipod sa kinaiyahan. Tungod sa mga kalihokan, mas nasabtan nako kung unsa kaimportante ang pag-atiman sa kalikupan alang sa umaabot. Daghang bag-ong kasinatian ang nakapauswag sa akong kahibalo ug abilidad, ug kini nagtukma sa akong personal nga mga tumong sa pagtubo, pag-alagad, ug paghimo ug positibong kausaban sa komunidad." – IDI,P10*

*(For me, volunteer work truly has a significant impact, especially in protecting the environment. Through these activities, I have come to understand how important it is to care for nature for the sake of the future. I have gained many new experiences that have enhanced my knowledge and skills, and these align with my personal goals of growth, service, and making a positive difference in the community.)*



Hearing their stories touched me. Many of them started with so little knowledge, yet they learned as they went, facing challenges that taught them so much along the way. I could hear the pride in their voices when they talked about gaining confidence, learning new skills, and becoming more involved in their communities. It was not just growth; it was real transformation. I felt a lump in my throat because it was clear that these experiences had shaped them in ways they never expected. It reminded me that even the smallest steps can lead to something truly powerful. Ramon emphasized this by stating:

*"Ang pag-apil sa mga trainings ug seminars nakatabang sa akong pag-uswag isip usa ka volunteer na mao gyud akong gusto mahitabo kay kailangan mana namo." – IDI,P12*  
*(Participating in trainings and seminars has helped me grow as a volunteer, which is exactly what I wanted to happen because it is something we truly need.)*

I could not help but relate to her story. I remember a time when I, too, doubted my ability to contribute, especially when I was surrounded by others who seemed more experienced and confident. Like her, I had moments where it was not just about learning new things but about finding the confidence to step forward, to lead, and to realize that my efforts do matter. Listening to her made me reflect on how growth does not always happen overnight. It is the small, quiet moments where we begin to believe in ourselves and see the impact of our actions. It reminded me that we all can make a difference.

Many participants highlighted personal support and financial burdens they face as barriers to continued participation. Despite this, their stories showed that personal commitment remains strong, especially when there are support systems in place. These can come from family, the community, or institutions that recognize and uplift their efforts. Volunteers continue to serve not just out of duty but because it gives meaning to their lives. Many participants highlighted the financial burdens they face as a barrier to continued participation. As Grace noted:

*"Ang pag-apil sa mga trainings ug seminars nakatabang sa akong pag-uswag isip usa ka volunteer, nga mao gyud akong gusto mahitabo kay kinahanglan gyud namo. Maglisud mi og konsumo, kinahanglan pa gani mi mangutang aron lang masugakod ang among mga panginahanglan. Mao nga importante para nako ang makaapil og mga kalihokan nga makapauswag sa akong kaugalingon, aron makatabang ko sa akong pamilya ug komunidad. Kini usa sa mga paagi nga makaduol ko sa akong personal nga mga tumong nga mahimong mas lig-on, mas andam, ug mas mapuslanon sa uban." – IDI,P5*  
*(Participating in trainings and seminars has helped me grow as a volunteer, which is exactly what I wanted because we truly need it. We struggle to make ends meet and sometimes have to borrow money just to get by. That is why it is important for me to join activities that help me improve myself so I can support my family and community. This is one of the ways I can move closer to my personal goals of becoming stronger, more prepared, and more helpful to others.)*

Listening to her, I could not help but think about my journey. I have faced those moments, too, having to choose between helping others and taking care of my own needs. It made me realize that volunteerism is not just about giving time. It often involves personal sacrifices that are not always easy. The weight of responsibilities, like bills and daily struggles, can feel overwhelming, but the desire to serve keeps me going. Like her, I have found that family support is essential. Their understanding and encouragement have been a constant reminder that even in tough times, their belief in me fuels my commitment to keep going. It is the

love and support we share that truly sustains us through everything. Leo also expressed how crucial family understanding and encouragement were to their continued involvement:

*"Suporta sa pamilya, mao nay nakatabang nako nga magpadayon pa." - IDI,P14*  
*(Family support is what has helped me continue.)*

He shared how his wife would take over childcare duties so he could attend pieces of training and how his children would help prepare materials or even join him in small community events. Their support did not just free up his time; it gave him a sense of purpose. He spoke with so much gratitude, saying that his volunteer work wasn't something he did despite his family but something he could do with their blessing and help. Listening to him, I realized that being a father isn't just about what you do inside your home but the impact you have on your community. His words reminded me how much pride there is in being able to balance both roles, providing for your family while also serving something greater. The love and support he received from his family weren't just about making things easier; they made his work feel even more meaningful.

