

How Do Value Identification and Organizational Support Influence Youth Volunteers' Sustained Participation in Rural Revitalization? ——An Empirical Study Based on a Survey of 664 Youth Volunteers

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Abstract: Against the continued advancement of rural revitalization, youth volunteer programs are marked by strong mobilization but weak retention. Based on survey data from 664 youth volunteers who participated in rural revitalization-related projects, this paper constructs a mediation model involving value identification, organizational support, professional matching, and continuous participation tendency to test the mechanism through which value identification and organizational support influence sustained participation. The findings show that both value identification and organizational support significantly improve professional matching, that professional matching has a significant positive effect on continuous participation tendency, and that organizational support has a significant negative direct effect on continuous participation tendency. Bootstrap tests further indicate that professional matching plays a significant mediating role in both the value identification→continuous participation tendency path and the organizational support→continuous participation tendency path, with indirect effects of 0.0970 and 0.0453, respectively. At the policy level, encouraging youth volunteers to continue participating in volunteer activities requires a certain degree of organizational support and stronger demand-oriented person-post matching, whole-process capability building, and growth-feedback mechanisms so as to enhance the sustainability and governance effectiveness of youth volunteer service.

Keywords: youth volunteers, rural revitalization, sustained participation, professional matching, organizational support

1. Introduction

Against the strategic backdrop of comprehensively advancing rural revitalization and accelerating the building of a strong agricultural nation, youth volunteers have become an important new force in grassroots governance and rural development. The national West China Program is expected to recruit around 60,000 new volunteers in 2026, with more than 90% of positions located in townships and below and service content focused on eight major areas such as rural education and rural construction, highlighting the state's institutional expectation that young talent should move downward to the grassroots. In practice, however, serious challenges remain. According to feedback from project offices at multiple universities, first-year attrition rates among volunteers commonly exceed 30%, and some county-level positions exhibit pronounced person-post mismatch. In this context, clarifying how the degree of professional matching and the strength of organizational support jointly influence youth volunteers' willingness to sustain participation matters not only for volunteer effectiveness, but also for optimizing the national talent-allocation mechanism and enhancing the endogenous momentum of rural revitalization.

Against the continued implementation of the rural revitalization strategy, youth volunteer service is regarded as an important linking mechanism among university resources, social forces, and the development needs of rural areas. Existing studies have discussed the practical significance and institutional conditions of youth participation in rural revitalization from the perspectives of action logic, support systems, and educational functions, providing a foundation for understanding the social value of

youth volunteer service (Hu Deqing, 2025)^[1]. Yet youth volunteer service is still generally characterized by strong mobilization but weak retention, especially after project completion, when repeated participation, duration of continued service, and depth of engagement are often insufficient, thereby affecting the stability of service relationships and the accumulation of experience (Deng Ping'an, 2025)^[2]. Accordingly, it is necessary to further examine how value identification, organizational support, and incentive mechanisms affect youth volunteers' professional matching, and whether professional matching can significantly promote their sustained participation in rural revitalization.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on Sustained Participation

Early research on volunteer service mainly focused on why individuals participate in volunteering. The functional theory proposed by Clary et al. (1998) argues that volunteer behavior is usually driven by multiple motives such as value expression, learning and growth, social interaction, and self-development^[3]. This theory provides an important explanatory framework for understanding the emergence of volunteer participation, but its explanatory power regarding long-term retention remains limited. As research has deepened, scholarly attention has gradually shifted to the conditions under which sustained participation is formed. Arnon et al. (2023) proposed the framework of volunteer engageability and pointed out that volunteer retention does not depend solely on individuals' willingness to participate, but is closely related to whether organizations can continuously provide a participation environment that is accessible, inclusive, and developmental^[4]. This perspective suggests that sustained participation is not only an individual-level behavioral choice, but also the result of organizational support conditions. Lorente et al. (2024) further noted that volunteers' engagement experiences during service and the psychological connection formed thereby are important direct factors driving continued retention^[5]. Zhou Linbo (2023), in research on youth volunteers, likewise found that initial participation motives do not automatically translate into sustained participation behavior; organizational response and service experience play an important mediating role in this process^[6].

