

# ULRR

## Exploring the contextual factors influencing young persons aged 14 to 17 years occupational choice to participate in volunteering

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O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

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## **MSc Occupational Therapy**

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# **‘Exploring the contextual factors influencing young persons aged 14 to 17 years occupational choice to participate in volunteering’**

## **Abstract**

Background: The impacts that a positive volunteering experience can have on youth have been known for some time. The growing evidence of the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering for youth and communities/societies to which the contributions have been made have been highlighted. However, the qualitative research literature available to support the influential factors of volunteering youth is deficient.

Objectives: This research paper examined the existing literature on youth aged 14 to 17 years and contextual factors that shaped their choice to engage in volunteering.

Methods: To improve the quality of the research, papers were assessed for eligibility and quality using the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) in conjunction with a critical review tool from McMaster University. A literature review was completed followed by a meta-synthesis. An appropriate question was shaped for the synthesis and relevant articles were reviewed. A qualitative methodology was utilised to integrate, evaluate and interpret the findings.

Results: Four themes were identified across six research papers as the contextual factors influencing the occupational choice of young persons’ to volunteer. The results were examined by the use of meta-synthesis.

Conclusion: The findings of this study suggest that youth in mental health services benefit from the inclusion of a range of activities in occupational therapy. In this regard, volunteering opportunities should assist youth exploring voluntary roles that match their interests and abilities for successful treatment.

## Introduction

Volunteering among adolescents is common in modern society. The Latin word ‘adolescent’ is the stage of human development that is described as a period in life of self exploration and identity formation (Lerner 2007). Many adolescents take on roles and responsibilities by participating in activities for which they are paid, such as child-sitting, household chores and jobs for community organizations (Mandich and Cronin 2005). However, many adolescents engage in unpaid activities to fulfil their roles as volunteers (Wilson 2000). Volunteering has been defined as:

“any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or organisation” (Wilson 2000, p. 215).

A key feature is that participating is voluntary, because those involved chose to and are not obliged to participate in volunteering activities (Jenkinson 2000).

The impacts that a positive volunteering experience can have on young persons have been known for some time (Davis, Smith and Gay 2005). The growing evidence of the physical and mental health benefits of volunteering and the surrounding benefits to the communities/societies to which the contributions have been made have recently been highlighted (McNamee et al. 2016).

The literature on volunteering youth, therefore, focuses highly on the benefits and outcomes of volunteering and discusses the educational benefits, social benefits and the future career opportunities that people gain from voluntary participation. However, the qualitative literature available to support the influential factors of volunteering youth, excluding volunteering in conjunction with the education system, is deficient. The objectives of the current study are to explore the existing literature on youth aged 14 to 17 years and contextual factors that have shaped their choice to engage in volunteering. The results will be examined through the use of meta-synthesis. It is noted that all forms of volunteering linked to education/training will be excluded. The research question, therefore, asks “What are the contextual factors influencing young persons aged 14 to 17 years occupational choice to participate in volunteering?”

## **Literature Review**

The primary motives of volunteers have been identified by Clary et al. (1998) and the impacts that a positive volunteering experience can have on young persons have been discussed by Davis, Smith and Gay (2005),

In a study in Canada, Jones (2000) found that most participating adolescents were reported to volunteer because of the belief in the cause. It was also evident that their choice to volunteer may have been influenced by other factors such as skills and experience, exploring own strengths, improving job opportunities and volunteering because friends did.

A later study in the Netherlands (Gortham et al. 2013) discussed influential factors, including the importance of parents and friends, on adolescent volunteering and, in agreement with Jones (2000), concluded that young people are more likely to volunteer if they have a close friend who engages in volunteering. Indeed the results show that while volunteers were influenced by both parents and friends that volunteer, friends had a relatively larger effect. In 2009 the Volunteer Development Agency commissioned Access Research Knowledge to survey the volunteering experiences of 16 year olds in Northern Ireland. It was observed that an individual's socioeconomic background influenced a young person's choice to engage in voluntary work. Using a large sample size, it was observed that those from a higher socioeconomic status participated in volunteering in order to improve future career opportunities, whereas those from a lower socioeconomic status were eager to help others in society. In agreement with the study in Canada described above (Jones 2000), the study in Netherlands also highlighted the school as a major influence on the adolescents' choice to volunteer, possibly due to the fact that schools are the main providers for volunteering opportunities for students.