Moreover, volunteers' motivation is deeply rooted in their connection to nature and their sense of responsibility toward environmental conservation. The following quote from Rica encapsulates this sentiment:

*"Ang nakapadasig saakoa sa pagka volunteer nako sa ancestral domain gyud, sa pagbantay sa kalasangan, mao nay nakadasig saakoa, mga katubigan." – IDI,P7*  
*(What inspires me in my volunteerism in the ancestral domain is protecting the forests; that is what motivates me, as well as the waters.)*

She is part of the Indigenous community, and as I listened to her, I realized it was not just her voice I was hearing; it was the collective heartbeat of her people. They spoke of caring for the forests and waters not as a task but as a sacred duty, a living expression of their heritage. It moved me in ways I cannot fully explain. I reflected not only on my life's purpose but on how deeply intertwined we are with the environment that gives us life. Their stories stirred something in me, something powerful and humbling. For her, volunteering is not just about lending a hand; it is a sacred act of stewardship woven into the fabric of who she is. Her strength and unwavering dedication, even in the face of obstacles and scarce support, come from a place of deep cultural pride and spiritual connection. It left me inspired and reminded me of the kind of purpose I want to carry within myself.

This kind of deep, personal connection to their environment reveals a unique form of volunteer motivation, one that goes beyond external rewards. Volunteer motivation, especially in the context of environmental stewardship, can be likened to an underground spring. It flows quietly, nourished by cultural memory, ancestral duty, and a deep spiritual connection to the land. Even when external support fades, this internal spring continues to sustain their efforts. In research terms, this is an example of intrinsic motivation, an internal force that drives consistent and meaningful participation regardless of outside incentives or institutional support.

### *Community Volunteer Interventions and Strategies for Sustainable Impact*

Community volunteers implement a diverse array of interventions aimed at addressing specific needs and fostering sustainable development within their communities. These interventions are often tailored to local contexts and leverage the unique skills and passions of the volunteers involved. Upon conversing with them, I discovered the importance of training resource support, education, and mentorship.

*On Training and Resource support.* Training and skill development are vital components of meaningful volunteer engagement. Many community volunteers begin with little formal experience but are driven by a strong desire to help. Over time, through exposure to structured training and real-world practice, they gradually build the competencies needed to contribute more effectively. Volunteers often stress that actual, hands-on learning has a more lasting impact than lectures or seminars alone.

Training and skill development are vital components of meaningful volunteer engagement. Many community volunteers begin with little formal experience but are driven by a strong desire to help. Over time, through exposure to structured training and real-world practice, they gradually build the competencies needed to contribute more effectively. Volunteers often emphasize that hands-on experiences or learning leave a more lasting impact than lectures or seminars alone. This blend of practical and structured learning allows volunteers not only to gain skills but also to discover their own potential. As Ana explained:

*"Pwede mag workshop, unya I actual. Okay na saamo. Basta ang gekinahanglan lang naay training." IDI,P1*

*(Workshops are fine, but they should include actual training. What we really need is training.)*

I could see the sincerity in her eyes as she spoke. We were sitting in a small community center, surrounded by posters and a chalkboard filled with plans. As she shared her thoughts, I could feel how much this meant to her. She explained that while workshops are useful, it's the hands-on experience that counts. For her, it is the real practice. I could feel the weight of her words, how simple tasks build real confidence, and that's what makes volunteers truly effective. It made me realize that learning is not just about reading or attending sessions; it is about rolling up your sleeves, diving in, and truly feeling the work you're doing.

However, I also noticed the challenges they face. As their livelihoods become more unstable, it's harder for them to stay active in volunteering without any support. They are not asking for salaries, just a small allowance to cover basics like transportation and meals. Even a little help, they said, would make a big difference in allowing them to continue serving their communities. May said:

*"Ang makatabang kay ang volunteer is matagaan na gamay na allowance. Ikaduhang tabang is ang volunteer matabangan sa pagpa approve sa balaud." IDI,P9*

*(What would help is if volunteers were given a small allowance. Another form of help would be assisting volunteers in getting policies approved.)*

As she spoke, I could sense not only her unwavering commitment but also the deep exhaustion that often comes with such dedication. Her worn-out slippers and the tiredness in her eyes told a story far beyond words. She shared how there were times when she was so tired and with no money to spare, but she still pushed forward. The weight of it all was heavy, yet she kept going, driven by something greater than herself. Despite the fatigue and the lack of resources, she continued to serve with pride and passion. It was clear that her spirit of selflessness wasn't just about what she did; it was who she was. Even when everything seemed difficult, she pressed on, finding strength in her purpose. Her perseverance reminded me of the true heart of volunteerism: giving without expecting anything in return, even when it feels like you have nothing.