2.2 The Professional Matching Mechanism

When research further asks how sustained participation is formed, matching theory offers a more explanatory path. Kristof (1996) pointed out early on that person-organization fit helps enhance satisfaction and commitment^[7]. The meta-analysis by Verquer et al. (2003) further confirmed that the higher the degree of fit, the stronger the positive attitudes and the lower the tendency to withdraw^[8]. Hoffman and Woehr (2006) advanced this logic to the behavioral level, demonstrating that fit affects not only subjective evaluation, but also objective behaviors such as sustained input^[9]. In the context of volunteer service for rural revitalization, rural service tasks are characterized by complexity, locality, and problem orientation. Whether youth volunteers can effectively apply their acquired knowledge and skills to volunteer service directly affects whether they develop a sense of competence, efficacy, and willingness to maintain long-term commitment. Therefore, professional matching is not merely a general background variable, but an important capability-conversion mechanism linking value identification and sustained participation.

2.3 Organizational Support

Parallel to professional matching is the mechanism of organizational support. Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) pointed out that when individuals perceive organizational care and resource protection, they are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and reciprocity, thereby increasing sustained contribution^[10]. Xie Jiahua et al. (2023) found that social support is significantly associated with college students' volunteer motivation^[11]; Hu Hongbin (2023) emphasized that volunteer service for rural revitalization requires a systematic support system^[12]; Hu Deqing (2025) argued that youth participation in rural revitalization cannot be separated from organizational embeddedness and institutional safeguards^[1]; Deng Ping'an (2025), from the perspective of normalization, emphasized the supply of stable mechanisms^[2]; and Wang Ju (2025) suggested that university volunteer service should move from value advocacy toward capability development and support transformation^[13]. Clearly, more organizational support is not necessarily better. The key lies in whether support matches young people's developmental needs, task requirements, and rhythms of participation. Otherwise, excessive administrative or symbolic support may create a divergence in effectiveness whereby support exists but

retention remains insufficient.

2.4 Literature Review and Commentary

Overall, volunteers' sustained participation in volunteer service activities cannot be fully explained by initial motives alone. Professional matching is an important conversion mechanism through which individuals move from value identification to sustained participation behavior, while organizational support plays a key role in this process, though its effects are often constrained by specific contexts and differences in support structure. In the research on youth volunteer service in the context of rural revitalization, the existing literature still leaves room for further development: first, the measurement of sustained participation still emphasizes subjective willingness and gives relatively insufficient attention to the behavioral dimension; second, although professional matching is widely mentioned, studies that systematically test it as an independent mechanism variable remain relatively scarce; third, the conditions under which organizational support can promote sustained participation and the conditions under which it may produce inhibitory effects have not yet been fully revealed.

On this basis, this paper investigates the relationships among value identification, organizational support, professional matching, and continuous participation tendency, and its main contributions are reflected in three aspects. First, in terms of indicator construction, this paper extends the measurement of sustained participation from a single willingness indicator to composite behavioral indicators so as to improve the explanatory power with respect to sustained participation behavior. Second, in terms of mechanism identification, this paper incorporates professional matching into the analytical framework as the core mediating variable, aiming to reveal how value identification and organizational support influence volunteers' sustained participation through a capability-conversion mechanism. Third, in terms of research context, this paper is situated in the background of rural revitalization and further discusses the differentiated effects of organizational support and the optimization of support structures, with a view to providing references for policy improvement and organizational management in youth volunteer service.

3. Research Hypotheses and Theoretical Analysis

3.1 Value Identification and Youth Volunteers' Continuous Participation Tendency

Value identification refers to the degree to which youth volunteers recognize, accept, and internalize the public value, social significance, and responsibility requirements embedded in rural revitalization. In the context of volunteer service for rural revitalization, sustained participation is not a one-time behavioral choice, but a relatively stable action tendency built on continued investment of time, emotion, and capability. Compared with external mobilization and short-term incentives, value identification can provide youth volunteers with a more enduring intrinsic motivation for continued participation. Existing studies show that whether young people are willing to remain rooted at the grassroots level and continue to participate in rural development is closely related to their perception of the meaning of service behavior. Wei Quan et al. (2026) found that volunteers with higher levels of value identification are more inclined to continue participating in volunteer service^[14]. This indicates that when young people have a high degree of identification with the goals of rural development and the value of volunteer service, they are more likely to regard volunteer service as a process of assuming responsibility and realizing value, thereby strengthening their tendency toward sustained participation. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Value identification has a significant positive effect on youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency.