Two studies considered the rewards of volunteering to be the reasons for participation as opposed to having a belief in a cause. In a quantitative study, Cornelis et al. (2013) discussed motivational factors behind volunteering including a desire to help a specific society, a desire for personal gain and volunteer satisfaction. In a study on youth volunteering in Turkey, ErturanOgut (2014) described individual rewards of volunteering including self-determination, self satisfaction and personal development and social rewards such as social acceptance, social learning and social interaction.

It is noteworthy that the studies described by Gortham et al. (2013) and by Cornelis et al. (2013) relied on self-reports and it is considered that the adolescents' thoughts and experiences may have been influenced by social desirability.

The positive impact that a volunteering experience can have on young persons (Davis, Smith and Gay 2005) is a theme articulated in further studies. Adolescents who volunteer are said to do better in school, feel better about themselves and gain positive work ethics which lead to socially responsible attitudes as adults (Theokas 2006). Thoits (2012) discussed the relationship between volunteerism and meaningful life experiences and concluded that engaging in meaningful volunteering activities provides feelings of satisfaction and gives a person a strong identity and contributes to their overall health and well being.

There is growing evidence of the physical and mental benefits of volunteering and the surrounding benefits of the communities/societies to which the contributions are made (Stukas et al. 2016). These authors have also provided further analysis of the six primary motives of volunteers that were originally identified by Clary et al (1998). These motivating factors have been differentiated with the development of the Volunteer Function Inventory (Stukas et al. 2016). Motivating factors for individuals were examined by referring to the six functions which include: values, skill enhancement, social strengthening, protective needs, career experience and enhanced understanding (Guntert et al. 2015; Stukas et al. 2016).

## **Methodology**

### Meta-Synthesis

For the purpose of this study, a literature review was completed followed by a meta-synthesis. Having shaped an appropriate question for the synthesis, relevant articles were reviewed and a qualitative methodology was utilised to integrate, evaluate and interpret the findings.

According to Scriber et al. (1997, p.314), "a meta-synthesis is bringing together and breaking down of findings, examining them, discovering essential features and, in some way, combining phenomena into a transformed whole ". It is the combining of data in such a way that it can result in new theories being developed. There is increased interest in the

application of qualitative synthesis to inform health related policy and Practice (Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009).

In this study, the three differing stages of synthesis proposed by Noblit and Hare (1988), were considered for use: reciprocal stage, refutational stage, and line of argument. The reciprocal stage involves recognising recurring themes and ideas in the individual research papers, leading to the development of overarching concepts or metaphors (Barnett-Page and Thomas 2009). Contrariwise, if the themes and ideas are in conflict, the refutational stage involves justifying and rationalising these conflicting themes. And thirdly, a line of argument involves constructing a statement that can summarise and express the findings.

A study can be referred to as a synthesis if it is based on the following stages: Clearly formatting a question, identifying relevant articles and determining their relevance to the research question, assessing the quality of the articles, summarising the evidence and interpreting the findings (Silverman 2011)

### Sampling Methods

In order to determine the current published qualitative research on Youth and Volunteering, the following databases were searched: AMED, CINAHL, Cochrane Library, EMBASE, ERIC, Google Scholar, Medline, Psyc INFO, PubMed, Sage and Web of Science.

Databases were searched using combinations of the terms included in table 1. Authors’ use of keywords identified were extracted and added to the database search term list.

**Table 1:** Search Terms

Topic	Search Terms
Volunteer	“volunteerism”, “volunteering”, “voluntary” “civic participation”, “civic engagement”, “community participation”, “community work”, “ community activities”, “volunteer organisation”, “help”, “helping”, “carers”, “extracurricular activities”

