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Understanding Factors of Involvement and Motives of Youth in Volunteerism

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Abstract

Volunteering is a transformative learning activity that involves the contribution of manpower and intellectual support to the community and humanities projects. The objective of the study is to examine the level of involvement and motives for youth participation in volunteer activities. This study uses a quantitative approach with a descriptive design through a questionnaire. A survey was developed using Volunteers Function Inventory (VIF) instrument to assess motivational function towards volunteers. Sampling studies involved 200 respondents aged between 16 to 30 years. The motivational factors of volunteer involvement, namely, value function, understanding function, career function, social function, protection function, and improvement function have been identified as contributing elements to youth involvement in volunteer activities. The findings showed that 76.5% of youths had volunteered to participate in the volunteering activities. 73.2% of the respondents had the desire to join volunteering activities again. The study indicated that the highest motive of youth involvement in activities volunteerism is an understanding function ($M=28.12$; $SD=4.18$). Finally, most volunteers had gained and sustain knowledge, skills, and abilities in volunteering activities. This study has important implications for the theoretical, practical, and policy towards the involvement of youth in a volunteering program in Malaysia.

Keywords: Involvement, Motivation, Volunteering, Youth

Introduction

Volunteerism is not a new phenomenon but it is a main resources for performing functions and tasks in an activity, especially youth involvement (Wilson & Pimm, 1996). It has changed a lot over time as today's society is very dynamic and its structure is improving with newer and forward-looking visions and goals (Ferreira et al., 2012). Volunteering is not a sector that generates income, but it attracts individuals to lend a helping hand. Bussell & Forbes (2002); Aranda et al (2019) emphasized volunteering activities have their lime and capacity to initiate a change, improve social and private welfare, as well as raising awareness regarding a certain topic or issue. In Malaysia, volunteering involves the surrounding communities which volunteering serves the purpose of helping as well as conserving and offering important services for the community and the country (Hamzah et al., 2016). Volunteering must be done through organizations or social channels that are registered under the Youth

Organization Registration Office with the objective of welfare activities and social responsibilities. Most registered organizations place the youth as the main leader, shaker, or mover and volunteer. Generally, a volunteer organization is an organization in the third sector whereby it acts as the backbone of a country's development (UN Volunteers, 2016). The members in a volunteering body consist of a huge part of volunteers from various organizations and are managed by workers or full-time working permanent members. The membership of a volunteer organization of course depends on the willingness and ability of the members in fulfilling duties or voluntary work movements. The youth remain an invaluable national asset and drives the country's development, unity and transcendency (Yacob et al., 2020). Nevertheless, some challenges are often faced by youth volunteers. The challenges include keeping the motivation and spirit alive in every single activity. Studies have shown that the difficulty to push and maintain volunteers is the main challenge. Therefore, youth volunteers especially need to be motivated and encouraged to continuously involve themselves in volunteering activities (Hamzah et al., 2016). Besides, youth participation in volunteering could indirectly prevent youths from engaging in detrimental activities (Moore & Allen, 1996).

Motivational factor is the important element in pushing the individual to be more actively involved in volunteering activities (Aranda et al., 2019). Motivation is a principal psychological process or a requirement that leads to actions and behaviors. Latham & Pinder (2005) added that motivation is a product of interactions among individuals and the environment. Studies have shown that motivation in volunteering activities are influenced by other factors including new skills, religious background, environment, and community development, compensation or wage, support system, career development, awareness levels of volunteering activities, and levels of knowledge in a volunteering organization (Smith et al., 2010). These factors are positively and significantly interrelated with volunteering activities (Suanda et al., 2012). According to Clary & Snyder (1991), the multifactorial model has the main goal through the understanding of reasons, hopes, plans, and goals that characterize the volunteering phenomenon. This model divides motivation according to its function and classifies motivation into six dimensions that are; firstly value that is interpreted as the chance for volunteers to state or acts towards their values, beliefs, knowledge, and ability; secondly comprehension which is the opportunity to gain experience through new learning; thirdly social, which is the possibility of being with friends or gaining new friends; fourthly career which relates to professional career advancements through volunteering works; fifth is protection which offers alternatives to negative emotions; and lastly the sixth is an enhancement which refers to a volunteer's self-worth and ego (Schroeder et al., 2014). Ferreira et al (2012) argue that the multifactorial model is one of the most complete categories in the literature field. This is important in determining the intrinsic and extrinsic motivational existence (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Raman & Pashupati, 2002).

Ferreira et al (2012) identified four different motivational categories including developments and learnings; generosity; career recognition and belonging; and protection. Developments and learnings are a part of the motivational category that relates to the learning process, obtaining new perspectives, and expanding experiences. Based on Kemp (2002); Trogdon (2005) volunteers consider their career largely as the source of inspiration to broaden their knowledge and their self-development. Volunteers also believe that this ability can increase

their understanding levels regarding the public, strengthen their social skills on top of gaining experience (UN Volunteers, 2016).

