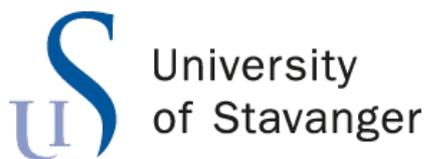


**Social Worker in School-Age Youth Volunteering from Student's Perspective:
A Participatory Practice Research with Chinese High School Students**



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Abstract

To examine the influence of volunteering on the social participation of the students, this research studied the intersection of two policies in the Chinese context, which makes social workers play a role in high school student volunteering. As a participatory practice research from the students' perspective, both students and social workers participated in several stages of the study. Focus groups were used to collect the data from two groups of participants, which were analyzed thematically and discussed with systems theories. Social workers can be seen influencing student volunteering positively by organizing quality volunteering, while the tremendous pressure on students limits the time and space of their social participation. The potential of empowering the students to change the systems is highlighted.

Keywords: Youth Volunteering, Social Work Practice, Practice Research

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Chapter One Introduction

Encouraging adolescents to volunteer is a great way for them to practice social skills in various settings, like their schools and communities. In China, a new policy announced in 2020 requires all public high school students to complete 40 hours of volunteer service. Despite academic pressures, students are expected to make time for volunteering in order to enhance their social participation. At the same time, a new model of “Social Worker + Volunteer” Model is promoted, in which social work is highly related to volunteering. Since both schemes above are recently implemented, the students’ perspectives and the social workers’ roles in practice are not seen. This research takes a participatory practice research approach to understand social workers’ roles in youth volunteering from some high school students’ perspectives. The research approach will be unfolded later in the research in Chapter Three. The following introduction focuses on the background of this study.

1.1 Study Background

Based on Erickson's theory of psychosocial development, adolescence is a critical phase for shaping one's personality (Waterman, 1982). During their teenage years, individuals develop new perspectives and ways of understanding the world. They begin to contemplate their own identity, which is shaped by how others perceive them and the different social roles they take on. This is a common phase for high school students, who may feel uncertain and require support in forming relationships with both similar and dissimilar peers, as well as identifying positive role models. Meeting these developmental needs can lead to a sense of trust and readiness for the challenges of young adulthood (Waterman, 1982).

Mental health problems, substance abuse, and egocentric behavior in young people are major challenges and public concerns in lots of countries (Santini et al., 2021). Young adults in Denmark who suffer from mental health issues often face challenges when transitioning into adult life (Andersen et al., 2019). Research has also shown that poor mental health is linked with loneliness and social isolation. Lack of social

participation is a major cause of loneliness (Christiansen et al., 2021). Therefore, it is argued that there is a need to increase the social participation of youth globally. Volunteering is a method for adolescents to practice in society, which could impact their social participation. It is promoted as an essential approach to encouraging students' social participation by polities in many Western countries (Smith et al., 2010).

1.2 The Chinese Context

A similar problem of adolescents' lack of social participation has also occurred in China, especially among high school students. Chinese high school students are under great academic pressure in school. The pressure comes from various aspects, such as the cultural emphasis on education and academic achievement, the competitive system of examinations and enrollment, and their parents' high expectations (Liu & Lu, 2011). The school schedule is also intense; high school students have to spend most of their time on Campus to prepare for the most important national college entrance exam, which is called "Gaokao" in Chinese (Lin & Chen, 1995). In this situation, the students do not have enough time or energy to practice in society to fulfill their developmental needs at this stage. Volunteering is promoted to remedy this defect. Even though youth volunteering and participation seem to be unnecessarily related to social work practice, they are connected by the two policies introduced in the following words.

1.2.1 Youth Volunteering In China: A New Policy

According to the form of organization, volunteering can be divided into formal volunteering and informal volunteering. Any individual act of helping others without expecting money in return can be called informal volunteering. It is unnecessary to be organized, while formal volunteering must be organized by an organization (Brilliant, 1997). The Communist Party of China is the governing party of the country, and the Communist Youth League (CYL) is responsible for guiding and educating young people with socialist values. The CYL has the authority to recognize grassroots

volunteer organizations, and its registration standards are relatively easy to meet, resulting in many organizations being registered with the CYL system. (Y. Xu, 2012). This research is done in an organization registered in the CYL system. Therefore, volunteering here mainly refers to formal volunteering. The detail of this institution and the reason to conduct research in this institution would be introduced in Chapter Three.

Volunteering, particularly for youth, has been heavily promoted by both the CYL and the Chinese government. There are various incentives and preferential policies in place to encourage young people to participate in volunteering. Students who have extensive volunteering experience are prioritized for joining the Chinese Communist Youth League or The Communist Party of China, which serves as proof of their exceptional academic performance and provides an advantage for potential positions in the government. (Spires, 2018). In response to these initiatives, an increasing number of young Chinese are volunteering (Zhang & Lin, 2008).

To get all high school students involved in volunteering, there has been a new policy published in 2020 that all public high school students must do 40 hours of voluntary work to get credits for graduation. This policy aims to cultivate teenagers' sense of social responsibility so that they can be aware of public welfare and be enthusiastic about voluntary work with the spirit of dedication (Curriculum Plan for Ordinary High Schools (2017 Edition, 2020 Revision), 2020). However, considering Chinese high school students are under great pressure to study for the national college entrance exam (X. Xu et al., 2021), mandatory volunteering seems to increase the burden and pressure on the students.

1.2.2 Social Work in China: The “Social Worker + Volunteer” Model

The profession of social work is not immune to the effects of government policies and funding. These factors have a significant impact on the value and effectiveness of social work (Hugman, 1996). State intervention plays a key role in the development of the social work profession in China. The study of social work with Chinese characteristics involves collaboration between policy makers and professionals (Gao

& Yan, 2015). For social work agencies in China to develop and succeed, they need to possess a strong foundation of moral resources. This includes socially accepted values such as caring and volunteerism. These ethical resources are crucial in providing professional services and gaining performance legitimacy and political capital. It is imperative for organizations to prioritize the cultivation of these values to achieve long-term success (Yi-Bing et al., 2022). This can also explain the close association between social work organizations and voluntary service, which is also valued and supported by the government.

A model called the “Social worker + Volunteer” Model is promoted by the government in social work practice and volunteerism (Tan, 2011). It means social workers lead volunteers to carry out services, while volunteers assist social workers in improving services, so as to achieve a win-win interaction and mutual benefit between the two parties. Social workers are professional, and volunteers are mass and collectively powerful. The model is aimed to improve the quality of social services, protect the basic rights and interests of both volunteers and service users, form a new interpersonal relationship of equality and mutual respect, and create a good social atmosphere.

Even though the model of “Social Worker + Volunteer” is promoted nationally, not every social work institution apply this model in practice. When participating in volunteering organized by a volunteer association without a social worker, there is no guidance from a social worker. Meanwhile, there are some social work agencies that team up with volunteers to provide social worker-guided volunteering as a core principle. Under this circumstance, the volunteers are not only the service providers but also service users from the social worker’s perspective. High school students volunteering in this situation are a special group of volunteers. The volunteering experience in the institution and the interaction with the social workers may affect their social participation and their development. The relationship between the social workers and the student volunteers in volunteering is very important to study.

1.3 Research Problems

In the intersection of the “40 hours” requirement and the “Social Work + Volunteer”, participation in volunteering during high school is related to the social work practice. When high school volunteers come to social work institutions to seek opportunities to participate in volunteer service to complete the credit requirements, social workers also need to take part of the responsibility of educating high school students about social participation. However, the ability and time of high school students to volunteer are limited, and it is also challenging for social workers to guide them to provide services.

It seems for both sides of the students and the social workers, the inclusion of high school students in the volunteering program is a burden. In this case, whether participation in voluntary service can achieve the purpose of enhancing the social participation of high school students and how the social worker in this process affects the social participation of these high school students have become questions that need to be studied.

1.4 Research Aims, objectives, and Questions

Under the policy and the model in China, the different interactions between social workers and high school student volunteers may lead to a change in youths' views on volunteerism and social participation. This study is to explore their perspectives on volunteering and social participation and how their interactions with social workers in the process of volunteering affect their perspectives so as to understand the role and effects of social workers in the volunteering of senior secondary school students. From the perspective of high school student volunteers, this paper discusses how participation in voluntary services managed by social workers affects their sense of social responsibility based on their own perceptions and articulations of the social workers' interactions with them.

The research questions are:

1. What are the students' experiences in volunteering during high school?
2. Which roles do the social workers play in volunteering from the student's perspective?
3. How does the experience of interaction with social workers impact their social participation related to volunteering?

1.5 Significances of this Study

Theoretically, requiring high school students to participate in volunteer services to improve social participation and allowing social workers to guide volunteers to conduct more professional and efficient volunteer services are beneficial to the development of individuals and society. However, in practice, there might be a lot of problems. Because both policies were introduced relatively recently, there hasn't been much research to explore how they have worked in practice. This study examined the interactions with social workers during volunteering from the perspective of high school participants and discussed the impact of these interactions on them. In addition to understanding the real situation of policy practice and finding out the causes of problems, this study will also help social workers find out the advantages and disadvantages in the process of practice and better guide high school students to carry out voluntary services and improve their social participation.

1.6 Structural Outline

In chapter one, the researcher introduces the global study background and the Chinese context. It states the research problem, aims, and questions, emphasizing the importance of this study.

In chapter two, the researcher delves deeper into the main ideas discussed in this research. By reviewing previous literature, the researcher aims to gain a better understanding of the connection between volunteering and social participation, as well as why Chinese social workers are involved in volunteering. An academic gap in how the two policies in China intersect is identified.

In chapter three, the researcher explains the research methodology used in this study, which is based on participatory practice research and a phenomenological perspective. The text also clarifies why focus groups were chosen for data collection and provides transparency about the process of recruiting participants.

In chapter four, the data analysis method is introduced. The data is analyzed thematically. A table of the findings is presented to make the structure clear.

In chapter five, the writer delves into the phenomenon by analyzing its findings through systems theory. This approach examines the interconnection and interactions between various systems. Tables are used to present the role set of both the social worker and students, highlighting potential role conflicts in different positions.