This experience underscored the importance of support systems for volunteers. Whether in the form of financial allowances, policy advocacy, or institutional backing, these supports are crucial in sustaining volunteer efforts. They not only alleviate the practical burdens volunteers face but also serve as a recognition of their invaluable contributions. Such acknowledgment reinforces the message that their efforts are seen, valued, and essential to the community's well-being. Jonas added:

*"Ang gikinahanglan na suporta sa grupo karon kay is more on financial mi kay lisud ang panagat. Bisag dili nalang siya mahimo na sweldo, bisan mga allowance lang, okay nana saamoa." – IDI,P8*

*(The support needed by the group now is more financial because fishing is difficult. Even if it is not in the form of a salary, even just an allowance would be fine for us.)*

Hearing this made me feel the weight they carry. They are giving so much to their communities, yet behind their commitment, they are also facing personal struggles. Many shared that they don't have formal jobs, and I could see the love and pride they have for what they do, but passion alone isn't always enough. The financial and resource struggles they face are constant. When they don't receive enough financial support, they turn to training and help from various groups just to keep going. It hit me how much they rely on this support, not just to gain skills but also to rebuild their confidence and motivation. Adi shared that they have received training from different foundations, and it made all the difference, not just in learning new things but in feeling empowered to continue their service. It reminded me that even the strongest passion needs support to thrive, and these volunteers carry on, not just with heart but with the strength they find in the resources and help they receive. As Liza shared:

*"Ge hanas mi pinaagi sa pag traing. Ge training pami sa Philippine Eagle. Training kay sama sa pagsukod sa dagkung mga kahoy, tubig, training sa pag tan.aw sa bukid." – IDI,P3*

*(We were trained through various sessions. We received training from the Philippine Eagle (Foundation). The training included measuring big trees, water assessment, and observing the mountains.)*

When I heard this, I was amazed by how hands-on their experience was. They were not just sitting through lectures; they were learning by doing. I could see the pride in their eyes as they shared their stories, and it made me realize just how important this kind of training is. It is not just about gaining skills; it is about truly understanding their work and building confidence in their abilities. Learning in the field seeing firsthand the impact of their efforts, helps them connect deeply to what they are doing. It is more than just completing tasks; it is about building a meaningful bond with the community and the environment. Listening to them made me reflect on how valuable real-world experience is and how it shapes not only what we do but who we become in the process.

*On Education & Mentorship.* Many of the community volunteers shared that their experience as teachers or trainers helped them feel more confident and effective in their roles. Whether they taught in schools, led workshops, or mentored others informally, their ability to explain ideas clearly and connect with people gave them a big advantage in supporting community activities. These volunteers were not just showing up to help; they were guiding, educating, and uplifting others along the way.

Within community volunteerism, the role of teaching and mentorship often unfolds quietly, through shared conversations, examples, and patient guidance. Many participants expressed how their ability to teach and guide others developed naturally over time, shaped by their personal and community experiences. Carlo shared:

*"Kay kaniadto magtutudlo man ko, nakatabang ko sa pagtudlo sa mga bata ug nakahatag og dugang bili sa programa. Sa akong paglantaw pud, tabangan ang isip sama namo nga volunteer, maghinaot mi nga naa pud makakita saamo nga trabaho, matabangan mi kung*

*unsa pay gikikinahanglan namo kung panahon kami kay naa sa panahon sa pagpatrol” – IDI,P1*

*(Since I used to be a teacher, I was able to help teach the children and add value to the program. In my view as well, volunteers like us should be supported, and we hope that someone will see our work and help provide what we still need, especially when we are out on patrol.)*

During our interview, I observed Carlo’s genuine passion for service. The modest setting, adorned with educational materials and community event posters, reflected a deep commitment to the cause. As he spoke, his words conveyed not only dedication but also the challenges faced in balancing volunteer work with personal responsibilities. Despite these challenges, her enthusiasm remained unwavering, highlighting the resilience and determination characteristic of community volunteers.

Another, skilled in social media, became like a bridge that connected the community’s efforts to a wider audience online. Faye added:

*“Nahibalo ko mogamit og social media, mao nga nakatabang ko sa pagpalambo sa programa ug pagdani og daghang mga tawo sa online.” – IDI,P15*

*(I know how to use social media, which helped improve the program and attract more people online.)*

This sentiment resonated with me as I understood how digital platforms can enhance educational initiatives. She showed me some of the Facebook pages where she posted the events, and I know how she put effort into that. By utilizing social media, they were able to reach a wider audience, share valuable resources, and foster a sense of community among participants. The ability to engage with individuals beyond geographical boundaries not only expanded the program’s impact but also enriched the learning experience for all involved.

One of the most meaningful parts of being a volunteer is the chance to share what you know. Volunteers learn new things from training and experience, and then they pass this knowledge to others in their community. This helps more people get involved and makes the group stronger. Sharing what they know is their way of giving back and helping others grow, too. As Leo said:

*"Mas nindot gyud kung ma-share nato sa uban ang atong nahibaw-an, para daghan pa ang makat-on ug makatabang." – IDI, P14*

*(It is really better if we can share what we know with others so more people can learn and help, too.)*

When he said this, I felt how sincere he was. He spoke with so much hope as if he truly believed in the power of shared learning. It reminded me of how one small act, like teaching someone a new skill, can ripple through the whole community. I saw that for her, knowledge is not something to keep but something to pass on.

*"Ang akoang mga nasabtan sa training ako gyud ginaambit sa among barangay aron makatabang pud sila." – IDI, P13*

*(What I learned from the training, I always share in our barangay so that others can help too.)*

I felt a deep sense of pride for her. I could see how much she valued learning, not just for herself but for others, too. While she was speaking, her eyes lit up with excitement. She spoke with so much care for her neighbors, and I felt how genuine she was. That moment reminded me that the heart of volunteering is not just service but it is also about lifting others and making sure no one is left behind.