Youth	“young person”, “young population”, “adolescent”, “teenager”, “young adults”, “school age”, “younger individual”, “older children”, “children”
Influence	“influential factors”, “influenced”, “opportunity”, “opportunities”, “adolescent behaviour”, “adolescent development”, “life stage”, “environment”, “transitioning”, “surrounding context”, “aspirations”
Occupation	“occupations”, “occupational behaviour”, “activity”, “activities”, “interests”, “roles”, “routine”, “occupational therapy”, “occupational choice”, “meaning”, “purpose”
Qualitative Research	“qualitative”, “ethnography” “content analysis”, “interview”, “focus group”, “observation”, “thematic analysis”, “grounded”, “conversation”, “case study”, “narrative”, “post positivism”, “interpretivist”, “phenomenology”

The current study researched papers between the years 2007 and 2015 of studies of young people and volunteering experiences. Initially articles were screened based on the articles title and abstract. To meet the criteria of the current study the following inclusion criteria were used: qualitative studies, participants aged between 14 and 17 years and studies of English language only. Articles that explored volunteering and education, volunteering and training and volunteering and tourism were excluded.

### Appraisal and synthesis

To improve the quality of the research, articles were assessed for eligibility and quality using the Standards for Reporting Qualitative Research (SRQR) (O’Brien et al. 2014). The 21

standards of quality in the SRQR was used in conjunction with a critical review tool from the McMaster University (Law et al. 1998). The articles were appraised separately following the guidelines of the McMaster tool. Critical appraisal examines the relevant articles in terms of validity, reliability and credibility (Law et al. 1998). Six articles met all of the inclusion criteria for the current study. The data from these articles were included in a qualitative synthesis to explore the contextual factors influencing young persons to participate in volunteering.

### **Ethics**

Articles included in the current study were assessed for ethical standards upon appraisal of studies in order to ensure ethical approval. As this research is a secondary exploration of previously published qualitative research there are no instantaneous ethical implications. Throughout the research process, bias of articles explored was considered along with credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability (Morse et al. 2002; Silverman 2011).

### **Findings**

In this paper six articles were reviewed to determine what the influential factors are in youth participating in volunteering activities. The articles reviewed had a diverse population. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 24 years of age. The research was carried out in different countries including Australia, China, Scotland and the United States. Different cultural and ethnic groups including Arab, Australian, Asian, South Asian and South Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Chinese, Hispanic and Scottish were studied. Participants were from different educational backgrounds ranging from middle school to post graduate students. The participants were also from different socio-economic backgrounds ranging from working class to upper class. And finally, the participants came from differing geographical environments including metropolitan areas as well as both urban and non-urban environments.

Table 2 presents a summary of the research papers studied, the size and location of the study, the composition of the study, the purpose of the study and the methods or interventions used in these studies.

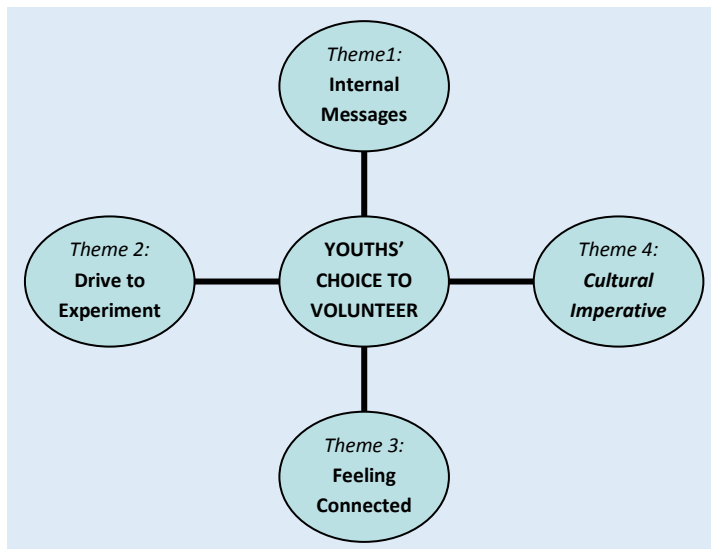
Despite the many differences in the population studied in the articles explored as well as the differences in subject matter, there are many commonalities amongst these groups in what influences young people aged 14-17 years old to choose volunteering activities. The influential factors behind youths choosing volunteering activities are both complex and multi-faceted.