In chapter six, the findings and discussion are concluded. The limitations and implications for further research and social work practice are also explored.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Key Concepts

Before the literature review, key concepts need to be clarified, what the youth and social participation refer to in this research. To make the definition of social participation in this research clear, As examined by Barbara and her colleagues (2014), The concepts of participation and social participation need to be defined more clearly as separate ideas. Social participation always happens within a person's life situation and is closely tied to their societal role. For example, children who are dependent on their parents may still initiate social participation. Combined with the levels of involvement adopted by Levasseur and co-researchers (2010), social participation in this research includes interacting with others without physical contact by their initiative, doing activities with others, helping others, and contributing to the community. The “youth” refer to the school-age youth, particularly those in high school. In the following article, they are also called as students or adolescence.

2.2 Findings in the Field

This research is related to both youth volunteering and social work practice in the Chinese context. For a better understanding of the research topic, here comes the literature review both internationally and domestically.

Volunteering is promoted as an essential approach to encouraging the social participation of students by polities in many Western countries (Smith et al., 2010). Even though it is assumed by Stolle & Hooghe (2003) that participation in volunteering has a positive impact on social participation no matter whether the students are involved voluntarily or mandatorily. Research conducted by Kim and Morgül (Smith et al., 2010) in the United States examined students' volunteering through school-based programs in which students are encouraged or mandated to be volunteers by the policies. Based on the findings, it appears that only voluntarily choosing to participate in volunteering programs has a significant impact on the psychological development of adolescents, while the passive volunteering does not. However, both voluntary and involuntary participation have positive effects on educational achievement.

Their research offers an overview of the long-term effects of volunteering on volunteers. However, it did not explore how the experience of volunteering influences the volunteers from their perspective. In addition, as emphasized by Hooghe and Stolle (2002) that the socialization effect of volunteering on young volunteers comes from the interactions between like-minded people and the leadership model. The interactions between the volunteers and others, such as social workers, are ignored. As examined by Cheung, Lo and Liu (2015), the positive attitude towards social participation and social responsibility, which is the aim of the 40 hours volunteering requirement in the new policy, is not simply about participation in volunteering. To increase volunteers' social participation and social responsibility, organizations need to carefully plan volunteer programs for them and emphasize social responsibility in the programs.

Social workers are highly related to volunteering both in theory and practice. The social workers who run the volunteer projects need to be able to manage volunteers in different settings based on program factors and characteristics of the volunteers (Brudney & Meijjs, 2014), and the different management strategies may make a difference in young teenagers' view of volunteering and their social participation. Based on the "Social Worker + Volunteer" Model in China, the task of planning voluntary service projects and managing the volunteers is the responsibility of the social workers in this context.

However, during the literature review, the researcher finds that in the articles of exploring this model, volunteers often point to a broad group of volunteers, not especially to any group (Tan, 2011). In the academic articles discussing the mode of cooperation between social work and youth volunteering in China, the young volunteers or student volunteering always point to college students (Gong, 2019; Hustinx et al., 2012). In the study of high school students' social participation, the role of social workers is rarely mentioned (Cheung et al., 2015; Efir, 2015). It seems that the possible relationship between the 40-hour volunteer service policy for high school students and the "Social Worker + Volunteer" model and the impact on both sides are out of expectation. Although the interaction between social workers and high school volunteers is common in practice, there are few studies on social work and youth volunteering that especially refers to high school students.

I argue that there is a blind spot here. It might offer implications for both youth development and social work practices. Research needs to be done to look at what happens at the intersection of these two policies and how young people develop their social participation in volunteering in this situation.

Chapter Three Research Methodology

3.1 Scientific Position

The research topic is closely connected to contextual social work practice and

will possibly lead to changes in real-life practice. To reach out to the volunteers and gain the volunteers' perspectives, collaborations between the researcher, the practitioners, and the volunteers are necessary. Therefore, practice research is the right tool and methodology to use in this research (Julkunen, 2016).

3.1.1 Choice of Practice Research

There are four types of practice research, which are divided into different levels, including the practitioners and service users in the structuring of the research (Andersen et al., 2020a). The purpose of this research is to observe the interactions between the social workers and the volunteers during the cooperation and get full perspectives from the volunteers. Both the practitioner and the service users who are the volunteers in this research are, to some extent, included. Therefore, the participatory practice research fits.

This research approach is based on participatory practice, which involves close collaboration between researchers, social workers in the institution, and student volunteers who use the services being studied. The goal is to connect research and practice by involving multiple stakeholders in the planning, execution, and dissemination of the research process. Emphasis is placed on cooperation throughout the process to ensure that all stakeholders are engaged as much as possible (Andersen et al., 2017). In the process of communication and negotiation, the research content, data collection, and writing of research results may be altered (Andersen et al., 2020c).

However, considering the fact that the volunteers are all students who are busy studying under great pressure, it is difficult to build to develop a close, binding partnership with a focus on a close, binding, and dedicated partnership with the volunteers. The time limitation, the time differences between China and Denmark, and the distances, which means the meetings after the data collection should be online, are also obstacles to conducting participatory practice research. The service-user-focused practice research is not feasible because of the same difficulties in building the partnership with the volunteers. These are the reasons why this research

is designed on participatory practice research but positioned in between participatory practice research and practice research on social work.

3.1.2 Role of the Stakeholders

The difficulties call for efforts from the external researcher, so the researcher is mainly responsible for the coordination of the research timetable, data collection, analysis, and evaluation in collaboration with the practitioners and the volunteers. The theme of this research is introduced to the practitioners first, and then the schedule of data collection is also decided with the volunteers after recruitment, later analysis, and findings are going to be discussed together to get a valid result.

The role of the practitioners was negotiated based on the interest they have in this research, and they chose to become partners who would take part in some decision-making processes such as schedule making, volunteer recruiting, focus group organizing, analysis reflection, and evaluation. The results will be submitted to the institution as a report and reviewed by the practitioners.

The role of the volunteers is the combination of informant and consultant. They were included after recruitment. Besides making the schedule of the data collection and offering information, all the volunteers showed interest in participating in the further stages of this research, such as discussion of the findings and evaluation. The method to make this research more participatory was to organize an online meeting with them, in which the researcher presented the findings and the discussion to the students, then they discussed their perspectives with the researcher as opponents.

However, some of them are hard to reach after the discussion, especially the public high school students who were signed up by their parents. The contact account they were using belonged to their parents, and the researcher could not get in contact with them after the research. Therefore, the discussion of findings and evaluation meeting only include 6 of the participants. Due to the time schedule of the high school students and the university students being different, the online meeting was held twice, one with three university students and the other one with three high school students. Their

reflections qualified the findings, and some of their opinions are included in the discussion in this paper, which will be stated.

3.1.3 Phenomenological Perspective

Practice research is closely related to qualitative research methodology in social work practice (Morriss, 2020) and can be connected to other research methods in specific ways in collaboration with practitioners and service users (Andersen et al., 2020b).

Phenomenological research is one of the five qualitative approaches (Creswell & Poth, 2018b), which focuses on understanding a phenomenon that all the participants have experienced and finding out what they share in common (Manen, 2016). By collecting and analyzing experiences from multiple individuals, it can provide a description of the essence of the phenomenon, including what they went through and how they went through it, for everyone to understand (Moustakas, 1994).

In this research, a phenomenological perspective can be seen because the researchers attempt to understand the phenomenon of mandatory volunteering during high school in China at a deeper level from the student volunteers' perspective. By view fresh life experiences of the students, this approach can lead to gathering more detailed and vivid information, and help people to understand the situation.

3.2 Sampling and Recruitment

3.2.1 Introduction of the Institution

The social work agency in which this research is taking place is called Xingzhi Social Work Agency (Xingzhi), which in Chinese means the unity of knowledge and practice. As the first social work agency in Jingjiang —— a town in Jiangsu Province, Xingzhi was established in 2015 (Taizhou Daily, 2015). It has built a young, energetic, and creative team, with six full-time social workers and 20 part-time ones. It has strong cooperation with a volunteer association which is called 179 Volunteer Association (179 Homophonic in Chinese is "go together"), which has more than 2600 registered volunteers (Taizhou Daily, 2015). The cooperation between them is

very close and irreplaceable because Xingzhi is established by the same manager of 179 volunteer associations. The establishment of Xingzhi and the recruitment of social workers are aimed at making the services more professional.

Judging from the history of the establishment of Xingzhi, it is not difficult to see that it has been taking the lead in integrating the concept of "social worker + volunteer" into daily work to help the service users. Xingzhi and 179 have adhered to the combination of theory and practice, improving the level of professional service, promoting the training of social workers, moving toward professionalism, and leading local voluntary work to specialization. Based on the observation, most volunteering services here are planned and organized by social workers, and then the volunteers are recruited to different positions as needed. Social workers also lead and supervise the volunteers during the actions. It is not the only agency that applies the "Social Worker + Volunteer" Model in practice, but the cooperation between social workers and volunteers in Xingzhi is inevitable.

3.2.2 Choice of the Institution

The research is conducted in Xingzhi and 179, which share the same office. The detailed situation of these two institutions is introduced in the introduction. Actually, there is another volunteer organization in the same town that works more closely with the school. Their volunteer team is made up of students and their parents. It seems to be easier to get in touch with the students there, but there are some reasons to explain why it is the best choice to conduct this research in Xingzhi and 179.

Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction, the cooperation of social workers and volunteers in Xingzhi and 179 is inevitable, not only because they share the same manager and the same office but also because of their persistence of the "Social worker and Volunteer" model. Other social work agencies also work with local volunteer groups, but not nearly as closely as them.

Secondly, the research problem is observed based on the researchers' working experience in Xingzhi and volunteering experience in 179. They are also interested in

these questions and want to find out some answers to better the situation. This is a necessary condition for smooth cooperation between the two sides.

Thirdly, although 179 is not a student volunteer organization, it is famous and influential in the town; hundreds of high school students come to the organization each year looking for opportunities to participate in volunteering. Therefore, it's possible to reach out to high school students here.

Last but not least, it takes time to build trust with an institution as an external researcher, and strong trust is needed to get in touch with their volunteers through them. Since the researcher had worked in Xingzhi and had been a volunteer in 179, the researchers had established contacts with the manager and some volunteers in this institution. Both the researcher and the manager have a mutual understanding and trust in each other's work regarding the research topic. This collaboration helps in saving time and makes the research process more efficient. Based on these reasons, the decision is made to conduct this study in Xingzhi and 179, and one practitioner takes the responsibility of cooperating with the researcher.