3.2 Organizational Support and Youth Volunteers' Continuous Participation Tendency

Whether youth volunteers can continue participating in volunteer service for rural revitalization depends not only on value identification at the individual level, but is also importantly influenced by the external support environment. Organizational support refers to the resource provision, institutional guarantees, and growth feedback perceived by youth volunteers during participation. Adequate organizational support not only helps reduce uncertainty and adaptation costs in grassroots service, but also enhances role cognition, service confidence, and organizational belonging, thereby increasing the likelihood of continued participation. Existing studies generally regard organizational support as an

important external condition affecting youth volunteers' continued investment. Perceived organizational support has a significantly positive effect on willingness to continue participating, attitudes, and job satisfaction, and its positive effect on attitudes is stronger among youth volunteers (Won, D. et al., 2025)^[15]. This indicates that organizational support affects not only volunteers' current service experience, but also their judgment as to whether they will continue participating in the future. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: Organizational support has a significant positive effect on youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency.

3.3 The Mediating Role of Professional Matching Between Value Identification and Continuous Participation Tendency

Professional matching refers to the degree of fit between youth volunteers' disciplinary background, knowledge structure, and capability characteristics and the requirements of service positions. In volunteer service for rural revitalization, young people with higher levels of value identification are usually more willing to actively connect what they have learned with the actual needs of rural areas and to seek realistic space for the exercise of professional capabilities during service. However, value identification does not necessarily translate directly into a tendency toward sustained participation. Only when this identification is transformed into a service experience in which learning is put to practical use can it be converted into stable participation motivation. Jia Bo et al. (2023) pointed out that when young people can effectively leverage their professional strengths and solve practical problems in rural revitalization practice, their sense of competence, efficacy, and achievement is significantly enhanced^[16]. It can therefore be seen that the influence of value identification on continuous participation tendency may need to be realized through the mechanism of professional matching. Specifically, the stronger value identification is, the more likely young people are to actively seek effective alignment between their professional capabilities and service positions, thereby forming a stronger sense of value realization and action accomplishment in practice and ultimately enhancing their continuous participation tendency. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Professional matching plays a mediating role between value identification and youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency.

3.4 The Mediating Role of Professional Matching Between Organizational Support and Continuous Participation Tendency

Organizational support can affect not only youth volunteers' sense of organizational belonging and willingness to participate directly, but may also further influence their tendency toward sustained participation by improving the fit between individuals and positions. In other words, the role of organizational support is reflected not only in resource provision and emotional care, but also in whether it can provide the conditions for youth volunteers to convert and practically apply their professional capabilities.

In volunteer service for rural revitalization, young people's professional capabilities do not automatically become service effectiveness; rather, they require organizational support in job assignment, training and guidance, and process feedback in order to gradually realize effective alignment with position tasks. The more adequate organizational support is, the more likely it is to promote effective matching between young people's professional capabilities and the actual needs of rural areas, thereby strengthening their sense of competence, achievement, and tendency toward continued participation in the service process. Therefore, the influence of organizational support on continuous participation tendency is not realized entirely through a direct path, but partly through the improvement of the level of professional matching. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Professional matching plays a mediating role between organizational support and youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency.

It can thus be seen that the formation of youth volunteers' sustained participation in volunteer service for rural revitalization is not the result of a single factor, but rather the outcome of the joint action of internal identification, external support, and capability fit. Value identification mainly answers the question of why young people are willing to continue participating, organizational support mainly responds to whether young people can obtain the conditions needed for continued participation, and professional matching reflects the conversion mechanism through which young people can effectively

align capability application with position requirements. Together, these three dimensions constitute an important analytical framework for understanding youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency, as shown in Figure 1.

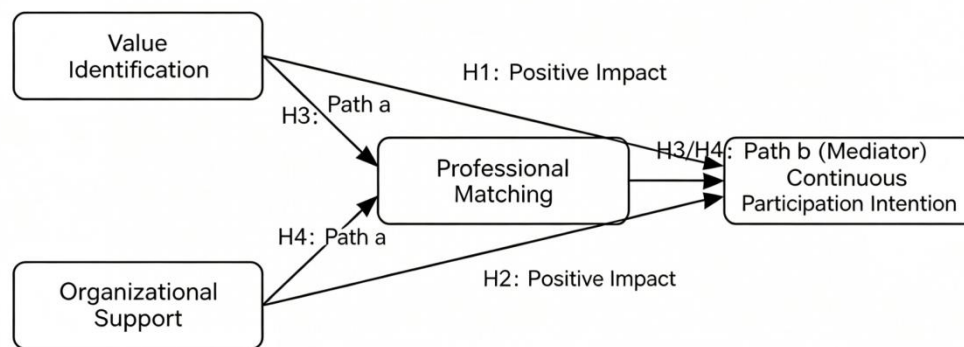


Figure 1: Research Framework

4. Empirical Study

4.1 Data Source and Sample Description

This paper collects data by means of a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire mainly covers respondents' basic demographic characteristics, volunteer service participation experience, value identification, professional matching, organizational support, and continuous participation tendency. After data screening and cleaning, a final valid sample of 664 questionnaires was obtained. All respondents were youth volunteers who had participated in volunteer service projects related to rural revitalization.