### *Outcomes of Volunteer Training in Enhancing Skills and Community Impact*

Volunteer training programs play a vital role in equipping individuals with the skills and knowledge needed to serve their communities effectively. These programs not only improve the competencies of volunteers but also contribute to positive outcomes within the communities they support. Through conversations with the volunteers, I learned that these outcomes are reflected in areas such as skill development, capacity building, motivation, and commitment.

*On Skill Development & Capacity Building.* Sustaining community volunteerism requires motivation, organizational support, and opportunities for skill development. Volunteers often start with a desire to help, but their long-term commitment depends on how they grow personally and professionally. As they gain new skills and knowledge, their confidence and effectiveness increase, which strengthens their dedication. However, without structured training and learning opportunities, their ability to adapt and succeed can be limited, leading to disengagement. This study explores how skill development and capacity-building efforts impact volunteers' long-term involvement and professional growth, especially through training and skill development. Volunteers often develop new skills through hands-on experiences and collaborative efforts. Liza highlighted this by stating:

*"Mas nalipay ko sa among pagtinabangay kay nakakat-on ko ug daghang bag-ong abilidad, nga dili lang nakatabang sa akong kaugalingon kundi nakahatag usab og dakong tabang sa among komunidad. Daghang bag-ong kasinatian ang nakapauswag sa akong kahibalo ug abilidad".*

– IDI, P3

*(I am happier with our cooperation because I have learned many new skills that not only helped me personally but also greatly contributed to our community. Through our teamwork, our unity and our efforts toward the development of our area have become even stronger.)*

Her enthusiasm was contagious. She described how being part of a team not only made the work lighter but also opened opportunities for learning things she never thought she could do, like facilitating community meetings, preparing reports, and even basic first aid. What started as a willingness to help turned into personal growth. Gaining new experiences plays a crucial role in volunteer skill-building. Jenny shared:

*"Para nako, dako gyud ang epekto sa volunteer work labi na sa pagpanalipod sa kinaiyahan. Tungod sa among mga kalihokan, mas nasabtan namo kung unsa kaimportante ang pag-amuma sa kinaiyahan para sa umaabot." – IDI,P13*

*(For me, volunteer work has a huge impact, especially in protecting the environment. Because of our activities, we have gained a deeper understanding of how important it is to care for nature in the future.)*

This statement truly stood out to me. As I listened to Jenny, I could see the pride in her eyes and the confidence in her voice. It was clear that her growth came not just from attending training but from being fully involved in the actual work on the ground. Volunteers like her are not only offering their time; they are also continuously learning, adapting, and improving through real-life experiences in the community. Belle emphasized this by stating:

*"Ang nakita sad nko na epektibo gyud and seminar ang actual na training kay kami naka balo sa mga bansay sa tanang buluhaton kay tungod sa mga actual ang seminar. Nakatabang gyud sa pagsuwag kanamo."*

*- IDI, P11*

*(Participating in trainings and seminars has helped me grow as a volunteer.)*

She said it with honesty, and it really stayed with me. I saw how much they valued learning, not just to gain knowledge but to become more helpful in their communities. I could feel how proud they were of their growth. It was not just about joining training, but also about using what they learned in real situations, like leading a group, helping during emergencies, or becoming more confident. For them, every training is a step toward better service and personal growth.

One key area where this growth becomes clear is in communication and facilitation. Many volunteers start with little experience speaking in front of others or leading discussions, but they develop these skills over time through practice and support. Participating in meetings, workshops, and planning sessions allows them to become more confident in expressing their ideas and guiding others. These experiences strengthen their ability to connect with people, an important skill for both teamwork and community outreach. For many, improved communication starts with small steps, asking questions, sharing ideas, or helping organize a meeting. Paolo shared:

*"Sa una, mahadlok ko mosulti. Pero tungod sa kanunay nga pakig-meeting ug pakig-istorya sa uban, nakat-on ko mosabot ug mopadayag sa akong hunahuna."* – IDI,P6

*(At first, I was afraid to speak. But through regular meetings and conversations, I learned how to understand and express my thoughts.)*

His story echoes how repeated exposure to group discussions helped her overcome shyness. He explained that simple encouragement from peers and mentors made a big difference. Eventually, he began taking on roles that required him to speak up, like presenting updates during barangay assemblies or helping facilitate focus group discussions. Another volunteer, Rica, shared how his communication skills improved as she joined more community activities:

*"Mas confident nako karon mopasabot sa mga tawo. Dili na ko pareha sauna nga maglibog kung unsay isulti."* – IDI,P7

*(I am now more confident in explaining things to people. I am no longer like before, unsure of what to say.)*

You can really sense how proud she is of his improvement. These sessions taught him how to listen actively, organize his ideas, and guide conversations. This gave her the confidence to take part in decision-making and help coordinate group efforts. This just tells us how these stories show that communication and facilitation are skills that volunteers develop over time with the right support. Whether through formal training or shared experiences, volunteers grow more capable of expressing themselves and guiding others.



