

# The Role of Social Media Usage, Gratitude, Self-Esteem, and Religiosity on Volunteerism among Malaysian Youth

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i12/24041> DOI:10.6007/IJARBS/v14-i12/24041

Published Date: 05 December 2024

## Abstract

This study investigates the relationship between social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism among Malaysian youth. The research examines how these key factors—social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity—affect youth engagement in volunteer activities. A sample of 419 Malaysian youths was analyzed using quantitative methods, including correlation and regression analyses. The results indicate that gratitude is the strongest predictor of volunteerism, followed by self-esteem, religiosity, and social media usage. Higher levels of gratitude and self-esteem were significantly associated with increased volunteer engagement. These findings highlight the pivotal role of gratitude and self-esteem in fostering volunteerism, while also demonstrating the influence of social media and religiosity. The study provides meaningful insights into the interplay between digital, personal, and religious factors that motivate volunteerism and offers practical recommendations for enhancing youth civic engagement in Malaysia.

**Keywords:** Social Media Usage, Gratitude, Self-Esteem, Religiosity, Volunteerism, Malaysian Youth

## Introduction

Volunteerism, broadly defined as the voluntary provision of time and services to benefit others without financial compensation, plays a vital role in fostering social cohesion and community development (Wilson, 2021; Snyder & Omoto, 2020). Engaging in volunteer activities not only provides substantial societal benefits but also contributes to personal growth, particularly for youth (Yeung et al., 2020; Lee & Kang, 2021). For Malaysian youth, volunteerism represents a significant pathway to civic engagement, personal development, and social responsibility. This is increasingly relevant in a world where the values of empathy, altruism, and community participation are seen as essential traits for a harmonious society (Mahmood et al., 2021; Wong et al., 2022). Despite its importance, little research has focused

on understanding the motivational factors that influence volunteerism among Malaysian youth.

Social media has become a powerful tool for youth engagement, providing platforms for communication, organization, and dissemination of volunteer opportunities (Lim & Teo, 2020). With more than 90% of Malaysian youth actively engaging with social media, platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have increasingly facilitated the connection between individuals and volunteer organizations (Rahman & Ismail, 2021; Wong & Chan, 2022). Social media usage not only increases the accessibility of volunteer opportunities but also fosters a sense of social responsibility through peer influence and community-oriented content.

In addition to social media, individual traits such as gratitude have been identified as important predictors of prosocial behaviors, including volunteerism. Gratitude is the recognition and appreciation of the positive aspects of one's life, which has been consistently linked to increased empathy and a stronger desire to help others (Algoe, 2018; Watkins et al., 2020). Studies have shown that individuals who regularly experience and express gratitude are more likely to engage in volunteerism as a way of giving back to their community (Chan & Abdullah, 2021).

Self-esteem, or an individual's self-perception and sense of worth, is another psychological factor that plays a crucial role in determining prosocial behavior, including volunteerism. Youth with higher levels of self-esteem are more confident in their ability to contribute positively to their community, which in turn makes them more likely to volunteer (Baumeister et al., 2020; Cast & Burke, 2021). For Malaysian youth, self-esteem is often influenced by family expectations, peer relationships, and societal norms, which can either encourage or inhibit participation in volunteer work (Lim & Zakaria, 2022).

Religiosity has long been associated with altruistic behavior, including volunteerism. In Malaysia, where Islam and other religions like Buddhism, Christianity, and Hinduism play a central role in daily life, religious beliefs and practices often emphasize the importance of helping others and contributing to the community (Azmi et al., 2021; Halim et al., 2022). Religiosity, as both a personal and societal value, may serve as a significant motivator for youth volunteerism, particularly in a collectivist culture that prioritizes community welfare over individual gain.

This study aims to examine the role of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity in predicting volunteerism among Malaysian youth. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) explore the levels of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism among Malaysian youth; (2) investigate the relationships between these factors and volunteerism; and (3) identify the strongest predictors of volunteerism in this context.

## **Literature Review**

### *Social Media Usage and Volunteerism*

Social media platforms have revolutionized how youth engage with volunteer opportunities, making it easier to access information and connect with organizations. Research highlights that youth frequently use social media for activism and community involvement, turning platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok into hubs for volunteerism-related activities

(Lim & Ismail, 2021; Rahman & Teo, 2021). These platforms enable individuals to join networks, share causes, and mobilize volunteer efforts, often with just a few clicks. As a result, social media fosters a culture of civic responsibility and allows users to participate in volunteer activities more readily than ever before (Huang et al., 2020).