Meanwhile, Hyde & Knowles (2013) have identified nine important aspects that motivate youth to participate in volunteering activities; the first being aspiration and the desire to help people or those in need; secondly, to make others happy in a certain period; thirdly, to support the community and environment; fourthly, to join family members in helping those in need; fifthly, to repay the volunteers' good deeds; sixthly, to love the individuals that require help; seventh, to donate necessities for those who need them; eighth, to fill up their free and leisure time; and lastly, as a responsibility towards a volunteering agency or organization.

Methodology

The population of this study was 420 consisted of youths who attended the National Youth Day Celebration Programme in 2016. According to Krejcie & Morgan (1970), based on the 95% confidence interval of $p < 0.05$, the sample size deemed suitable was 200. All the respondents had given a set of self-administered questionnaires and 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. After the data had complete, the descriptive analysis will determine the frequency and percentage of the respondents' demographic profiles. The motive of the youth's involvement in volunteering activities also had been studied.

Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents were age, ethnicity, gender, education levels, nationality, and individual monthly income. Motives of participating in volunteering activities were measured using the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI). The VFI measures six motives which are understanding, values, enhancement, career, social and protective. A seven-point of Likert scale was used to indicate the level of importance for each motive ((1 = Not at all important, 2 = Low important, 3 = Slightly important, 4 = Unsure, 5 = Moderately important, 6 = Very important, 7 = Extremely important).

The values function involves opportunities that volunteerism provides for individuals to express values that are very important to the self, related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others. The understanding function consists of the opportunity for volunteers to gain and sustain knowledge, skills, and abilities while the social function was volunteering offers opportunities to improve social relationships, it helps individuals to fit in and get along with social groups that are important for them. Career function is to determine participation in voluntary work that increases future job opportunities and protective function showed participation in voluntary work can protect them from negative feelings, it can help the individual to eliminate negative aspects surrounding. Lastly, the enhancement function was by participation in voluntary work the individual can enhance self-esteem, it centers on ego growth and development. The analysis involved the mean value and standard deviation to determine the main motive of youth involvement in volunteering to determine the dispersion of data (Suanda et al., 2012).

Results

The total number of respondents in this study was 200. Females were the highest participants in this study with a total of 133 (66.5%) and males contributed 67 (33.5%). 101 (50.5%) of the respondents were aged between 21 – 25 years old. Most of them were Malays (182 or 91.0%). Degree students contributed 104 (52%) of the respondents and others consisted of

Master/Doctor Philosophy, Diploma, and below. The family income of the respondents was average RM2001-RM3500 with 49 or 24.5%. Table 1.1 demonstrated the respondent's demographic profile of the study area.

Table 1.1: Respondents' Demographic Profile (n=200)

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	67	33.5
Female	133	66.5
Age		
16-20 Years	59	29.5
21-25 Years	101	50.5
26 -30 Years	40	20.0
Race		
Malay	182	91.0
Non-Malay	18	9.0
Residence		
Town	105	52.5
Out of Town	95	47.5
Education		
Masters / PhD	10	5.0
Degree	104	52.0
Diploma and below	86	43.0
Occupation Status		
Student	123	61.5
Working	69	34.5
Not Working	8	4.0
Family Income		
RM5000 and above	30	15.0
RM3501-RM5000	45	22.5
RM2001-RM3500	49	24.5
RM1001-RM2000	46	23.0
RM1000 and below	30	15.0

The levels of youth involvement in volunteering are measured through the percentage of participation, period time of involvement, sources, methods of participation in volunteering, and reason for choosing to volunteer. Table 1.2 shows the youth involvement levels in volunteering. The results showed that 153 respondents (76.5%) were volunteers while 47 respondents (23.5%) were non -volunteers.

Table 1.2: Youth Involvement Levels in Volunteering

Youth Involvement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	153	76.5
No	47	23.5

Table 1.3 below shows that a total of 40 out of 153 respondents (26.2%) have been volunteers (less than seven months), 38 respondents (24.8%) have been volunteers for (3-5 years), while 37 respondents (24.2%) involved as volunteers in the period (last six years), 28 respondents (18.3%) in the period (1-2 years) and 10 respondents (6.5%) in the period (7-11 months). Aranda et al (2019) state that the factor of social motivations increases with age whereas growth and security motivations decrease as volunteers grow older. The evidence suggested that older and younger volunteers might prioritize different motivation, the possible differential effect of age on the relationship between motivation and volunteerism outcomes is not yet sufficiently justified.

Table 1.3: Duration of Involvement in Volunteering Activities

Duration of Involvement	Frequency	Percentage (%)
6 years recently	37	24.2
3 to 5 years	38	24.8
1 to 2 years	28	18.3
7 to 11 months	10	6.5
Less than 7 months	40	26.2

Next, Table 1.3 shows the duration of which respondents were involved in volunteering. The results showed that 40 (26.2%) respondents had become volunteers in less than seven months. The findings of this study are equivalent to the previous research by Suandi T. (1991) in Rabun et al., (2017). Based on this research, most of the volunteers had a long duration and high level of commitment to volunteering activities. This is probably because there is a high level of volunteerism spirit among youth volunteers. Therefore, they suggest that a high level of commitment should be maintained, and more efforts should be made to improve the behaviour of youth.