3.2.3 Strategy to Attract the student participants

Sampling strategies used in this research are criterion sampling and homogeneous sampling to study a group of people who shared similar experiences of participating in volunteering during high school, and both two strategies work well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the same phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018b, p. 225). The volunteers shall meet the following requirements:

- A. They are now high school students or new college students who have participated in volunteering during high school.
- B. They have their own phones, which makes sure that they are approachable online.
- C. They are interested in the research topic.
- D. They are willing to share their volunteer service experience and feelings.

This recruitment was made into a volunteering activity in which about ten high school students can participate voluntarily and get the hour counting. The recruitment notice

was posted on the webpage of the institution. The hours that the students can get from participating in the focus group would also be qualified by the institution as a guarantee. There are also some incentives, such as snacks, sweets, fruits, and a certificate of participation with the logo of Aalborg University, which is also attractive to the students. In this way, this project supposes to attract the youth who haven't finished 40 hours of volunteering and also the ones who are interested in the theme.

The online recruitment was conducted on weekends. However, there were only college students who had experience in high school volunteering signed up in three days. It turned out that all high school students in Grade 2 had an important exam on that weekend when we were supposed to conduct the focus group, and the schedule of other grades was not clear when we started to post the recruitment information. After discussion with the practitioners in the institution, personal invitation is considered a better way to recruit high school students.

Therefore, it turns out four college students participated in an online focus group separately, and seven volunteers participated in the face-to-face focus group. They are four public high school students, one international high school student, 1 Technical high school student, and one peer volunteer who dropped out from high school. The reason for including these three peers who do not need to fulfill the 40 hours is to gain their perspectives which are out of the structure. It is also important to mention that three out of the four public high school students are invited by the practitioner, and the other one is also signed up by parents.

3.3 Data collection

The data collection method used in this research is the focus group. The focus group method is a method of gathering qualitative data, usually by having a small number of people participate in informal group discussions focused on a specific topic. It is different from a group interview because, in a focus group, the interaction is not just happened between the interviewer and the interviewees, but the discussion between

the group members is also encouraged by the moderator of the focus group and possibly analyzed by the researcher (Wilkinson, 2016).

As part of this research, two focus groups were conducted. The first focus group was an online discussion with university students who had volunteered during high school. The second focus group was a face-to-face discussion with high school students. Both focus groups lasted approximately 2 hours. At the start of the online focus group, there was a brief period of silence, but things improved after the introduction. The in-person focus group took place in an activity room within the institution, where volunteers often gather. Since the volunteers were familiar with the environment and some knew each other, communication flowed easily right from the beginning.

In a focus group, there are various roles required, including the participants, moderator, and observer. The researcher typically acts as the moderator, while an external volunteer is invited to be the observer. Although the original plan was to have a practitioner as the observer, the lead practitioner believed that their presence could hinder the volunteers' free expression. Therefore, out of respect for the volunteers and research data, the decision was made for none of them to attend on that day.

The moderator guided senior high school student volunteers to conduct in-depth discussions on the experiences they have in voluntary work and the influences these experiences bring to their view of social responsibility in a relaxing environment. The observer observed the participants' facial expressions, body language, etc. Based on the consent of the volunteers, all the discussion was recorded with audio recording.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Firstly, the students are underage, to include them, the researcher must obtain consent from both the participant's parents and the participant themselves. Selecting a location for a focus group can be difficult. There are concerns that students may feel compelled to express their opinions about volunteering when in rooms specifically designed for that purpose at social work facilities. At the same time, selecting a

different location may limit students' responses due to their unfamiliarity with the venue. Ultimately, the researchers, social workers, and students came to a joint decision that the focus group would take place in a volunteer activity room. However, the room would be decorated to create a more comfortable atmosphere, and all social workers would not be present on the day of the group. Thirdly, the focus groups were in Chinese, the meaning might be different when translating into English. Therefore, the discussion of the findings is necessary in this research.

Chapter Four Data Presentation

4.1 Data Analysis Method

As discussed in Chapter Three, this study is in between the practice research on social work and the participatory practice research, and with a phenomenology perspective. It also applies Focus Group as a data collection method. The characteristics of these studies are needed to be taken into account when the researcher selects the data analysis method. In the following words, the considerations are discussed.

In data analysis, it's common for a third party, such as a researcher, to intervene to ensure objectivity (Creswell & Poth, 2018a). However, participatory research values and encourages the involvement of participants in the analysis process (Andersen et al., 2020b). In this study, which is inspired by participatory practice research, the analytical role is ideally collaborative, which means the process is undertaken by the participants in collaboration with the researcher.

However, due to the time limitation of the students who are always busy with school life, even though all the participants showed interest in participating in data analysis and discussion of the findings, some of them were hard to reach out to after the focus group. They were not available to participate in the analysis or offer reflections simultaneously. Therefore, a solution that comes up by the researcher is that the researcher takes the analytic role and writes the data analysis with theories first and

then organizes the participants to discuss the analysis and findings. In this way, not only is the objective ensured, but also the reflection of the participants can be collected and used to qualify the findings and supplement the discussion.

Thematic analysis helps identify similarities among participants and settings, leading to a broader understanding of a phenomenon or experience (Butler-Kisber, 2018). As a result, the uniqueness of individual experiences is ignored. It is assumed to be linear and fits quantitative research well (Braun & Clarke, 2006), while it is also often used in focus group analysis as a form of content analysis (Wilkinson, 2016). Thematic analysis fits the phenomenological perspective and the data collection method in this research.

Since this study takes a phenomenological perspective, it is to study the lived experience of the students and how they experience volunteering under the influence of the “40 hours” requirement and “social work + volunteer.” An emphasis on the interaction with the policies and the social workers during volunteering can be seen from the research questions. This is closely linked to the lifeworld form, which means when understanding the lived experience, the researcher needs to be aware that the individuals are living in the world and they have interactions with others and the environment (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2020). To apply thematic analysis with this understanding, a guide made by Sundler and her colleagues (2019) is inspiring. In this guide, there are three foundations, which are openness, questioning preunderstanding, and a reflective attitude. With these three fundamental principles in mind, the analysis process is also divided into three steps (Sundler et al., 2019).

The first step for the researcher to do is to familiarize the researcher with the material through open reading (Sundler et al., 2019). In this research, an emphasis is placed on open-minded reading, which allows the researcher to fully explore new information in the data beyond what is typically expected for study purposes. To achieve familiarity, the researcher listened to the audio recordings of the two focus groups multiple times. Throughout this process, the researcher comprehensively explored the experience and

created a full transcript in Chinese. In this research, the audio recordings of the two focus groups were listened to multiple times to achieve familiarity. The experience was explored comprehensively, and the full transcript in Chinese was made during this process.

The second step is to search for themes (Sundler et al., 2019). Throughout the process, the researcher carefully examined the full transcript to identify the underlying meanings of the experiences and highlighted them accordingly. The researcher also took some notes along the way. This allowed for comparisons of similarities and differences between the experiences of different individuals. Through organizing these similarities and differences, distinct themes emerged.

The next step involves consolidating the themes into a complete and coherent text (Sundler et al., 2019). During the process, the researcher organized and wrote the findings, which were named and reflected by both the participants and the researcher. The findings were then summarized in simple terms and sent to the participants for confirmation. The social worker practitioners also received a report. However, due to a lack of responses on the report, online meetings was organized to explain the findings in more detail to interested parties. Unfortunately, not all participants attended. Some provided reflections on the findings, which resulted in certain findings being rewritten. There was an obstacle that the full transcript and the report were written in Chinese for the social work practitioners and the students to better understand, then some chosen parts were translated into English when writing the thesis. Therefore, there is no organized transcript in English in the appendix.

4.2 Data Analysis

There are data collected from two focus groups during the data collection. One is with university students who have experienced mandatory volunteering during high school, while the other one is with high school students who are now experiencing mandatory volunteering. Given the recent implementation of the policy, these university students

still have fresh memories of the volunteer experience. However, their perspective is a retrospective perspective, and they are now in a more relaxed university environment than the high school environment. It turns out the two groups have some different opinions on the similar experience while they share most perspectives in common. Different from the silence and distance in the online focus group, the facilitator set up the venue and placed snacks and fruit on the tables to make the face-to-face discussion more relaxed and casual for the high school students. The afternoon group involved one peer and six current high school students, one in an international high school and one in a vocational high school with no volunteering credit requirements, and four in a general high school with volunteering credit requirements. The group got to know each other through volunteering and had more to talk about with their peers. The atmosphere was cordial.

Before the data analysis with theories, the data is presented and summarized in a thematic and descriptive way in the following paragraphs in four main categories, which are related to the research questions with sub-themes. They are the experience in volunteering and the willingness to participate in volunteering, which can answer the first research question, the roles of social workers, which is relevant to the second research question, and the sense of social participation, which is core to answering the third research question. The tables here can help to have an overview of the categories and sub-themes.

Table 1:

4.2.1 Experience in Volunteering	
Theme 1	Observation of the “real world”
Theme 2	Be in a group
Theme 3	Tired of Formalist
Theme 4	Ineffective volunteering because of the service buyers
Theme 5	Comments from the others

4.2.2 Willingness to participation in Volunteering	
Theme 1	School requirement
Theme 2	Influence of the family
Theme 3	Sense of achievement
Theme 4	Standard of quality volunteering
Theme 5	Choice of the right institution
Theme 6	Lack of constant participation in volunteering program
4.2.3 Interactions with social workers and student's understanding of their role	
Theme 1	Lack of interaction and limited knowledge
Theme 2	Unclear role of the social worker in the limited interactions
4.2.4 Changing sense of social participation related to volunteering	
Theme 1	Growing knowledge, social circle, and care
Theme 2	The changing role in volunteering
Theme 3	Difficulty of getting good results from passive participation

4.2.1 Experience in Volunteering

For better understanding, there is some information in advance on how high school students usually get to be involved in volunteering services based on the observation in the institution. The recruitment progress is like the one used in this research. When the volunteer service project of the institution needs volunteers, the social worker will send the information on the social platform. The students or their parents can see the information and choose whether to sign up according to their free time and preferences.