From the sample structure, female respondents account for a relatively high proportion, and the overall sample shows clear characteristics of youthfulness and university-based organizational mobilization. In terms of participation experience, the proportion of respondents who had participated in volunteer service for rural revitalization only once is relatively high. To some extent, this reflects the current problem of insufficient sustained retention in youth volunteer service under the rural revitalization context, and it also indicates the strong practical relevance of studying youth volunteers' sustained participation.

4.2 Variable Definition and Measurement(as shown in Table 1)

4.2.1 Value Identification (VI)

This construct is composed of four items and mainly reflects young people's cognition of the public value, social responsibility, developmental meaning, and policy responsiveness of volunteer service for rural revitalization. A higher score indicates a stronger degree of value identification.

4.2.2 Professional Matching (PM)

This construct is composed of three items and is mainly built from indicators such as training experience, perceived skill matching, and the amount of skill use, in order to measure the degree to which youth volunteers realize the conversion of professional capabilities and task adaptation in service tasks related to rural revitalization.

4.2.3 Organizational Support (OS)

This construct is composed of three items and is mainly built from indicators such as goal clarity, communication smoothness, and a resource guarantee index, in order to depict the degree of organizational environmental support perceived by young people in the process of volunteer service.

4.2.4 Continuous Participation Tendency (CS)

This construct is composed of three items and is mainly built from behavioral indicators such as repeated participation experience, participation frequency, and the logarithm of service duration, in order to measure youth volunteers' actual tendency to continue participating in rural revitalization service.

Table 1: Variable Definition and Measurement

Variable	Item	Source of Item	Coding Method
Value Identification (VI)	VI1: I participate because I have an inner sense of social responsibility and affection for rural communities.	Adapted from Clary et al. (1998) with revisions	5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
	VI2: I participate in order to realize personal value and self-development.	based on Zhou Linbo (2023) and Hu Deqing (2025).	5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
	VI3: I participate in order to contribute to the implementation of the rural revitalization strategy.		5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)
	VI4: I participate in response to national policy and the call of the university or college.		Same as above (final score calculated as the mean)
Organizational Support (OS)	OS1: During project participation, I am clear about the service objectives.	Adapted from Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002)	5-point scale coding (higher = higher score)
	OS2: The team communicates smoothly with local grassroots organizations.	and Kurtessis et al. (2017), with revisions based on Xie Jiahua et al. (2023).	5-point scale coding (higher = higher score)
	OS3: Resource support during project implementation is relatively good (funds/equipment/venues).		Categorical coding and standardization (final composite index)
Professional Matching (PM)	PM1: Received targeted professional training before the project started.	Adapted from Kristof (1996),	Binary coding (yes = 1, no = 0)
	PM2: Actually used my own professional skills or knowledge in service.	Verquer et al. (2003), and Hoffman and Woehr (2006).	Scored by the number of selected skill items
	PM3: Degree of match between personal professional skills and actual rural needs.		5-point scale coding and standardization (final composite index)
Continuous Participation Tendency (CS)	CS1: Repeated participation experience (whether participation frequency is greater than one).	Adapted from Arnon et al. (2023), Lorente et al. (2024), and de Miguel-Molina et al. (2024).	Binary coding (yes = 1, no = 0)
	CS2: Participation frequency (cumulative number of participations).		Coded by frequency level
	CS3: Service duration (cumulative number of volunteer service days).		$\ln(1 + \text{service days})$ and standardized (final composite index)