This not only improves how they work with their communities but also strengthens their personal growth and leadership potential.

*On Motivation & Commitment.* Community volunteerism plays a vital role in social development, promoting service and compassion. However, maintaining volunteer engagement over time depends on both internal and external factors that either strengthen or weaken motivation. Volunteers are often driven by a desire to help, but external factors like organizational support, training, and recognition also play a key role in their long-term involvement. Without proper guidance and support, volunteers may face burnout, disillusionment, or disengagement. This study looks at how motivation and commitment affect the sustainability of volunteerism and explores factors that help or hinder skill development and lasting participation.

At the heart of sustained volunteerism lies a powerful inner drive, a deep-seated desire to make a difference. For many community volunteers, the motivation to serve stems from a sense of purpose, empathy, and connection to others. However, even the most passionate individuals can waver when their efforts lack direction or support. One of the primary factors influencing volunteer commitment is having a clear sense of purpose and direction. Jonas shared,

*"Ang tinuod nga motibo sa pagvolunteer kay ang tinguha nga makatabang, apan kung walay klarong direksyon, mawala ang gana."*

*-IDI, P8*

*(The true motivation for volunteering is the desire to help, but without clear direction, enthusiasm fades.)*

His words struck me because they revealed a quiet frustration that many volunteers feel but rarely express. He had started out full of passion, eager to serve his community in any way he could. But over time, he found himself repeatedly asking, "Unsa man gyud akong role?" ("What exactly is my role?"). With this, Jenny noted:

*"Para nako, tinuod gyud nga dako ang epekto sa volunteer work, labi na sa pagpanalipod sa kinaiyahan. Tungod sa mga kalihokan, mas nasabtan nako kung unsa kaimportante ang pag-atiman sa kalikupan alang sa umaabot." – IDI, P13*

*(For me, volunteer work truly has a significant impact, especially in environmental protection. Through these activities, I've come to understand how important it is to take care of the environment for the future.)*

From that conversation, I began to reflect on how essential it is for volunteers to feel guided and supported. It is not just about giving them a task; it is about showing them that what they are doing matters, that it connects to a larger goal, and that their time and energy are valued. As I do this study, that moment helped me see motivation not as a fixed trait but as something that can be nurtured or lost, depending on how we support our volunteers. It is a reminder that if we want volunteerism to thrive, we need to be just as committed to them as they are to their communities.

This sense of purpose does not just guide what volunteers do; it shapes who they become. For many, volunteering is no longer just an activity or a role they take on from time to time. It becomes part of who they are. The identity of being a volunteer blends into their daily lives, their relationships, and even their way of thinking. It is not just about joining programs anymore; it is about living a life rooted in service. Faye shared,



*“Bisan asa ko moadto, volunteer gihapon ko. Mao na gyud ni akong kinabuhi.” – IDI, P15*  
*(Wherever I go, I’m still a volunteer. This has truly become my life.)*

When she said this, I saw something deeper in her eyes; there was calmness, confidence, and a strong sense of self. I could feel how genuine her words were. She did not need to prove anything; her actions and her presence already spoke volumes. While I listened, I remember thinking how natural it all seemed to her volunteering was no longer a separate part of her life. It was who she was. Leo also shared a powerful insight:

*“Di lang ni trabaho para sa ako. Misulod na ni sa akong kasingkasing.” – IDI, P14*  
*(This isn’t just work for me. It has already entered my heart.)*

When I interviewed Leo, he smiled quietly as he said this. He talked about how, even outside official activities, he would still look for ways to help, whether it was guiding youth, assisting neighbors, or sharing information online. His statement wasn’t dramatic, but it struck me deeply. He was not doing it for applause or recognition. He did it because he felt it deeply and sincerely.

That moment made me pause and reflect. I realized that for many of the volunteers I spoke with, this wasn’t just about giving time. It was about embracing a way of life. Their identity as volunteers is not just a title; it is a quiet commitment rooted in compassion and carried with pride. And for me, as a researcher, it became clear that when volunteering becomes part of a person’s identity, it lays a powerful foundation for sustainable and meaningful community engagement.

### *Viewpoints and Standpoints*

I view the goals of community volunteers as deeply rooted in their commitment to service and their desire to make a meaningful difference in their communities. Their engagement in community programs and activities reflects a strong sense of purpose to uplift the lives of others, promote unity, and support sustainable development. These goals are often driven by their personal values, lived experiences, and a shared vision of a better and more empowered community.

In terms of interventions, I have observed that community volunteers take on various roles, such as facilitators, organizers, and advocates. They initiate activities like skills training, awareness campaigns, and livelihood projects, often in coordination with local leaders and institutions. These strategies are not only practical but also grounded in the volunteers’ understanding of local needs and resources. Their hands-on involvement becomes a key driver in achieving meaningful outcomes for the communities they serve.