During the focus group with the university students, the volunteers talked about their first experience of volunteering. Some were tidying up in the library, some were taking care of the elderly in the community, and some were cleaning the riverbank. Most of them were nervous, timid, and worried that they could not do well. The

starting points for volunteering were different. One student was curious about the library and volunteering, another wanted to exercise her social skills, and the other two students only wanted to fulfill the volunteering requirement issued by the school. Some of them have been in contact with volunteering since junior high school before required, some of them were brought along by their family members in volunteering service, and some of them have been involved since high school because of volunteering requirements. Five of the volunteers have more experience in volunteering and have participated in some long-term programs, while two volunteers have only participated in volunteering once. Therefore, there are a lot of differences between the individual's experiences, while they share a lot of feelings in common. The researcher found six themes that play important roles in their volunteering experience.

Theme 1: Observation of the "real world"

It is experienced both by college students and high school students during participation in volunteering, and from their narratives, they also see the observation of real-world life as the most important experience in volunteering. Some students were impressed by the volunteer service. They scanned the passes of vehicles at highway intersections during the pandemic. It was tiring but allowed them to observe people in society whom they would not meet in their daily life.

A: Impressive ones. Ah, let me think about it..., It seems to be that go to the highway intersection to help check the pass uh during the pandemic. At that time, most of the cars on the road are large trucks carrying goods. There is a group of people I rarely meet, that is, these truck drivers. They are tired but still struggling to live. It (volunteering) allowed me to really get in touch with the real-life experience of various people in society. (Online focus group)

The observation mentioned includes not only the service users but also some other volunteers with different professions they meet during volunteering. Both groups of people offer great inspiration. The service users they meet are always in difficulties. The student volunteers sympathize with their plight while also thinking about the

causes of their problems. It leads to the reflection on their attitudes to life and some policies. The people who work in different fields also broaden the students' horizons and increase their understanding of various occupations.

Theme 2: Be in a group

Some of the volunteers mentioned their impressive volunteer service is an activity called "Anti-drug Play." It was innovative, participatory, and meaningful. Students played the role of drug dealers and drug users, organized stage plays, and popularized anti-drug knowledge to the audience in the form of repertory. They enjoy being in a group with peers and try to do something together.

Theme 3: Tired of formalist

Some students mentioned that it was pointless to do formalistic volunteering for the sake of credits, as it does not improve oneself and does not help others and should be avoided as much as possible. A similar situation, as quoted below, is also mentioned by the college students. They all disagree with this formalistic volunteer service. Some students expressed that although they only volunteer for the credits, they don't want to waste time on formalistic volunteering.

F: "Just yesterday, I saw a guy wearing a uniform of a traffic police guiding a student volunteer to stand at the intersection in front of the school, and they just took two pictures and said the service is over."

X cut in with a laugh: "It's just formality."

F: "Yes, it's just for the score, get the certificate, it's meaningless" (face-to-face focus group)

Theme4: Ineffective volunteering because of the weak cooperation

Besides formalist volunteering, there is another situation that makes the student doubt the value of volunteering. It happened in volunteering programs in which the volunteers play the role of a third-party supervisor. Taking a student's experience as an example, he participated in a social work program purchased by a hospital. The volunteers like him took the responsibility of calling the patient to get their

comments on the hospital as a process of evaluation. However, even though the canteen of the hospital was complained about by the patients in the phone calls for many times. The hospital did not improve it. Both the patient and the volunteer were disappointed.

F: "Of course, this is not our problem, but the hospital's problem. But I just feel like it's a waste of time, and we don't have to do things that don't work." (face-to-face focus group)

The service itself aims to take advice from patients and promote improvements to hospital facilities. However, the hospital does not take it seriously while volunteers put in a great effort, which makes the service fail to reach its goal. This is not something that rarely happens. Another student mentioned visiting families of children in difficulties and finding one family living in a house in very poor condition. Improving the housing situation can have a significant positive impact on the lives of this family and their children. However, the difficulty was that the policy did not allow them to build a house on the land. The volunteers hoped that the policy could be more flexible. Otherwise, they could not help the family.

Theme 5: Comments from the others

The students are always trying their best to volunteer. Sometimes they get praised by the others, while sometimes they encounter misunderstandings. Two different experiences of being misunderstood are shared by two high school students.

The first student shared her experience when she was helping the institution to issue the certificate of student volunteering. To make sure high school students participate in volunteering by themselves, the school asked the students to fill in a confirmation form with information about the institution, the content of the service, and pictures of the student volunteering. This form should be qualified with the official stamp of the institution. Her work was to check if other students' forms were written properly and stamped on them. The work sounds easy. However, once she reminded a student that part of the content needed to be added, the student misunderstood her words and became angry. The student complained about the busy schedule in school and the

requirement of the written form to her. She was shocked and did not know what to do. In the end, the student calmed down to fill in the form, but the encounter hurt her emotionally. She thought that happened because she did not speak to the student clearly.

I: "He said thank you softly as he left. I was dumbfounded about the whole process. About 20 minutes after he left, I cried because I didn't know what to do, and I suddenly encountered this situation, ..., it's a good lesson, I need to speak clearly."
(face-to-face focus group)

The other student was fundraising for children in difficulty, but a lot of people thought that project to help those children was a fraud. When the institution first started raising money, the student himself also had doubts. However, social workers brought some volunteers to visit children in need. He participated and found that the social worker truly put a lot of effort into helping those children. He hopes that more people can understand the work they did.

Students all have good and bad experiences in volunteering. They like to observe real life and get in touch with other people through volunteering, including peers, adult volunteers, service users, and so on. Even though they participate in volunteering for the hours, they have the expectation that the time should be spent on meaningful voluntary services instead of formalist ones or ineffective ones. There are still some misunderstandings towards volunteering services in society, but the students, to some extent, can handle them.

4.2.2 Willingness to Participation in Volunteering

Since this focus group is also organized as a volunteering activity, the participator's willingness to participate in this focus group is also observed. The online focus group with university students who have high school volunteering experience was in the morning. The four university volunteers in the discussion group did not turn on the video in the online chat. At first, they were not active in the online discussion, but after the facilitator introduced the topic and stressed the importance of participation in the discussion, they gradually entered the discussion. As the students were curious

about the purpose, content, and format of the interviews and the process of analysis, the facilitator extended the introduction part of the project to introduce them in more detail to qualitative research and focus group interviewing, as well as the systems theory in social work, to give them a more in-depth understanding.

Different from the university students, who are all signed up by themselves and show great interest in the aim and approaches used in this research, two of the high school students are invited by the social worker, and another two are signed up by their parents. They did not show a lot of interest in this research at the beginning. Even though they are all willing to participate in this research for hours, the ones who are signed up by their parents are observed not to discuss in the group as active as others.

Theme 1: School requirement

Talking about their first volunteering experience, most of the high school students said they were more passive, "*adults taking me along*", "*for the sake of hours*", etc. However, the first volunteering experience was more enjoyable.

When asked if they would still be volunteers if there was no requirement for volunteer hours in school, all the university students said they would like to have the experience of volunteering during high school. If there was no school requirement, they might not have learned about volunteering and might have participated less frequently, but they would still be willing to try volunteering. The reasons are that they think students need to be exposed to the actual situation of this society earlier through being volunteers, to get to know the society and to generate thoughts on some of the social phenomena.

Most of the high school students agreed with the university students' opinion, but they also mentioned that they don't have enough free time to participate in volunteering.

One of the students even worked on her homework during the ten minutes break of the focus group discussion. Based on what they said, the ideal time for participating in volunteering is during vacations, while weekends are mostly spent doing homework.

The two who were signed up by their parents expressed an opinion contrary to that of others. They don't prefer to participate in volunteering during high school, but there is

a possibility that they will participate in volunteering when they grow up and have a lot of free time.

Theme 2: Influence of the family

In addition to signing up for volunteer services for their children, many respondents' parents also participate in volunteer services themselves. The student's willingness to participate is greatly influenced by their parent's or other family members' volunteering experience. Many students get their initial understanding of volunteer service by observing their parents' behavior in volunteering since childhood. That is the starting point of becoming curious and interested in volunteering for them before participation.

X: "I was influenced by my father since childhood, and he has always been a volunteer. Well, it (the first time I got to know to volunteer) was at the Beijing Olympics, and my dad took me to the Bird's Nest in Beijing, where he volunteered. He brought me inside, and out of curiosity, I saw that volunteer, the one standing in front, shaking hands with others cordially. Isn't it the feeling of being a celebrity? I got a curiosity of how it feels being a volunteer." (face-to-face focus group)

The influence of family is generally positive. However, the two students who were signed up by their parents instead of by themselves showed less interest in volunteering than others, even though their parents also participated in volunteering from time to time.

Theme 3: Sense of achievement

Volunteering is usually taken place in public, where the students can receive a lot of comments from others, especially from the service users. One student mentioned that she had volunteered to guide some external teachers and students in school and had received compliments which made her feel a sense of achievement in helping them.

I: "It was when the senior high school entrance examination was over last year, I was in Grade 1, and the university teachers came to enroll students. I helped them distribute leaflets. The teacher praised me and encouraged me to apply for the university she is

in.” (Face-to-face focus group)

Theme 4: Standard of quality volunteering

As presented in the first topic, the students experienced a lot of different types of volunteering. They found some of them interesting and worthy, while others are defined as a waste of time. The students have a standard of what quality volunteering is worth participating in. As a university student made summarized, quality volunteering should have an introduction to the project and the purpose of the activity, a rich and varied content of the activity, a photo record, a summary of the meaning after the service, and finally, a review with the volunteers' understanding of this service.

Theme 5: Choice of the right institution

A lot of the students mentioned that when they need to participate in volunteering, they prefer to participate in a program run by this institution for several reasons. The most important one is that they had very meaningful volunteering experiences here, which makes this institution trustworthy. They believe that they are not simply wasting time but are actually serving people in need.

F: “I find this fact about volunteering, you have to find the right organization, or it's boring.” (face-to-face focus group)

Some other students also said that they had known a lot of friends here, and they could meet them by volunteering at this institution, which makes participation more attractive to them. Some university students who are now studying in another city would also visit the institution during their holidays. It seems to become a habit to come to this institution to help when they are free.