**Table 2:** The Studies Reviewed in this Paper and the Key Points of Comparison

<b>Study and Author</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Sample Size and Composition</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Methodologies</b>
“Motivations for Civic Participation Among diverse Youth: More Similarities than Differences” by Parissa J Ballard, Heather Malin, Tenelle J Porter, Anne Colby and William Damon	A US study of Latino and Asian first and second generation immigrant and non- immigrant adolescents	1,365 participants  198 born in US (first generation)  801 one or more parents born in US (second generation)  366 both parents born in US (non-immigrant)  Mean age 17.36 years old  52% Female  47.7% Latino/Hispanic, 28.9% Asian,10.2% as mixed 7.2% White 5.2% Black/ African American	This study was conducted to determine the motivations and understand similarities and differences in civic volunteering in Latino and Asian first and second generation and non-immigrant youths	A mixed method study was used in this research. Both surveys and interviews were conducted in this study but for this review only the qualitative aspect of this research has been analysed.
Motivations for Youth Volunteer Participation: Types and Structure – An Analysis of Interviews with Twenty-Four Young Volunteers” by Wu Luping	A Chinese study of 24 youths	The group in this study included: 12 females and 12 males that were either students or professionals. In this group there were also 8 Communist Party Members and 1 Probationary Party Member.  In this group were also ordinary participants and organisers of volunteer activities, intra-institutional volunteers, volunteers and extra-institutional (NGO’s) volunteers, volunteers who belonged to a given organisation and freelancing volunteers who did not belong to any volunteer organisation	The reason for this study was to determine the motivations of Chinese youth who participate in volunteer activities	Two types of interviews were used: Face-to-face and Internet interviews using the Internet Chat toll QQ.

<p>“Not the community, but a community: transferring youth into citizens through volunteer work” by Sandi Kawecka Nenga</p>	<p>A US study of 47 volunteers and 12 volunteers interviewed on shifts</p>	<p>The age group interviewed was 15-23 years old Americans</p>	<p>The research indicates 3 different types of community youth join in a volunteering capacity: a community of a homogeneous group, a community of diverse volunteers and networks of marginalised groups and a community of youths that become attached to a city-wide network of non-profit organisations but formed few ties with volunteers or clients.</p>	<p>The method used in this paper was in-depth interviews with 47 US volunteers. In addition, 12 other volunteers were also interviewed during their shifts.</p>
<p>“Volunteerism as purpose: examining the longterm predictors of continued community engagement” by Carolyn Barber, Conrad T Mueller and Sachiko Ogata</p>	<p>Over 20,000 US students</p>	<p>Participants were from over 80 communities aged between 12-18 years old</p> <p>56.3% female</p> <p>African-American 18.8%, Asian-American 6.3%, Hispanic/Latino 13.6%, Other/Multiracial 6.1%, and White 55.25%</p>	<p>This study explores what makes those who continue to engage in their communities despite the many changes that accompany their developmental transition into adults differ from those who stop.</p>	<p>Participants were given both in-school questionnaires and in-home computer based interviews. Additional information was collected from parents in face-to-face interviews.</p>
<p>“Religion and Immigrant-Origin Youth: A Resource and a Challenge” by Mona m Abo-Zena and Carolyn M Barry</p>	<p>254 US students</p>	<p>The participants were from religious middle, high school or religious youth groups from a metropolitan New England area.</p> <p>114 identified as immigrants</p> <p>58% female</p> <p>Mean age 15.62 years old</p> <p>The immigrant group was composed of:  15.5% Arab American,  15.5% Multi-ethnic,  14.6% other, 13.6% Asian,  11.7% Asian American or Pacific Islander, 11.7% Black or African American, 11.7% Hispanic, 2.9% White, 2.9% Not sure which included 51.3% Muslims, 40.7% Christians, 3.5% Buddhist and 1.8% other religion</p>	<p>This study set out to describe how religion may support bonding, purpose and community as well as creating obstacles to positive development for immigrant-origin youth.</p>	<p>Focus group interviews were conducted by trained researchers and were held over 30 to 90 minutes with most interviews lasting 60 minutes. Focus groups were chosen because it provides a more comfortable setting for those being researched and may lead to more participation by individuals from marginalised groups.</p>
<p>“Volunteer stereotypes, stigma and relational identity projects” by Mary Ho and Stephanie O’Donohoe</p>	<p>A Scottish study of thirty nine 16 – 24 year olds</p>	<p>Participants were from central Scotland.</p> <p>Young people from a range of educational backgrounds as well as occupational settings participated.</p> <p>28 were aged 16-18 years old</p> <p>The 22-24 year olds were recruited from the author’s personal network.</p>	<p>This paper tries to understand non-profit marketing and consumer identities by looking at volunteering as a form of symbolic consumption. This paper also examines how youth both volunteers and non-volunteers relate to associated stereotypes, and how they manage this negative connotation in negotiating their social identities in relation to volunteering.</p>	<p>Participants were given the choice of being interviewed in a group, with a friend or own their own. The choice was given to create an environment where the participants felt comfortable.</p>