From my standpoint, the outcomes that community volunteers aim for go beyond immediate project results. They hope to see long-term improvements such as increased community participation, enhanced access to basic services, and the continuation of programs even without external support. Additionally, their involvement contributes to their own personal and professional growth. As a researcher, I find these insights valuable in understanding how volunteerism, when supported and sustained, can lead to impactful and lasting development at the grassroots level.

#### 4. Discussions

Grounded in the participants' perspectives and insights, I discussed the findings based on the participants' responses and reviewed previous findings, highlighting points of agreement or contradiction with my study's results. I organize the discussion into themes and sub-themes that capture the participants' insights. These include (1) the long-term goals of community volunteers, (2) interventions and strategies for sustainable impact, and (3) the outcomes of volunteer training in enhancing skills and community engagement. I also discuss the implications of these findings for educational practice, particularly in teaching and learning, and suggest future research directions, highlighting areas for further investigation.

##### *Long-term Goals of Community Volunteers*

The long-term goals of community volunteers are primarily centered on personal rather than collective objectives. While their aspirations are individually driven, they align with broader community outcomes by encouraging local leadership, promoting the spirit of volunteerism, and supporting sustainable solutions to community challenges. Through their efforts, volunteers aim to foster positive, lasting changes that will continue to benefit the community for years to come.

*Personal Goals in Volunteering.* The data indicate that many volunteers were primarily motivated by personal goals. However, the findings also suggest that an emphasis on personal development may, at times, lead to less attention to broader community needs.

The findings show that many volunteers expressed a strong desire for personal development, which enhanced their sense of fulfillment, purpose, and effectiveness. This is in line with Hustinx and Lammertyn's (2003) idea that when people see volunteering as a chance for personal and professional growth, they tend to stay committed. This highlights the importance of capacity-building in keeping volunteers engaged and ensuring the success of community initiatives.

However, this contradicts Musick and Wilson's (2008) view that an excessive focus on personal benefit may undermine genuine community engagement and increase the risk of volunteer burnout. They emphasize that when individual motivations outweigh collective goals, volunteers may become disengaged from the broader purpose of their involvement. Therefore, they stress the importance of maintaining a balance between personal development and communal responsibility to ensure sustained and meaningful participation.

Emotional support from family and the community played a significant role in sustaining volunteer involvement. This echoes Hustinx et al. (2015), who emphasized that volunteers with strong social ties are more likely to remain committed. Likewise, Durkheim's (1912) theory of collective effervescence suggests that feeling part of a shared purpose strengthens volunteer commitment by fostering unity and a sense of belonging within the group.

The findings also show that personal motivations were strongly tied to social relationships within the community. This affirms Putnam's (2000) Theory of Social Capital, which suggests that people with strong connections are more likely to work together toward common goals. Similarly, the findings support Bourdieu's (1986) description of social ties as a valuable resource that helps individuals achieve both personal and collective outcomes. Volunteers were able to gather support and work effectively as a team, demonstrating that meaningful participation often begins with personal involvement, even before assuming a formal role.

### *Community Volunteer Interventions and Strategies for Sustainable Impact*

Community volunteers use simple strategies like awareness campaigns, skills training, and helping organize local groups. They work with leaders and agencies to make sure programs meet the community's needs. These efforts help create lasting and meaningful change.

*Training and Resource support.* The findings on training and resource support were key to the personal development of the volunteers. While many of them started with minimal formal training, they gradually gained confidence and competence through workshops, seminars, and hands-on experiences. These opportunities not only improved their ability to perform their roles more effectively but also empowered them to take on leadership responsibilities within their communities.

Structured training programs are pivotal in enhancing the capabilities of community volunteers. This supports the study of Fahey et al. (2002) where they highlight that training serves as a critical tool for both recruitment and retention of emergency service volunteers, emphasizing its role in sustaining volunteer engagement. This affirms the idea of Perry et al. (2015), where the success of this model demonstrates how consistent training can empower volunteers to become key agents of change.

Resource support also plays a critical role in sustaining community programs. Volunteers with experience in financial planning and resource mobilization are instrumental in securing the funding necessary to maintain these programs. This affirms Bowman's (2011) study, which stresses that nonprofits with diverse funding sources, including grants and donations, tend to thrive in the long term.

Several participants demonstrated a clear understanding of budgeting, fundraising, and resource acquisition, which allowed them to secure financial support for their initiatives. This supports the study of Weerawardena et al. (2010), emphasizing that volunteers with financial planning skills contribute significantly to the development of sustainable funding strategies. Additionally, Bovaird (2007) supports the view that efficient resource management helps maximize the use of limited materials and funds, thereby contributing to the long-term success of these initiatives.

*Education & Mentorship.* Many volunteers with prior experience as teachers or trainers felt more confident and effective in their roles. They used their teaching background to connect with people, explain ideas clearly, and engage participants. Their ability to educate and guide others enhanced their effectiveness in supporting community activities, taking on active roles in mentoring and uplifting others within the community.