Theme 6: Lack of constant participation in volunteering program

The students trust this institution a lot. However, the time they can participate in volunteering programs is limited. A lot of students in the discussion mentioned one program which is aimed at helping children with difficulties. They expressed that they

could not follow up on the situation of those children because the program had been closed, but the program was actually still running.

The student cannot constantly participate in one volunteering program is a downside from the perspective of the volunteers and the social workers. Even though the students want to participate in some important part of work in a program, they cannot make sure that they have enough time to do so, and the social worker either does not dare to leave the work to them. That's also a reason why they always show up as a participator.

According to the data, a lot of students start to participate in volunteering because of the requirement from school. However, the influence of the family is the actual starting point of knowing to volunteer. Their willingness to participate in volunteering is influenced by the family, sense of achievement, the quality of the volunteering, and the trust in the institution.

4.2.3 Interactions with Social Workers and Student's Understanding of Their Role

The interaction between social workers and student volunteers is also a topic that needs to study. Some of the interactions are mentioned in the previous data without the student's awareness.

Theme 1: Lack of interaction and limited knowledge

When the questions about social workers were asked, a lot of students said they had very little interaction with the social workers. Some said that the social workers seldom talk to them individually. They talk to the group of volunteers, mostly about the instructions and conclusion of the volunteering service. Some students mentioned that they were corrected by the social workers when they made mistakes in volunteering, while some also mentioned that their ability to work was criticized by a social worker. Only one student said that he had established a very close relationship with a social worker during long-term participation in volunteering, and the social worker would give him some advice on how to solve the problems he encountered in his life.

Most of the students don't know a lot about the social worker. Some even asked about the difference between social workers and volunteers. One university student said he had contact with social work students at school but less in volunteering, and other students also said they didn't know much about social workers. Although some students know that the workers in "Xingzhi" are social workers, they have no idea what kind of job the social workers are doing.

Theme 2: Unclear role of the social worker

A: "It feels like the social workers are more like field workers, arranging for us to do things to make volunteering go more smoothly and to make the volunteer experience smoother, I guess."

B: "Is who running the official contact number of this institution a social worker? She's nice."

C: "Do community workers count? My family helped with the census and became more familiar with many of the neighbors around us, and I feel that handing over some of the work in the community to the community residents has also facilitated human interaction between residents."

D: "Not much involvement. I think I only had contact with a social worker of this institution once in an activity, but he was with his kids, and there wasn't much interaction." (Online focus group)

Similar narratives show among high school students as well. Although they knew that some of the staff in the association were social workers, they were not clear about the role of social workers. Some of them summarized that in volunteer service, social workers were "instructors," providing guidance on language and behavioral norms. One student tried to generalize social worker's work from what they have seen as following:

F: "As a social worker, I think his work should be divided into two aspects. One aspect is the so-called organization of volunteering or taking the initiative to explore the problems in this society. Then solve it as much as possible. Then there is another

aspect, he is in this place, providing some help to individuals who need social work services.”(face-to-face focus group)

Based on observation of the social worker’s work in the institution, the student’s words described the social worker well.

4.2.4 Changing Sense of Social Participation During Volunteering

Some students thought that social participation was mainly for the socially disconnected high school students, while others thought that everyone was a subject of social participation.

Theme 1: Growing knowledge, social circle, and care

Volunteering is mentioned by them as one of the best ways for students to gain a sense of social participation. The process of observing various trades and industries while participating in the volunteering service has given students who have been staying in a closed campus environment some initial understanding of real life in society. It is based on this understanding that they can try to participate in the society. They have also come into contact with people from different circles, expanding their social circles and providing references, facilitating the process of students moving from the confined small school community into the larger society and the role of students to socialites. It also facilitates the transition from student to socialite. Their participation in various services had given them a preliminary understanding of different professions, such as judges, lawyers, and firefighters as well. It had served as a reference for their future study direction, and they also mentioned that they liked the feeling of getting together with a group of people of their own age and that their social circle had been expanded and their social skills had become stronger.

The care for other people is also growing through the expansion of knowledge and social circle. Most students expressed that they are more outgoing and more willing to talk with classmates, teachers, and even strangers. They also show great care for the service users they have served before. A lot of them want to follow up on the families they have visited.

I: "It is that we live in the same world, why some people's lives here are difficult beyond my imagination. I think we need to care about them. We are a group; human beings are one big family."

University students relate social participation to their major a lot. They care about the cooperation between institutions and making a change in society. One student studies Business, and she said it might be a good way to combine corporate social responsibility with volunteering programs, while another one who studies Public Management thinks there should be a platform with all the information about people in need and the people who are willing to help.

Theme 2: The changing role in volunteering

Some students talk about their roles in volunteering has been changed over time. One who was misunderstood in fundraising started to try to let other people know more about volunteering since that time. He put great effort into convincing his surroundings that volunteering is truly helpful to people in need. He also hopes that social workers can expand their publicity to let more people understand and care about social work and volunteering.

One student also mentioned that she had organized a donation for the children in some poor areas. In addition to the care for people, she also expressed care for the animals and the environment. She said the following words and wanted to build a shelter for stray animals.

K: "The world is not only for human beings but also about issues related to other animals or the environment."

Although most of the students initially volunteered to fulfill the requirements of the school, there is a possibility that they can complete the transition from passive participation to active ones. The transition can be seen in the changing roles, from the participator to the propagator or even to the organizer. Their care for volunteering or for potential service users is also growing during role changes.

Theme 3: Difficulty in getting good results from passive participation

However, some high school students have not completed the transition. It is observed in the focus group discussion that the students with less volunteering experience were more concerned about credits and thought that they needed more time for volunteering during their high school years. They were still in a state of passive participation in completing tasks. The students were also signed up by their parents for this research. Initially, they believed that they did not have a desire to make a significant impact on society. Their focus was solely on studying and working without the need for much social involvement. Those who have more experience in volunteering have more possibility to gain a sense of social participation. Although they did not take the initiative when asked, they expressed their wish to follow up on the projects they had participated in and showed more concern for the people in need. According to the analysis, there are both possibilities and difficulties in improving the students' sense of social participation during volunteering. It may have something to do with the depth or length of time that students are involved in volunteering, but there may be other reasons. It will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Five Discussion of the Findings with Theories

5.1 Theoretical Background

In this research, Bronfenbrenner's (1979) systems theory is going to be applied. Systems theory discusses the interrelations between the different systems that are important for this research. The theory assumes systems on four levels, namely the micro-, meso-, exo-, and macro-levels, which are interrelated with and interacting with one another (Darling, 2007).

The micro-level represents the systems in which the individuals have actively participated (Darling, 2007). Taking an ecological perspective, youth development occurs within these micro-systems of everyday life, the family, the peer group, the school, and some other workplaces for youth. In this research, the workplaces for youth refer to the institution through which all the students participated in

volunteering. The interactions between the students and their social environment are based on the roles and relationships within their "microsystems" which form their development.

The meso-system is defined as the relationship between two or more micro-situations, meaning the overlap between two or more micro-systems (Darling, 2007). It shows the connection between different contexts based on the micro-level. Volunteering during high school shows strong connections and active interactions between family, school, peer groups, and the institution. Therefore, it can be seen as a representative of the mesosystem in this research.

The term "exo-system" refers to the social environment that impacts an individual's context, even though they are not actively involved in it (Darling, 2007). In this research, one example is the influence the "social worker + volunteer" model has on the social work institution, thereby influencing the volunteers. The policy, which requires 40 hours of voluntary service during high school, is also an example.

The macro-system describes society on a larger scale following certain values and rules (Darling, 2007). This can help to understand how high school students are constructed in society, what problems they are facing, and thereby what are important measures to improve their social participation. In this research, the pressure on high school students, the misunderstandings of volunteering, and the lack of knowledge of social work can be seen in society on a macro level.

It's important to note that the different systems are interconnected, meaning any changes made to one level can also impact the other. This phenomenon, also known as interconnectedness (Darling, 2007). Understanding these interactions between levels is crucial in determining the factors influencing a student's volunteering experience and sense of social participation.

5.2 Understanding Student Volunteering on Multiple Levels

The students' living environment is structured in multiple systems. The volunteering experience is also influenced by the interactions within and across these systems. To fully understand the experience of these students, the researcher is going to discuss the findings from data analysis within the systems on different levels. Due to the interaction that happens between different levels, although the general structure of this discussion is from micro-systems to meso-, exo-, and macro-systems, interconnections in different systems are examined. Therefore, other systems may be mentioned in the discussion of one system.

5.2.1 Micro-System: Expanded Social Circle Besides Family and School

In-person interactions which influence the personal development of the students in a daily setting have happened on a micro-level. It is important to study the face-to-face interactions of students with different people in different environments.

As shown in the data analysis, students' volunteering is highly influenced by their family members. Their parents' participation in volunteering not only affects the students' interest in volunteering but also affects through which institution they are participating in volunteering. To meet the volunteer hours, students volunteer sometimes in the community and sometimes in institutions. This choice is largely affected by the parent volunteer service experience. Students taking part in volunteer service under the guidance of "Xingzhi" social workers often have a family member who is also a volunteer in the 179 Volunteer Association. There are also students who volunteer more in the community because of their parents' influence.

The action of students participating in volunteering also needs support from their family members because the students themselves are underaged and are not as independent as adults. Their participation in voluntary services requires parental permission. Sometimes, they are also picked up by their parents. Even in some specific services, they need to be accompanied by parents.

The students' lives are largely confined to their families and schools. The researchers observed that high school students and their peers also talked during breaks in discussion groups about the topics related to school life, such as the difficulty of the test, the length of vacation, and the amount of homework. To those who are struggling with the "40 hours" requirement, volunteering is like a piece of homework that they need to finish and hand it in.

Volunteering experience from the student's perspective is valuable because it expands communication and interaction on a micro-level. Instead of being in school or in family, they can also be in the institution or be in the volunteering fields where they can get in touch with lots of different people that they don't usually encounter during high school.

"I think the real meaning is that it actually provides a platform, and this platform can allow students to get in touch with the reality of social life a little earlier."