Four themes were identified across the six articles as the contextual factors influencing young persons' occupational choice to volunteer:



**Figure 1:** Themes (Contextual factors influencing young persons aged 14 to 17 years occupational choice to participate in volunteering).

### **Theme 1: Internal Messages**

This theme is evident in the six articles reviewed. Participants in Lupings' study (2014), expressed a sense of social responsibility as one of their motivating factors for volunteering. One participant interviewed commented

“I myself am a native of Henan and I wanted to change people's impression of the Henanese” (Luping 2011, p.88).

Internal messages from society emerged as a resilient factor influencing young persons' choice to participate in volunteering. Ballard (2015) discusses how

“non-immigrants are motivated by more remote issues learned from adult mentors” (Ballard 2015, p.77).

A young woman involved in working with homeless people stated

“(My Grandma’s) been volunteering (at the food bank) for years...and she was like, it’s good to volunteer and help other people. I was really thinking about it...So I was like it’s really good to help out” (Ballard 2015, p.77).

### **Theme 2: Drive to Experiment**

Ballard (2015) shows that “second generation youth participated in civic activities with preparations for the future in mind” (Ballard 2015, p.77). In this article youth wanted to gain skills necessary for future careers. They participated in “service organisations because they really helped build up my leadership... It’s something I can use in the future,” (Ballard 2015, p.77).

Nenga (2015) shows that “the initial motivation for volunteering played a role in the volunteer’s search for community” (Nenga 2015, p.1064). Many students feel lonely and search for a connection to other people and to make friends by joining service clubs. A student that was interviewed said “That was one of the first organisations on campus I got involved with. And I got to know so may like-minded people”.(Nenga 2012, p.1067).

### **Theme 3: Feeling Connected**

Feeling connected and creating a sense of belonging and contributing through volunteering is common across all papers. One youth expressed how volunteering helps to bridge youth with other community members. Nenga (2015) discusses how youths connect to a community through volunteering activities. A volunteer explained;

“The fact that someone wants to sit down and wants to discuss things with them, I think, they look at that as something very nice in their life. Because then that applies not only to the homeless center or my camp counselling, when I sit down and talk to kids, it applies to like my schooling, to my family life when I realise , Okay. My father, and my mom are just like these people at the homeless shelter. I need to sit down and talk to them. I can’t just pass them by. You know, they’re people as well. A much as I don’t like to admit it” (Nenga 2012, p.1073).

Nenga's research (2012) shows there are three different types of community youth join in a volunteering capacity: a community made up of a homogenous group (which develop strong ties to individuals), a community of diverse volunteers and networks of marginalised groups (which attach to organisational philosophies) and a community of youths that become attached to a city-wide network of non-profit organisations (which form few ties with volunteers or clients. The author also suggested that depending on which community youths identify with shapes their experiences and may affect their civic and political participation and behaviours in later life. A sense of belonging through connecting youths to the community through volunteering activities could;

“transform youth into productive citizens” (Nenga 2015, p.1074).

#### **Theme 4: Cultural Imperative**

This theme emerged strongly across all articles explored. Luping (2014) shows that a sense of responsibility is a traditional participation reason to volunteer. One interviewee expressed their participation motive as

“I felt, before I joined the association and also today, that Beijing and China are my family, and the people here are my family members. Helping them is like helping my family members, that's all. And anyway, there will be times when I will need help from everyone else. Other people will be helping me like this when I need help” (Luping 2014, p.181).

Today's volunteers want to participate in activities that get things done and in particular for disadvantaged groups.