Volunteers with teaching backgrounds brought structure and clarity to community programs. Their experience allowed them to simplify complex ideas and encourage participation. This approach supports Freire's (1970) Critical Pedagogy, which views education as a means to empower people. These volunteers not only taught but also helped others think critically and find their voice within the community.

Volunteers did not just teach; they mentored, offering guidance and building confidence. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, which suggests that people learn best when supported by those with more experience. Through mentoring, volunteers helped others grow, not only in skills but also in confidence. Their ability to mentor, plan training, and create learning environments was essential to the success of community initiatives. This supports McBride and Sherraden's (2007) study, which highlighted the value of skills-based volunteering in filling essential gaps and improving the effectiveness of programs.

The findings focus on the role of mentoring, particularly by volunteers, in facilitating adult learning and community engagement. Specifically, it highlights how volunteers who have prior experience as learners or educators use that background to create practical, relevant, and respectful learning environments for adult learners. This approach affirms Knowles' (1980) Adult Learning Theory, which emphasizes that adult learning is most effective when it is connected to the learner's existing knowledge and life experiences. The

findings also suggest that this mentoring approach is successful in engaging the community and fostering meaningful participation.

The findings of this study show that mentorship plays an important role in sharing knowledge among volunteers. Experienced volunteers often guide and support new members, helping them learn skills, understand their roles, and adapt to the organization's culture. This informal learning process creates a supportive environment where volunteers grow and improve together. These results support the view of Ragsdell and Jepson (2014), who stated that mentoring and job shadowing are key to volunteer development.

The findings show that mentoring among community volunteers helps develop important soft skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving. These skills often grow through regular guidance and example, not just formal training. This supports Mentorloop's (2023) view that mentorship builds interpersonal skills. Volunteers who act as mentors also model positive behavior, helping others become more confident and effective in their roles.

Another key finding was the use of digital tools, especially social media. Some volunteers used Facebook and messaging apps to raise awareness, organize activities, and connect with the community. This affirms Bennett and Segerberg's (2012) idea that technology can strengthen collective action. Volunteers with digital skills played a big role in keeping others engaged and involved.

### *Outcomes of Volunteer Training in Enhancing Skills and Community Impact*

Volunteer training helps improve the skills of community volunteers, such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving. It boosts their confidence and ability to lead projects. As a result, they can better support their communities, create stronger programs, and make a bigger, lasting impact.

*Skill Development & Capacity Building.* The findings show that skill development and capacity building were key parts of the volunteers' experiences. Many started with little formal training, but through workshops, seminars, and hands-on activities, they became more confident and capable. This helped them do their tasks better and take on leadership roles in their communities. The volunteers also showed a strong desire for continuous learning, which improved their skills and increased their impact on community work.

Volunteers in this study gained important skills like communication, leadership, and problem-solving through teamwork. This supports Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory, which says people learn best through social interaction and participation. As they took part in community work, volunteers not only improved their skills but also felt a stronger sense of belonging. These findings also support Hustinx et al. (2010), who found that skill-building environments help volunteers grow personally and professionally, making them more likely to stay involved. This hands-on and social way of learning helped the volunteers develop and stay committed.

The results of this study show that community volunteers are mainly motivated by skill development and fulfillment. This supports Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which explains that people learn best through direct experience. Volunteers who faced real-life challenges developed stronger problem-solving skills and adaptability, which helped sustain their commitment. These findings affirm the work of Cnaan and Cascio (1999), who emphasized that personal growth through volunteer service plays a key role in long-term commitment. Together, these perspectives highlight how meaningful skill-building experiences encourage sustained engagement in community work.

Additionally, the study highlights the importance of structured training in equipping volunteers with the necessary skills to perform their roles effectively. This supports Wilson's (2012) assertion that ongoing

training enhances volunteer engagement by improving competence and fostering a sense of accomplishment. The findings also align with Salamon and Sokolowski's (2001) argument that organizations investing in capacity-building initiatives create a more skilled, committed, and dedicated volunteer workforce. The data from this study show that training not only boosts competence but also reinforces volunteers' sense of value, strengthening their commitment to both the community and the service they provide.

The findings of this study reveal that volunteers developed crucial skills such as communication, leadership, and problem-solving through social interaction and collaborative problem-solving. These skills were honed through their participation in community activities, where working together with others provided ample learning opportunities. These support Lave and Wenger's (1991) Situated Learning Theory, which says that learning is most effective in a social environment. Volunteers also benefited from mentorship and ongoing training, which helped them grow and stay committed.

The results of this study show a strong connection between volunteer engagement and skill development. Volunteers who were actively involved in community work enhanced their interpersonal and communication skills, which supports Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, and Hustinx's (2009) finding that participation in volunteer activities improves these skills. The study also highlights the importance of skilled facilitation for effective community organizing, aligning with Brager and Specht's (2001) assertion that skilled facilitation is essential for mobilizing participation and addressing community needs. Additionally, the development of communication and facilitation skills among volunteers indicates capacity building, emphasizing the value of continuous training and mentorship to sustain long-term engagement and ensure the sustainability of volunteer-driven initiatives.