According to their narrative, the students understand that high school life is unique because they are focusing on studying during high school. While after high school, they are going to society. The influence of family is crucial in introducing volunteering to them. Volunteering can help them to gradually move to social life by giving them a chance to communicate and interact with different groups of people on a micro-level. It explains the importance and necessity of having high school students participate in volunteering.

5.2.2 Meso-System: Students Disempowered by Having Parents as Spokespersons

Volunteering is described as a "platform" by the students, which also means on this platform, some micro-systems that the students are in meet and have interactions. Some interactions between the family and the institution can be observed in the focus group recruitment. High school students spend most of their day in school and cannot use mobile phones. Therefore, their parents are more like their spokespersons. At the beginning of the recruitment, the researcher wanted to find participants who had their phones for contact. However, a fact found out during recruitment is that even though

the students have their own phones, they don't have much time to use the phone to keep in touch with the institution. Therefore, the high school students recruited in the face-to-face focus group are mostly contacted by their parents. In addition to the two students who are signed up by their parents, the others whom the institution invites by calling their parents. Parents showed an interest in getting their children involved in the discussion first and then checked the availability of their children. Only one student has been contacted by the institution without parents as a doorkeeper.

The interactions between parents and institutions can be an obstacle to communication between the social worker and the students. In an ideal process, organizations send out recruitment messages, and students choose to participate in the services they are interested in. However, with parents as doorkeepers, the choice is usually made by the parents. Students' own preferences and opinions are easily ignored. I believe this is one of the reasons why students who are directly signed up in by their parents feel less involved than other students. They participate in the decision-making process even less than those who are invited by calling their parents.

Some parents tend to, instead of the students, make decisions related to the student's development. It also, to a large extent, affects the student's understanding of social participation. In the discussion, comparing to others who share their opinions and examples of social participation, one student who was signed up by a parent said the following sentence:

G: "There seems to be nothing. Generally, the social participation is all handled by my mother,, the activities I participated in were basically for hours. I feel that my social sense is actually quite low. Well, because now I just want to study hard and find a stable job. I actually feel that in my plan, I have no contribution to society, I am ordinary, and I don't have any particularly great ambitions." (face-to-face focus group)

Although her mother is also a volunteer in the association who takes part in a volunteering program regularly, her attitude to volunteering and social participation is

generally passive. The participation in volunteering and this discussion do not make her feel involved. Interestingly, social workers were also more likely to recruit student volunteers who were able to communicate with the agency themselves, based on observations of social workers recruited by the agency. They believe that such students are more proactive, more independent, easier to communicate with, and better able to complete volunteer service in groups.

Parents being spokespersons also makes almost all the students feel that they don't have a lot of personal interactions with social workers in volunteering during high school, which is on a Micro-level. They do not contact social workers by themselves, only come to the volunteering field where there are a lot of volunteers that the social worker can hardly communicate with everyone individually.

However, the researcher claims that there are a lot of interactions between social workers and students on a meso-level, which is based on the volunteering field. It is a type of indirect communication during volunteering, which can be seen from the students' narrative. They mentioned the social workers as instructors of the voluntary service. Social workers often introduce the aim and the work of each volunteer, offer short training to help the volunteers easily take the job, take pictures of the volunteers during the participation, send them in the group chat afterward, and make a short conclusion at the end of volunteering. These works are basically in line with the description of student volunteers for quality volunteer service. The social workers also document every service with pictures and name lists of the participators, which makes the students not need to worry about the proof of participation. By ensuring the quality of the volunteering experience and providing the materials the students need, the social workers and the student volunteers indirectly interact. It is also the reason why some students choose to come to this institution and show trust in it.

5.2.3 Exo-System: The Burden on The Institution Influencing Other Systems

There is some social environment that impacts an individual's context, even though they are not actively involved in it. In this research, the "Social Worker + Volunteer" model and the "40 hours" requirement both have a great impact on the decision-

making process of volunteers and high school students in the social work institution, thereby influencing the volunteers.

Sharply increased pressure on institutions because of the “40 hours”

The model of “Social Worker + Volunteer” is promoted earlier than the “40 hours” requirement, and as introduced in the introduction, since the establishment of “Xingzhi” Social Work Agency in 2015, it has taken the responsibility of guiding volunteers, especially youth volunteers. It should be clarified that although youth UNDP is defined as people between the ages of 15 - 24, the term “youth” in the Chinese context is much broader.

According to the Constitution of the Communist Youth League of China, any Chinese youth over the age of 14 and under the age of 28 can apply for membership in the Communist Youth League of China. However, it does not mean that is over 28 cannot be called “youth” (Chinese Communist Youth League, 2008). In the Medium - and Long-Term Youth Development Plan in China, the age range of the youth referred to is from 14 to 35 years old (Xinhua News Agency, 2017). According to the Constitution of the All-China Youth Federation, except for the designated seats, the new members shall be under the age of 40, and the reappointed members shall be under the age of 45 (Chinese Communist Youth League, 2020). Therefore, the word “youth” in the Chinese context can broadly refer to people between the age of 14 to 45.

Understanding the range of “youth” in China can make it easier to understand the extra pressure brought by the “40 hours” requirement on the institution and the social workers. However, the institution takes responsibility for guiding youth volunteers to being registered under the YCL and having close cooperation with them. Because of the broad range of “youth” and the natural cooperation with the 179 Volunteers Association, it was not an extra job for “Xingzhi” or the social workers. Most of the volunteers are independent adults or some teenagers who have family members volunteering in the institution. The two agencies collaborate on a model in which professional social workers design programs for the recipient community. After

formulating the service plan, social workers will lead volunteers to carry out the service. The services, from the volunteers' perspective, are voluntary services.

The management of volunteers was not as complicated as it is now. Social workers manage online communities of volunteers. When the project needs, the social worker will release the recruitment information of volunteers in the community and select the volunteers who meet the requirements to participate in the service. Many volunteers who are able to meet the needs of service users are usually adults with jobs or relevant expertise. For instance, social workers may find hairdressers to provide haircuts for elderly individuals who live alone voluntarily.

Until the 40 hours of volunteer service for high school students was officially established in 2020, there was not a lot of urgent need for students to volunteer. Only those who wished to become members of the CYL in school were encouraged to participate in voluntary service (Y. Xu, 2012). However, the "40 hours" requirement brought great change. All the students had to find chances to participate in volunteering in a sudden. Since they are busy studying in school, their parents, who are the spokespersons, help them to look for opportunities. Thus, many parents anxiously come to the office where the 179 volunteer association and Xingzhi social work agency share. They join online volunteer communities and frequently ask the office to organize volunteer services that teenagers can participate in. This has put a lot of pressure on the institution. While the service program remains the same, the need for volunteer participation increases.

Institutional reaction to the challenges

Most high school students do not have the abilities or skills to help the service users directly, which makes it hard for social workers to include them in some services. The social workers like to include the students in some projects, such as cleaning the riverbank, in which the work is easy to carry out. Hundreds of students can work together on the riverbank, which can take out the burden off the social workers' shoulders for a while.

However, the challenge is not only to face the increased need for participation. There are also a lot of problems that occur in student volunteering. For example, parents as spokespersons sometimes cannot communicate well with students or the social worker about participation in volunteering. What often happens is that parents sign up for children without communication with their children and later cancel the participation or become absent from volunteer service. Some parents like to follow the students to make sure their safety and to take photos of their children as they volunteer. Some even want to do the work for their children. These actions interrupt the service as well as disempower the students. Parents and high school volunteers often have such irregular behaviors in participation, leading to the decline of trust in their behavior and ability.

The institution does not want to be affected by the increased demand for voluntary participation in service planning and quality, and it is difficult to supervise all the students when there are hundreds in one service. The institution wants to stop this kind of behavior from happening and has come up with some institutional rules to limit the participation of the students. The rule is that the students need to register themselves as a member of 179 volunteer association. The process of becoming a member includes the collection of personal information, such as a copy of an ID card and participation in volunteer training, and it charges an annual membership fee. After all of the above processes, the student can start to participate in voluntary services organized by this institution. It is to ensure that the students who participate can take volunteering seriously and behave in accordance with the basic standards of a volunteer.

In addition, because the students are still juveniles, in some volunteering fields where the social worker cannot be there to supervise the students, they cannot participate only by themselves. At least one adult is required to be in the field, and they can be one of the student's family members or one trustworthy adult volunteer in the institution. This requirement is motivated both by the need to ensure the student's safety and by the distrust of the behavior of them. To some extent, this also

strengthens the dependent interaction between children and family in the Micro-system, which is seen to be disempowerment in volunteering on a Meso-level.

Inefficient communication between micro-systems

The work of offering proof to the students is also challenging for two reasons. Firstly, each school is responsible for issuing the certificate form to students in a standardized format. The certificate should be returned to the school after it has been sealed by the institution. The detailed requirement of how the students fill in the certificate form differs from schools. The institution does not have the necessary form and lacks knowledge of the detailed requirements. That's why the institution cannot issue proof to the students right after their participation but need to wait for them to come with a filled form.

However, some parents are not clear about the process, they ask the institution for a form, or they want to get the institution's official seal stamped on random paper. It shows not only a lack of communication between the school and the family but also a lack of cooperation between the school and the institutions. There is frequent interaction between agencies and parents, but without the involvement of schools, most of the communication around voluntary service certification is futile.

Secondly, because the school collects students' volunteer service prove at the same time, students and parents usually focus on a period to issue the certificate in the office. It requires at least one person to take this job for the whole day. The agency could not arrange for a social worker to do the work. That's why a volunteer mentioned in the discussion that she had worked as a helper in the office to issue the certification forms. She can take this work because she has participated in volunteering a lot of times, and the trust between the institution and her is built through her participation.

In conclusion, the "40 hours" requirement puts pressure on the students and their parents, which later work at the institution. The pressure moves from the Exo-system to the Micro-system, then to the Meso-system. The institution, thus, makes some

decisions on an institutional level to limit and regulate the participation of the students and parents. The process shows how the institution reacts on an exo-level to pressure coming from the micro- and meso-systems, and the reactions work back on the family on a micro-level and on the volunteering on a meso-level. A problem found here is that the school seldom participates in communication with family or the institution.