4.3 Model Construction

Based on the research framework, this paper constructs a mediation model of value identification, organizational support, professional matching, and continuous participation tendency. Among them, value identification and organizational support are independent variables, continuous participation tendency is the dependent variable, and professional matching is the mediating variable. The model holds that, on the one hand, value identification and organizational support directly influence youth volunteers' continuous participation tendency; on the other hand, both can also indirectly promote continuous participation tendency by improving the level of professional matching. Accordingly, the following Equations (1)-(3) are constructed:

$$CS = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 VI + \gamma_2 OS + \gamma_3 Z + \varepsilon_0 \quad (1)$$

$$PM = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 VI + \alpha_2 OS + \alpha_3 Z + \varepsilon_1 \quad (2)$$

$$CS = \beta_0 + \beta_1 VI + \beta_2 OS + \beta_3 PM + \beta_4 Z + \varepsilon_2 \quad (3)$$

In these equations, PM stands for professional matching, CS stands for the tendency for sustained participation, VI and OS represent value identification and organizational support, respectively, and Z denotes a series of control variables, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Value Identification (VI)	4.5986	0.5450	2.2500	5.0000
Organizational Support (OS)	0.0000	0.6422	-4.4405	0.5547
Professional Matching (PM)	0.0000	0.6988	-1.9853	2.0582
Continuous Participation Tendency (CS)	0.0000	0.8421	-0.9857	2.8072
Incentive Mechanism (IM)	2.1807	1.5003	0.0000	6.0000

4.4 Empirical Analysis

4.4.1 Correlation Analysis

Table 3: Correlation Analysis

Variable	VI	OS	PM	CS	IM
VI	1.0000***	0.2810***	0.3426***	0.1177**	0.0478
OS	0.2810***	1.0000***	0.2449***	-0.0374	0.0770*
PM	0.3426***	0.2449***	1.0000***	0.2100***	0.1499***
CS	0.1177**	-0.0374	0.2100***	1.0000***	0.0015

The correlation analysis shows that VI is significantly positively correlated with PM, OS is significantly positively correlated with PM, PM is significantly positively correlated with CS, and VI is also significantly positively correlated with CS, as shown in Table 3. This result provides preliminary support for the transmission logic of value identification—professional matching—sustained participation and organizational support — professional matching — sustained participation.

4.4.2 Regression Results

Table 4: Regression Results

Variable	Eq I: PM (Professional Matching)				Eq II: CS (Continuous Participation Tendency)			
	beta	t	LLCI	ULCI	beta	t	LLCI	ULCI
VI	0.381***	7.914	0.287	0.476	0.118*	1.852	-0.007	0.243
OS	0.176***	4.297	0.095	0.256	-0.144***	-2.742	-0.246	-0.041
PM					0.256***	5.147	0.158	0.354
R ²	0.141				0.059			
F	54.400				8.220			

Note: N = 664. Equation I is the mediation equation, and Equation II is the outcome equation. *, **, and *** indicate significance at the 10%, 5%, and 1% levels, respectively.

As shown in Table 4, in the mediation equation, PM is the dependent variable, and both VI and OS have significant positive effects on PM, with an explanatory power of R²= 0.141. This indicates that both value-based internal identification and organization-based external support help improve the degree of matching between youth volunteers' capabilities and tasks. In the outcome equation, CS is the dependent variable; PM has a significant positive effect on CS, OS has a significant negative effect on CS, and VI has a positive effect on CS but does not reach the 5% significance level, with the model R²= 0.0588. This result indicates that professional matching is the key direct driver of sustained participation.

4.4.3 Effect Tests

Table 5: Effect Tests

Effect Type	Effect	LLCI	ULCI	Conclusion
VI → CS (Direct Effect)	0.1180	-0.0070	0.2430	Not Significant
OS → CS (Direct Effect)	-0.1438	-0.2460	-0.0410	Significant
VI → PM → CS (Indirect Effect)	0.0970	0.0564	0.1412	Significant
OS → PM → CS (Indirect Effect)	0.0453	0.0223	0.0743	Significant

Note: N = 664. Equation I is the mediation equation, and Equation II is the outcome equation; indirect effects are tested using Bootstrap. LLCI and ULCI denote the lower and upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval, respectively.

As shown in Table 5, Bootstrap tests show that the indirect effect of VI→PM→CS is 0.0970, with a 95% confidence interval from 0.0564 to 0.1412; the indirect effect of OS→PM→CS is 0.0453, with a

95% confidence interval from 0.0223 to 0.0743. Neither interval contains 0, indicating that the mediating effect of professional matching is significant. Looking further at the total effects, the total effect of VI on CS is approximately 0.2150, while the total effect of OS on CS is approximately -0.0985. This result suggests that professional matching should be regarded as a key mechanism variable for explaining sustained participation in youth volunteer service.