“I have a sense of guilt when I see on television the distressed expressions of people who need help” (Luping 2011, p.181).

In Abo-Zena's research paper (2013) participants were interviewed from different religious and immigrant groups. In these groups there were both family and community expectations towards volunteering. A Muslim student described his volunteering in the following quote,

“Yeah, I volunteered quite a bit before I came to (College). Here, it's usually through (College Islamic Student Group). I think it's important to promote the fact that, although we're a separate part of society, we're a segment of Muslims. We still want to show that we

want to give back to the society because obviously we all live in the same place. We want to better it, just like all other groups do.” (Abo-Zena 2013, p.365).

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to explore contextual factors influencing young persons aged 14 to 17 years to participate in volunteering. The findings indicate that there are many commonalities between participants’ experiences of volunteering and the contextual factors influencing their participation in same. The current study supports that of Luping (2011) who divided youth motivating factors into three groups: sense of responsibility – helping others, advancement – professional practice, training and happiness – interests, curiosity. These three groups correlate well with the work done by Clary et al. (1998). Clary et al. (1998) describes the six major motivations for youth volunteering as enacting one’s values, increasing one’s understanding, psychological growth, career related gains, strengthening social relationships and meeting personal needs. Often there is a multiplicity of motivations that combine both elements of self-focused and other focused concerns (Ballard 2015).

Findings from the current study suggest that internal messages from society have influenced participants’ participation in volunteering activities. This coincides with recent literature that discusses how youth are influenced by their parental and family roles with regards to volunteering activities. Participants engage in civic activities as do their parents or family members (Barber et al. 2013). Karcher & Lindwall, 2003 describe social interest as representing an individual’s identification with humanity and sense of belonging to community. Social interest is an innate characteristic that requires nurturing during developmental years (Mandich and Cronin 2005). Having caring and altruistic behaviour modelled for them, adolescents may be influenced to participate in a volunteering role (Wilson 2000).

Internal messages from society can have positive and negative influences on a youths’ perception of volunteering. A quote from an article reviewed captures the stigma associated with the occupation volunteering;

“[...] wake up thinking about charities, wears clothes from charity shops and just talk about charities stuff to everyone [...] he’s probably one of these freakishly happy people who smiles all the time.”(Ho 2014, p.869).

Ho (2014) discusses how a young persons’ view of a volunteer can be misconceived and in return how this impacts on their choice to participate in volunteering activities. Volunteering has been identified by young participants aged between 14 and 17 years as ‘not cool’ and ‘boring’ (Ho 2014). This research suggests that negative images of volunteering may reduce young peoples’ willingness to participate in volunteering activities. However messages from society can also positively inform young people as well as influence their choice to engage in volunteering. Peer groups, social media, youth clubs and schools have emerged to be strong influential factors. This may be due to the expanding participation in volunteering among communities and the occupation becoming more popular among youth (McNamee 2016).

Luping (2014) discusses the importance of volunteers progressing and developing from their activities and not just concentrating on delivering on set goals. The author also noted that many of the volunteers wanted their contributions to be pleasurable and not painful. Based on this research, the author felt that the following slogan could be used to increase volunteerism:

“I participate; I contribute; I develop and I am happy.”

Across all articles reviewed it is evident that young participants’ engage in volunteering with a desire to try new things, gain life experiences or to develop and build skills. The adolescent stage of development is a prominent time when individuals experiment (Mandich and Cronin 2005). Volunteering may be an occupation of interest to young people during this life stage – an opportunity to take on a responsible role and receive a sense of satisfaction.

Volunteerism is seen as a form of purpose for adolescents which is enhanced by community and family connections (Barber et al. 2013). The findings were also similar to existing literature in terms of young persons enjoying the social aspect of volunteering and feeling connected (McNamee 2016). The findings indicate that participants enjoy meeting people with similar interests and participating in activities with peers. Research by Nenga (2012) showed that there are three different types of community youth join in a volunteering capacity: a community made up of a homogenous group which develop strong ties to individuals, a community of diverse volunteers and networks of marginalised groups (which attach to organisational philosophies) and a community of youths that become attached to a

city-wide network of non-profit organisations (which forms few ties with volunteers or clients). The findings suggest that depending on which community youths identify with shapes their experiences and may affect their civic and political participation and behaviours in later life.