Table 1.4: Sources or Methods of Youth Involvement in Volunteering

Source/ Method	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Friend, family member, colleague, or other volunteers	61	39.9
College/ University	36	23.5
Poster or magazine	18	11.8
Employer	16	10.5
organization Website	10	6.5
Volunteer bureau / Similar service	7	4.6
Own decision	1	0.7
Not sure	4	2.5

Table 1.4 shows the sources or methods of youth involvement in volunteering. The findings show that 61 of the respondents (39.9%) were involved in volunteering activities through family friends, colleagues, or other volunteers, followed by college/university (23.5%) as the lowest percentage is through their own decision (0.7%). It shows that the influence of friends is significant in inspiring respondents to participate in volunteering. This finding coincides with the research done by Mamat et al (2018) that found the social environmental factor such as peers is the primary driver in youth volunteering participation.

Table 1.5: Motives for volunteering

Motives for volunteering	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Heard good things about being a volunteer	54	35.3
To help others	30	19.6
Interested in what the organizer does	29	19.0
Something that can be done	19	12.4
Have family members who are volunteers	15	9.8
Wants to get out of the house	6	3.9

Based on Table 1.5, the main reason for respondents to volunteer is because they always hear good things about being a volunteer (35.3%), followed by the desire to help others (19.6%) and interest in what the organizer implements (19.0%) whereas the reason of wanting to get out of the house records the lowest percentage (3.9%). It shows that respondents furnished with positive values. This finding was concurred by Suanda et al (2012); Sadiq (2017) majority of respondents became volunteers because they always hear positive things about volunteers and would like to help those in need. Previous studies related to motivation and volunteerism have also identified the “altruistic” aspect or altruism, i.e., the belief or practice of disinterested and unselfish concern for the well-being of others as the primary motivation (Tapp & Spanier, 1973; Howarth, 1976; Esmond & Dunlop, 2004). This concept is still widely discussed (Smith, 1966; Burns et al., 2006; Carpenter & Myers, 2007).

Researchers have analyzed the youth involvement motives in volunteering using the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI). The research instruments are developed by Clary & Snyder (1991) which has been modified according to the suitability of this study. There are six motives contained in VFI, namely protective, values, career, social, understanding, and enhancement as seen in the table below

Table 1.6: Motives of Youth Involvement in Volunteering

Motive	Mean	Standard Deviation
Understanding	28.12	4.18
Values	28.08	4.36
Enhancement	27.88	4.51
Career	27.33	4.51
Social	27.03	4.42
Protective	26.95	4.59

Table 1.6 shows the mean of the motive of youth involvement in volunteering. The results show that the understanding motive records the highest mean value (mean = 28.12) followed by value motive with the mean value of 28.08. It shows that the understanding and value of volunteering drive the respondents' participation. The findings portray how respondents gain knowledge, skills, abilities, and human values in every volunteering activity participated.

The findings support past research findings by Muhamad & Alauddin (2013); Khir et al., (2016) that the value and understanding motives are dominant towards an individual's participation in volunteering. The value factor remains the leading motive for youth to participate voluntarily and show moral values such as empathy, concern, and the desire to help others.

As for the understanding factor, youth will gain experience and learn new things to apply their knowledge and skills in volunteering.

Conclusion

Volunteers play a vital role in helping to preserve and provide essential services in the community and country especially Malaysia (Niebuur et al., 2019). Volunteers also assist in unraveling inequality issues and social imbalance along with other problems; hence it is relevant and rational to update information in determining factors that affect the behavior, motivational power, and the need for a volunteer workforce in this country and globally (Kim et al., 2010). This was agreed by Moore & Allen (1996); Hustinx et al (2010). The obstacles in being a youth volunteer are very challenging, especially to maintain the motivation and volunteering spirit to take part in every single activity carried out every year. Though this problem is an effort to fulfill the mission set by the organization, various research and studies carried out show that the inability to motivate and retain volunteers is an overall challenge (Maund et al., 2020). The findings of the study showed that the respondents got to know about the activity volunteerism through friends, family, colleagues, or other volunteers and through college or university courses. These findings support the findings of the study by Norazrine et al (2017) who found social environmental factors such as peers to be the main driver's youth involvement in volunteer activities.

The involvement of respondents in volunteering shows that this activity gives a positive impact on youth to be more concerned about other people's struggles. Overall, most of the volunteers were happy with volunteering. They feel satisfied with the support, satisfaction and recognition, and organizer information. Meanwhile, the finding is also equivalent to research by Hamzah et al (2016); Aranda et al (2019) that youth have positive involvement motives in volunteering including helping people in need, boosting self-confidence, and adding values to their career.

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