*Motivation and Commitment.* The results of this study show that motivation is key to sustaining long-term volunteer engagement. Volunteers are mainly driven by personal values like empathy, social responsibility, and a desire to contribute to their communities. This intrinsic motivation helps them stay committed, even when resources or recognition are limited. However, continued engagement is not just about initial enthusiasm. Volunteers noted that their commitment is strengthened when they see the tangible impact of their work, receive support from peers or organizations, and feel their contributions are valued. This highlights the importance of recognizing volunteers' efforts to maintain their long-term commitment to community service.

The findings from this study indicate that many participants began volunteering with strong intentions but continued because they saw the difference they were making. When volunteers clearly understood their roles and received feedback or appreciation, they felt more motivated to stay engaged. This supports Clary et al. (1998), who found that volunteers are more likely to commit long-term when they can see the impact of their actions. The findings also align with the Expectancy-Value Theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), as volunteers remained motivated when they observed tangible outcomes and benefits from their work.

The findings of this study highlight the importance of emotional and organizational support for volunteers. Many participants shared that recognition, even in small forms, helped maintain their motivation, especially during difficult times. This aligns with Rochester et al. (2010) and Wilson (2012), who found that volunteers who receive strong support are more likely to stay engaged. These findings also support the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000), as volunteers remained committed when they felt autonomous, competent, and connected. When these psychological needs were met, volunteers found greater meaning in their roles, which helped sustain their commitment despite challenges.

The findings of this study show that volunteers who see their role as central to their identity are more likely to stay engaged over time. This supports van Ingen and Wilson's (2017) view that the salience of volunteer role identity is a key predictor of long-term involvement. Positive organizational experiences, like role clarity

and receiving positive feedback, further strengthen this sense of identity. This aligns with Grube and Piliavin's (2000) findings, which show that such experiences improve volunteer performance and retention.

A strong volunteer identity also contributes to a greater sense of purpose and meaning in life, supporting Thoits' (2012) argument. Volunteers who internalize their role report higher psychological well-being, suggesting that their engagement benefits both the organizations and communities they serve while also promoting their own personal growth. This highlights the reciprocal nature of volunteering: the more integrated the volunteer role is into one's identity, the stronger their engagement and the greater the impact on their well-being.

### *Implications for Practice*

Volunteering is generally defined as the act of offering services for the benefit of others without financial gain, motivated by values such as solidarity, civic engagement, and social responsibility (United Nations Volunteers, 2011). With this in mind, volunteering should go beyond personal benefits and be rooted in shared goals that promote long-term community development. If volunteers are mainly driven by personal reasons, there is a risk that community needs will be overlooked or only partially addressed. Therefore, capacity-building programs should guide volunteers to connect their personal growth with a deeper commitment to community-centered outcomes, ensuring that their efforts contribute to lasting and meaningful change.

To strengthen community voices in policymaking, organizations should collect and document volunteer stories and use them in consultations, public forums, and reports to influence decision-makers. Volunteers should be encouraged and trained to join barangay consultations, planning sessions, and public hearings to directly share their experiences and needs. Local government units must also support community development by funding community-based training programs, providing resources for small volunteer-led projects, and strengthening participatory governance structures at the barangay level.

Moreover, as a Social Studies teacher, it helped me see the importance of connecting classroom lessons with real-life community experiences. Listening to community volunteers showed me that understanding people's real situations must come first before planning any help or development projects. This encourages me to begin lessons with what students already know and experience in their communities, making social issues easier to understand and more relevant. I also aim to help students see that they can contribute to positive change, even in small actions.

Continuous learning and mentorship must also become a regular part of volunteer work. Organizations should offer regular workshops, coaching, and peer learning sessions to help volunteers improve their skills over time. Volunteers must be given opportunities for reflection, feedback, and practical learning to adapt to new community challenges. By building a culture of ongoing education and active engagement, organizations can help volunteers grow personally while making a stronger, lasting impact on their communities.

### *Future Direction*

Based on the conversation I had with the participants in identifying their experiences in volunteering, a quantitative study may be done utilizing the themes I utilized in this research as variables and the emerging subthemes as indicators. Specifically, a mediation analysis may be done using the intervention theme as the interest variable on the correlation between long-term goals (independent variable) and outcomes of volunteering initiatives (dependent variable). Also, exploratory factor analysis may be applied to develop questionnaires on intervention, long-term goals, and volunteering outcomes.



Future research may also adopt the Theory of Change framework to map how specific volunteer interventions lead to desired outcomes over time. Using this framework can help clarify the pathways through which volunteers' long-term goals, interventions, and outcomes are connected. It can also guide the design of programs and evaluations, ensuring that strategies are aligned with the overall goals of community development.

In conclusion, I suggest that future research should focus on developing evidence-based tools and frameworks that enhance the understanding, planning, and evaluation of volunteer programs. By building on both quantitative methods and strategic frameworks like the Theory of Change, future efforts can help create stronger, more sustainable volunteer initiatives that are responsive to the evolving needs of communities.

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