The motivations for adolescent volunteering can be divided into the following two broad groups: self-focused (selfish) i.e. making friends and other focused (altruistic) “because people should do something about issues important to them” (Ballard et al. 2015). The current study results suggests youth part take in volunteering activities as it is perceived to be the norm and within their cultural and societal beliefs. Volunteering was enhanced by participating in both voluntary and required activities. Volunteering activities promoted well-being as well as a sense of familial and community expectations to contribute and fulfil these expectations (Abo Zena et al. 2013). Luping (2011) also discusses the two stages of volunteering. In the first stage the volunteer has a sense of superiority and contentment of helping others. In the second stage of volunteerism the sense of responsibility for helping others grows stronger with time.

### **Implications for Occupational Therapy**

It is recognised that the current study applies to a range of services in occupational therapy practice. Considering the increasing prevalence of mental health issues in young people (Jackson et al. 2014) and the expanding child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) in Ireland, the current implications will focus on CAMHS.

Research has shown that volunteering can have a significant impact on people’s well-being and mental health (McNamee et al. 2016). Volunteering is a powerful occupation as it provides individuals with an opportunity to connect with a community, meet people and make a difference. It is evident in the findings above that there are many contextual factors that influence youths’ participation in volunteering activities. Factors discussed above are considerations in practice when incorporating volunteering activities into vocational rehabilitation programmes with adolescents. Opportunities to take part in social and extracurricular activities will aim to help build young persons social skills and networks where they can learn about volunteer opportunities. Supporting the opportunity to exert decision-making capacity is a key component of occupational therapy when working with

adolescents. This would include practitioners addressing how to find appropriate volunteering opportunities and connecting youth to volunteering organisations. A recent study explored adolescents' and parents' views of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Ireland (Coyne et al. 2015). Findings show adolescents reported experiencing lack of involvement in decision making and treatment. Occupational choice and control are essentials for occupational therapy practice (Zemke 1996). Creating opportunities for choice and control ensures that clients are doing the things they wish to do in the ways and means they wish to do them (Townsend and Polatajko 2007).

The findings of the current study suggest youth in mental health services benefit from the inclusion of a range of activities in occupational therapy. In consideration with this, volunteering opportunities should assist youth in exploring voluntary roles that match their interests and abilities for successful treatment.

### **Limitations**

The purpose of this meta-synthesis was to explore available research and evaluate individual studies to explore similarities and gain a deeper understanding of factors contributing to the question of the current study. A limitation of this study is the number of articles deemed relevant to be used in the current study to answer the question asked. This research sought to explore the experiences of young persons aged between the years of 14 and 17 years. The participants in the articles reviewed enclosed participants' aged between 14 and 23 years of age. This suggests that findings from this study also explored the views of adolescents' transcending into adulthood and therefore may have blurred the definite of the research. With regards to the articles that have been reviewed in the current meta-synthesis, an existing limitation is that the articles explored focused on specific areas in relation to the motives or influential factors of adolescent volunteering. Another limitation was that the data was interpreted by the author which may have biased the findings challenge of the method implied was in synthesising themes from the selected six articles. In an aim to combat bias and subjectivity the author used a reflexive approach as per Silverman (2011). Reflexivity was completed in discussions between the author and research supervisor as well as in support meetings with peers.

## **Conclusion**

Youth volunteering has long been a common ethic throughout the world, with adolescents giving their time without any expectation of reward. While these volunteer activities may be performed with the core intention of helping others, there is a common belief that those who give of themselves also receive. Clary et al (1988) argue that people can be recruited into volunteering by appealing to their own motive function. It has emerged from this study that the majority of adolescents satisfy similar motive functions; social, reciprocity, enhancement, values and career.

Literature discusses the health and career benefits of youth volunteering. There are also many social benefits from volunteering. Social benefits include meeting new people, spending time with peers, demonstrating care for others to and about others and feeling valued by others in society (Griff-Alspach 2014). Participating in volunteering strengthens a young persons' social network and social support as well as giving a volunteer a sense of belonging in a community (Griff-Alspach 2014).

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