5. Research Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

5.1 Research Conclusions

Value identification can significantly improve professional matching and thereby promote youth volunteers' sustained participation in rural revitalization. This result is consistent with the logic of value expression—behavioral maintenance emphasized by functional theory in volunteer service, and it also corresponds to domestic research findings that youth volunteer identification drives sustained investment. Zhou Linbo (2023) pointed out that youth volunteer participation is not determined by a single motive, but is jointly shaped by value identification and action experience^[6]; Hu Deqing's (2025) research on the action logic of youth participation in rural revitalization also emphasized that sustained participation becomes stable only when young people regard rural revitalization as a practical field with public meaning and personal responsibility^[1]. This paper further advances that explanation, namely, that the effect of value identification does not remain only at the attitudinal level, but is translated into the action level through the capability-conversion mechanism of professional matching.

Organizational support has a significant positive effect on professional matching, but a significant negative direct effect on continuous participation tendency. This differentiated result of positive enabling and negative direct impact indicates that organizational support is structurally heterogeneous: support is not naturally equivalent to incentive. Existing studies of organizational support have pointed out that resource provision, perceived care, and feedback mechanisms help enhance engagement and retention. Yet in the context of youth volunteer service, if support is manifested mainly as administrative arrangements, process control, and task pressure, rather than developmental support and capability gains, it may suppress the experience of autonomy and weaken continuity. Deng Ping'an's (2025) discussion of the normalization of volunteer service^[2] and Wang Ju's (2025) research on the shift in university volunteer service from educating people to promoting development^[13] both suggest that support mechanisms should shift from a management orientation to a development orientation. Therefore, the findings of this paper do not negate organizational support itself; rather, they reveal the matching conditions between support modes and support content.

Professional matching plays a significant mediating role in both the value identification→sustained participation path and the organizational support→sustained participation path. This is consistent with the classic conclusion of person-post matching theory that matching enhances a sense of efficacy and reduces withdrawal tendency, and it also corresponds to domestic research showing that the exercise of volunteer service capabilities determines behavioral retention. In other words, whether youth volunteers continue to participate depends not only on whether they are willing, but also on whether they can do the work well, whether they can be seen, and whether they receive achievement feedback. This finding strengthens the paper's core judgment that professional matching is the key mechanism variable connecting value mobilization, organizational provision, and sustained behavior.

5.2 Policy Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions, the following policy recommendations are proposed:

5.2.1 Strengthen the Sustained Cultivation Mechanism of Value Identification

Incorporate volunteer service for rural revitalization into an integrated system of ideological and political education, practical teaching, and career education in universities, thereby forming a closed loop of course cognition, project experience, and reflective reinforcement. Emphasis should be placed on improving young people's internalization of the public value of rural revitalization and personal responsibility through typical cases, place-based practice, and achievement display, so as to avoid one-off mobilization and short-term participation.

5.2.2 Establish a Demand-Oriented Professional Matching Mechanism

Local governments should publish lists of position requirements, while universities establish

capability profiles for volunteers to implement precise matching among tasks, capabilities, and personnel. For key projects, layered and classified post assignment should be promoted to prioritize the allocation of positions related to volunteers' fields of expertise; for temporarily mismatched positions, a training-compensation plus mentor-guidance mechanism should be established to reduce participation loss caused by mismatch.

5.2.3 Shift Organizational Support from a Management Type to a Developmental Type

Optimize the structure of organizational support, reduce excessively administrative procedures, and increase the supply of developmental support. The focus of support should shift from task allocation and process control to capability coaching, process feedback, collaborative problem solving, and recognition of outcomes, thereby enhancing young people's autonomy, sense of competence, and sense of achievement, and alleviating the negative direct effect of organizational support on sustained participation.

Acknowledgement

Funding projects: Guangdong Province Philosophy and Social Sciences Planning 2025 Volunteer Service Research Special Project, "Research on the Collaborative Mechanism, Dilemma Breakthrough, and Path Innovation of Youth Volunteer Service in Colleges and Universities in the City to Empower Rural Prosperity" (No. GD25ZYF07); Key Funding Projects of the 14th Five-Year Plan of Shenzhen Education Science in 2024 (No. ZDZZ24024); Key Project of University-Level Quality Engineering Education and Teaching Research, Shenzhen Polytechnic University, 2025 (No. 7025310504); Guangdong Provincial 2025 Educational Science Planning Project (Moral Education Special) (No.2025JKDY064).

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