The discussion above shows how students are influenced by the changes on an exo-level in the process of participation in volunteering. Students seem to be in a passive state, but in fact, when students participate in voluntary service, they often can take the initiative to observe and build their own understanding of society. In the following text, the discussion focuses on how students observe and react to exo-systems in volunteering.

As mentioned in the data analysis, some students have experienced ineffective volunteering because of the failure to cooperate with other institutions. Based on these experiences, they realized that the institution had limited power in decision-making on an exo-level. Here is the conversation between some students discussing why there are not any voluntary animal protection projects in the institution.

K: I also want to know why 179 has no services to protect stray animals.

X: Mr. Xu (an adult volunteer they know in volunteering) runs a shelter for stray animals (personally, not institutional).

F: This question should be whether there is no government unit to issue such tasks.

The researcher: Yes, I think this issue is still a concern of society, and it has not been paid attention to, right? (face-to-face focus group)

When the students discuss this question, they gradually see this question from a micro-level to an exo-level, and the researcher brings it to a Macro-level. It shows how students see through a voluntary project. In the first place, the question is asked from a perspective of a participant who is concerning the stray animals as a problem in society. It is related to someone they know on a micro-level by a student on a micro-level, while another student knows that the decision is not only made by the institution but also depends on the cooperation with the government units on an exo-

level. The researcher in the discussion also gives a reflection on the importance society attaches to this problem on the macro-level. These can all influence the decision-making in the institution. It is seen that students build their understanding of society through volunteering, which is one of the most important tasks they need to fulfill in this life stage.

5.2.4 Macro-System: High Academic Pressure Limits High School Students' Autonomy

Macro-system refers to the value and the rules that everyone follows. It includes the economic and political situation, the patterns, values, and traditions of the larger society. A lot of phenomena in the discussion above have roots in the cultural environment and the values in society.

In traditional Chinese culture, education has been highly esteemed and is viewed as the primary means of achieving social success (Liu & Lu, 2011). And the root of getting a better career through taking exams can be traced back centuries ago. Despite significant changes over the past century, the value placed on education remains prevalent in modern-day China (Lin & Chen, 1995). The way that students pursue higher education is also through exams, and the National College Entrance Examination from the 7th to the 9th of June is the most important exam in China. High school education is designed for students to get good scores in this extremely important exam (Luo & Wendel, 1999). High school students are under great pressure (Ang & Huan, 2006), which is not only from the school but also from their families.

For the bright future of their children, Chinese parents are willing to spend time and money to ensure the academic success of their students. They tend to take full responsibility for the household chores to make sure the students don't spend unnecessary time on anything not related to the study (Lin & Chen, 1995). This is one of the reasons that the parents play the role of spokespersons for the students. The other reason is that the students are facing heavy workloads in and out of school. During the weekdays, in addition to the courses in the daytime, they have evening

study in which they would stay in school till about 21 o'clock at night to do their homework (Luo & Wendel, 1999). The time out of school is extremely limited in this situation. Some of them truly don't have time to use their phones or to look for the opportunity of participating in volunteering by themselves. The norm on a macro-level is highly influencing the micro-systems where the students are in.

Education that is highly focused on academic success has negative effects on the student's development and can do harm to them both physically and mentally. It is critiqued by the society. To let the students gain more social participation and take social responsibility in the future, the "40 hours" requirement of participation in volunteering is designed. Although it aims for better development of the students and lower pressure during high school, the requirement without changing the school schedule turns out to be another burden on the students.

A lot of formalist volunteering occurred in some institutions for students' demand of participation, in which the students do nothing but put on the iconic volunteer attire standing on somewhere for hours, and taking a picture (Spires, 2018). Based on the discussion with students, formalist volunteering is not only a waste of the student's time but also, to some extent, consumes students' enthusiasm for volunteering and thus influences the willingness to participate. It also makes students reflect on the quality of volunteering service. Those who can make their own choices see volunteering as a two-way process. For the quality of the service, the institution selects and limits the participation of the students. The students find volunteer service is usually of higher quality in this institution, then they build trust in this institution and become more willing to participate in the volunteer service organized by this organization.

Under the same pressure, students have completely different choices. Some chose to participate passively in formalistic volunteering to meet the requirements of the school, while others actively selected quality and meaningful services to participate in. Progress shows individual autonomy under the influences of the macro-system. It also explains why some students have improved their sense of social participation

while it is difficult for some other students to achieve the same goal. The student's autonomy plays an important role.

5.3 Understanding the Role-Set of the Students and the Social Worker

In Systems theory, each system has its goal to reach, while the individuals who are inside the systems have their own goals as well (Hutchinson & Oltedal, 2003, p. 190). Sometimes, the goal of the system and the individual can meet, but sometimes, they cannot. The social role is described as a set of norms about how to participate in tasks that belong to a certain position in systems. The role-set means all the expectations on a certain position, including the inner demand of the individual who is in the position and the external goal which is expected by the systems. Seeing the student and the social worker's role-set from both sides can help to understand the role conflicts.

5.3.1 Role-Set of the Students in Different Positions: Limited Self-Development

As a student has mentioned in the focus group, social participation can be seen as people taking different roles in different positions in society. To understand students' experience and willingness to participate in volunteering, their roles in the family, in school, in volunteering, and in society are studied.

Table 2:

Position	Role-set linked to the position	Inner demand	External Goal	Role conflicts
In school	Student	Get education	Get good scores in the College Entrance Exam	Education is not all about the scores.
In family	Children	Know themselves through interaction with peers, institutions, and the society	Be taken care of and focus as much time as possible on study.	The students need space to practice out of family or school.

In volunteering	Volunteer	Meaningful experience which can help self-development	Complete 40 hours of participation	Passive participation sometimes does not work
In society	Adolescence and youth	Get ready for young adulthood	Study hard and take social responsibility	They need time and space to grow up and prepare for adulthood

They have seen students in school where they study hard. Their goal and the goal of the school system on them share something in common, but education is not only scores. The workload placed on students for scores is often too heavy, and it encroaches on students' time for other education. During the break of the focus group, some students complained that the PE lessons are taken place by the main subjects, which makes them lack exercise and unhealthy. The education the student want includes academic education, physical education, and the education of social participation, which can help their self-development.

The space that the students can get in touch with society is further limited by family. As children in the family, they are always protected by their parents. Based on the expectation of academic achievement, they are expected to spend the most time on study. However, during this period, they want to interact with others to know better about themselves from others' reactions.

In volunteering, they are volunteers who want meaningful experiences. They want to explore the “real world” through volunteering, but there is an external requirement for them which is the “40 hours”. They must find a way to complete the “40 hours” first. Therefore, some of them go to formalism volunteering, which they can easily participate in, while some try to combine the inner demand with the external

requirement by going through the registration process to participate in quality volunteering organized by social work agencies.

In society, they are in transit from adolescence to young adulthood. They are facing the expectations of both adolescence and youth, which are academic achievement and taking social responsibility. The transition takes time, and the students also need space to develop themselves. The conflicts in school and family show that they don't have enough space and time during the period of high school. Lack of time and space is the biggest obstacle for the students to get social participation and take social responsibility. The findings also show the student's changing roles in volunteering, which is the transition from the participator to the propagator or even the organizer. Although it indicates a possibility that the students gain deeper and deeper social participation during volunteering, the problem that they need time and space to participate better in volunteering needs to be addressed.

5.3.2 Role of the Social Workers: The Developing Social Work Profession

Social workers have their roles in different positions as well. Through the discussion of the various roles of social workers, it is easier to understand the reasons for students' insufficient cognition of social workers and the unclear role of social workers in volunteer service.

Table 3:

Position	Role-set linked to the position	Inner demand	External Goal	Role conflicts
In YCL	Youth tutor	Register with CYL	Guiding youth to take social responsibility	The responsibility come along with the registration

In volunteering	Organizer and Instructor	Offer quality and professional service with the help of capable volunteers	Offer quantity voluntary positions for students	The quality takes priority, cannot meet the demand of quantity
In society	Service provider	Get recognized and conduct professional social work practice	Provide social service	The value of professional social work and the welfare service have differences

Because the institution is registered, the social workers are naturally seen as the youth tutor with the responsibility of guiding youth to take social responsibility. It was not a hard job for them because of the broad range of youth in China. But when it comes to student volunteering, there has been a change. Before, the social worker cooperated with capable volunteers when there was a need for the service. But now, the demand for the participation of students who lack skills are sharply increased. The social workers are expected to provide more opportunities for them to participate while they still need to make sure of the quality of the service. The conflict shown here and the role of the social workers from the student's perspective is related to the quality of the service. Therefore, they are mentioned as organizers or instructors.

In society, the position of social workers is complicated. In the findings, the students have little understanding of social work, and the role of social workers remains unclear. It is not surprising because there has not been a full and detailed definition of social work which can be used to recognize the profession accurately (1979). Even though social work education has been promoted for decades, the profession of social work and professional practice does not keep up with the pace (Yi-Bing et al., 2022). The social work practice was marginalized until a policy came out in 2006, in which it was considered crucial to establishing a group of social workers as part of the

infrastructure to strengthen the Chinese Communist Party's leadership in building a harmonious socialist society (Gao & Yan, 2015; Leung et al., 2012).

It is understandable that some students cannot distinguish between community workers and social workers. In the textbook used in China's social work licensure program, there is a type of social worker called an administrative social worker. Differing from the professional social worker who works in a social work institution, the administrative, social worker works in government systems, including communities. The only way to know if a community worker is a social worker is to see if the worker has the qualification of a social worker. People can get the qualification through exams, and it does not require a social work academic background (Yi-Bing et al., 2022). However, even though a community worker gets the qualification and can be called a social worker, she or he does the same job as the ones who don't have the qualification. People cannot see the difference in the work they do.

The development of the social work profession is led by the government. The expectation of the social workers from the government is not only to maintain harmony in society but also to help gain innovation in government governance (Leung, 2012). The social work institution is also expected to take part in the function of the government, such as offering services to certain groups of people or helping to promote some ideas. To transfer the function of providing services to the social work institutions, the government units purchase service projects from them, and social work institutions are dependent on these projects a lot (Zhao et al., 2016). For the projects purchased by the government, the role of the social worker is the service provider.

Taking the experience of the students as an example, even though in the purchased program, the social worker institution is expected to be the third party that supervises and evaluates the work in the hospital, the hospital doesn't take the supervision seriously, and the institution as service provider cannot force the service buyer to adjust their work. Social workers' lack of power in the projects is observed by the

students. The discussion of stray animal protection shows that the students think the basic reason for social workers to provide new services is the government purchase. This also reinforces their view that the role of social workers is to provide service and ensure the quality of services.

5.4 Possible Solutions Related to Practical social work

The necessity and importance of participating in volunteering are addressed by the students themselves. However, because of the limited space and time out of school, they cannot actively and constantly participate in volunteering. The lack of cooperation between institutions and schools, high pressure and expectation on high school students in the cultural norm, and the ignored intersection of the two policies are the main problems shown in the discussion.

5.4.1 Systems Theory in Social Work Practice

Socialization is essential for human beings (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In terms of practical social work, the objective is usually to transform the micro- and exo-systems into a meso-system (Hutchinson & Oltedal, 2003). Therefore, what the social worker can do in solving the problems in volunteering is also building bridges to make space for communication and negotiation between different systems.

5.4.2 YCL as the bridge between institution, school, and Community

In the Chinese context, the institution, the school, and the local communities all have close interactions with the local branch of the YCL (Y. Xu, 2012). Taking the YCL as a bridge, the interactions on the meso-level can be more efficient. For example, a student reflected that when parents look for opportunities to participate in volunteering, they search for information about the institutions from the news posted by the YCL. The institutions with closer interactions with the YCL are more trustworthy from the parent's perspective. The information offered by the YCL makes communication between the institution and the parents more efficient.

However, based on the discussion, in dealing with student volunteering, a lack of cooperation between the school and other micro-systems, such as the parents, the institution, or the community, is plain to see. There is a possibility that the social work institution can communicate with the YCL and its branch in school, which is highly promoting youth volunteering. The branch of the YCL in the school can take action to strengthen the cooperation with the institution or the community where there are opportunities for students to be volunteers. The cooperation can be information selection from the institution and the communication, then posted to the students in school. The students can sign up for participation in school, which can weaken the parent's role as the spokespersons for the students. Let the students make more choices by themselves can help them complete the transition from passive participation to active one.

It can also be direct cooperation with institutions, for example, organizing student volunteer teams for some projects. Schools can take the responsibility of educating the students with more skills than only focusing on scores. The students can use these skills to provide services in volunteering projects. The institution can trust more on the student's ability and behavior as well. This can prevent students from doing formalistic volunteering and make it easier for students to improve themselves in volunteering. Thus, it can enhance students' willingness to participate and enhance their sense of social participation.

5.4.3 Possible Empowerment of the Students

A lot of students find participation in this research very inspiring. They have never tried to summarize their experience and development related to volunteering and have never noticed there are so many problems and possibilities to solve the problems. In the discussion of the research findings, the researcher introduced the systems theory to the students and underlined the influence between systems can be mutual. Some students learned more about the systems theory on the internet and came back to ask the researcher how a student can influence the systems they are in. The students have demonstrated exceptional learning and reflection ability in the discussion. They also

expressed a strong desire to make a positive impact on the environment the moment they got to know the fact that they have the power to influence others. The value of empowerment can be seen through this discussion.

There is a possibility that the social workers can share some knowledge with the students and their parents during volunteering. For example, the social worker can share the knowledge of what the students need for better self-development in this stage. It can let parents realize that they should give their children more autonomy. Social workers can also have more interactions with students in volunteering and give them more feedback on what they are doing well and what they can do better. They can also organize workshops to help the students to deal with the pressure and the anxiety caused by academic pressure. Since the students like to observe how different professions work, the social workers can invite volunteers from different fields to share their life stories. This knowledge sharing can better help the student's self-development.

The share of knowledge can be mutual as well. The social workers should also recognize that the knowledge of the students is valuable since they are in between the service provider and the service user. They can organize short discussions after every volunteering service and invite some students who take part in the evaluation of some projects. It can have the students participate deeply in the projects, which are seen to be helpful in improving the sense of social participation. It is also a way to see the projects from another perspective, which is also helpful to the development of the projects and the institution. It is also empowering for students to know that they can help the development of the institution.

5.4.4 Possible Influence on the Exo- and Macro-Systems

The students also expressed that they want to negotiate with the government about the policy. Some of the students who are members of the YCL in school said that they have a chance to write a proposal to the government concerning the high academic pressure and the limited space for social participation. The social workers can also write a proposal through the YCL system to raise the government's attention to the

role of social workers in volunteering among high school students. Based on the effort of both sides, there is a possibility of negotiating the policy with the government.

The change of the norm and value on the macro level can be difficult because the students themselves are all living in the norms. They are also supporters of the norms, such as a better score means a better future, but the lack of space and time to practice outside school and family remains an obstacle to their self-development. As suggested in empowerment, the social worker can help expose students to more careers and improve students' understanding of jobs in various industries during volunteering. It can let students gradually understand the entry requirements of various industries and find the norm might not be the same in different industries. They can share their understandings through the internet, and there is a possibility to spark some social discussion. These attempts can help high school students better establish an understanding of the exo- and the macro-system and make up for the feeling of powerlessness obtained in the previous observation.

Chapter Six Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion of the findings and the discussion

During the discussion, various factors that affect the findings were explored on different levels. The interconnections and the interactions between different systems are discussed. Both the role-set of the student and the social worker in different positions are presented to help the understanding.

The student's life is highly confined to school and family, and the positive or negative influence of the school and the family depends on the space where the students can make choices and decisions by themselves. The limited space can be the biggest obstacle in student volunteering, which is formed by the social norms in the context. The meaningful experience of volunteering can broaden the space and the students' micro-system, which meets their needs of them in the transition stage from

adolescence to young adulthood. This is the reason that the necessity of participation in volunteering is addressed by the student themselves.

In the context of excessive demand for participation, volunteering and students form a two-way choice situation. The students who can take volunteering seriously are selected through the process to participate in quality volunteering, while the others are limited to participating in these quality ones but turn their faces to some formalism ones. In return, quality volunteering increases these students' willingness to participate and sense of social participation, while the formalism ones cannot.

Social workers interact with student volunteers by selecting volunteers and ensuring the quality of volunteer service, thus affecting their participator's sense of social participation in a positive way. Due to the indirect interaction between the social workers and the volunteers and the lack of a clear definition of social workers in China, students' understanding of social workers is limited to volunteer service organizers and instructors.

The problem is found that the lack of time and space to practice outside school and family is the biggest obstacle, and the participants can make more space for the students. However, if the school does not take more responsibility for the education of social participation, some students cannot complete the transition from passive participation to active ones during formalism and meaningless volunteering.

The possibilities can be seen in the branches of the YCL, which promote youth volunteering and have close connections with schools, institutions, and families. The intersection of the "Social worker + volunteer" and the "40 hours" should be addressed, and the pressure on the social workers and the positive influence they can do on student volunteering should be seen. The YCL needs to take the role of a bridge to connect the institutions and the schools, let both parties take responsibility for the social participation education during volunteering, and let the students take part more in the decision-making process. Based on this, the social workers can share knowledge with the students and gradually empower the students to make changes in

society by handing in political proposals to the government or sparking social discussion on the internet.

6.2 limitations of the Research

There are several limitations of this research. The first one is that the scope of the research is narrow. This research is very contextual-based. It looks at the intersections of the two policies, which are only promoted in the Chinese context. Except for the promoted “Social work + Volunteer” Model, the social work profession and practice in this research are quite different from the Western concepts.

Secondly, reflecting on the student’s participation in this research. Some of the high school students who were signed up by their parents in this research participated passively, and they did not participate in the discussion. Some of the participants who were invited by the institution already had built trust and a good relationship with the institution, and they had more willingness to participate, which made them express more in the focus groups than those who participated passively.

The third limitation is the limited participation of the stakeholders. Although it is inspired by participatory practice research, the participation of the social workers and the students is limited due to the time limitation. Both the spare time that the students and the social workers can participate in this research and the time the researcher must write this thesis is limited. Therefore, the students did not participate in the data analysis process. Only some of them participated in the discussion and evaluation at the end of the writing. Considering this research takes the perspective of the students, the social workers did not participate in the discussion and evaluation either. Only a report is handed to the social work institution.

6.3 Further Research

Focus group discussions are often seen as a starting point for quantitative research. Although this study explores the causes of this phenomenon, it summarizes the factors that may affect students' sense of social participation in volunteering. However, the

influence degree of each influencing factor can be further discussed through quantitative research.

In the focus group of high school students, in addition to regular high school students, there are also technical college students and international high school students.

Through the comparative analysis of their educational environment and sense of social participation, we can put forward better suggestions for the improvement of exam-oriented education in ordinary senior high schools.

The “social worker + volunteer” model shows the possibility that it could be beneficial to both parties, but there are a lot of problems in the process of implementation. Therefore, studying more on the practice of this model is needed.

Taking the volunteers as the third party who can help to evaluate the services.

To address the role of social workers and make them work more efficiently, the power and the boundaries of the social work profession need to be studied. When social work organizations rely on government purchases, how to balance the power relationship between service buyers, themselves, and service users is a very important topic. In addition, rather than using vocational qualifications to distinguish social workers from community workers, social work specialization requires more refinement in terms of service areas.

6.4 Practical Implications

In addition to the suggested solutions in the discussion, there are several implications in social work practice. Social work has been closely related to volunteerism since its origin, and many nonprofit organizations cannot operate without the participation of volunteers. This research also indicates that cooperation with volunteers can benefit both the social work institution and the volunteers. While the boundary between volunteering and social work practice is emphasized (Brudney & Meijs, 2014), the possibility of helping the social work practice with the experience and knowledge of the volunteers needs to be explored.

Social work in different contexts can be different. Social work originated in Western society and in different cultural backgrounds (Healy, 2005). The process of localization will also produce some adaptations or conflicts. For local social workers, it is necessary to balance the contradictions between international social work professional education and local practice. For international social work researchers, it is important to be aware of the influence of the context in the process of research. Ensuring a certain degree of cultural sensitivity can help to carry out cross-cultural research and practice (Harrison & Turner, 2011).

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