In Malaysia, social media usage has a significant impact on youth engagement in volunteerism. Studies indicate that Malaysian youth are highly active on social media, which amplifies their exposure to volunteer opportunities, often through digital campaigns and peer-to-peer sharing (Rahman & Ismail, 2021). Social media also serves as a platform for youth to follow volunteer organizations, stay updated on events, and engage with content that promotes social responsibility (Wong & Chan, 2022). Consequently, social media not only facilitates access to volunteer opportunities but also creates a peer-influenced environment that encourages participation in community service (Mahmood et al., 2021).

Moreover, social media has created new avenues for youth to contribute to volunteer causes without being physically present. Virtual volunteering, where individuals offer their skills remotely, is becoming more prevalent. This form of volunteering enables youth to engage in global causes and collaborate with international organizations, expanding their volunteerism reach beyond local communities (Huang et al., 2020). Thus, social media usage plays an integral role in promoting and sustaining volunteerism among youth, particularly by lowering barriers to entry and creating a more accessible volunteer environment.

#### *Gratitude and Volunteerism*

Gratitude has been well-documented as a key motivator for prosocial behavior, including volunteerism. Gratitude fosters feelings of empathy and a desire to give back to the community, making it a significant predictor of volunteer activities (Algoe, 2018; Watkins et al., 2020). Individuals who frequently experience gratitude are more inclined to participate in volunteer work as a way of showing appreciation for the positive aspects of their lives. This link between gratitude and prosocial behavior is especially relevant in cultural contexts that value reciprocity and community welfare (Chan & Abdullah, 2021).

In Malaysia, gratitude is deeply embedded in cultural norms that emphasize family and community interdependence. Malaysian youth, who often grow up in close-knit families, are taught to appreciate the support and opportunities they receive, which translates into a greater sense of obligation to help others (Wong & Lim, 2022). Grateful individuals tend to seek out opportunities to volunteer as a means of expressing their gratitude, both to those in need and to their communities. This sense of moral obligation, derived from feelings of gratitude, serves as a powerful motivator for volunteerism among Malaysian youth (Chan & Abdullah, 2021).

Additionally, gratitude fosters a positive outlook on life, which has been shown to increase individuals' willingness to engage in prosocial activities. Grateful individuals are more likely to feel satisfied with their lives and, in turn, are motivated to share that positivity with others through volunteerism (Watkins et al., 2020). For Malaysian youth, gratitude not only enhances their personal well-being but also drives their desire to contribute to the greater good, further solidifying the role of gratitude in encouraging volunteerism (Algoe, 2018).

*Self-Esteem and Volunteerism*

Self-esteem, or an individual's sense of worth and confidence, is another important factor influencing volunteerism. High self-esteem is positively associated with prosocial behaviors, as individuals who feel good about themselves are more likely to engage in activities that benefit others (Baumeister et al., 2020; Cast & Burke, 2021). Youth with strong self-esteem are confident in their ability to make a meaningful contribution, making them more inclined to participate in volunteer activities that reinforce their positive self-image (Lim & Zakaria, 2022).

In Malaysia, youth self-esteem is shaped by various social and cultural factors, including family dynamics, educational achievements, and societal expectations (Wong et al., 2021). Youth who feel supported by their families and peers tend to develop higher levels of self-esteem, which, in turn, motivates them to give back to their communities through volunteer work. Moreover, volunteerism can further enhance self-esteem, as it provides individuals with a sense of accomplishment and social connection, reinforcing their belief in their ability to make a positive impact (Cast & Burke, 2021).

Research suggests that self-esteem and volunteerism have a reciprocal relationship. While high self-esteem motivates individuals to engage in volunteer activities, volunteering also boosts self-esteem by providing opportunities for personal growth and social validation (Baumeister et al., 2020). For Malaysian youth, volunteerism not only serves as a way to contribute to society but also as a means of personal development, enhancing their self-confidence and reinforcing their identity as valuable members of their community (Lim & Zakaria, 2022).

*Religiosity and Volunteerism*

Religiosity, often defined as the degree of religious belief, practice, and commitment, has been consistently linked to prosocial behavior, including volunteerism (Saroglou, 2019; Azmi et al., 2021). Religious teachings across different faiths often emphasize helping others as a moral duty, encouraging adherents to engage in volunteer work as a form of service to their communities (Halim et al., 2022). In Malaysia, where Islam is the predominant religion, and other faiths such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity also hold strong influences, religiosity plays a crucial role in shaping the values and behaviors of youth (Abdullah et al., 2020). Youth who actively participate in religious activities are often more inclined to volunteer, seeing it as an extension of their religious commitment and a way to live out their faith.

Research indicates that religiosity is a significant predictor of volunteerism, particularly in cultures where religious identity is closely tied to community involvement (Saroglou, 2019). In a collectivist society like Malaysia, religious institutions often serve as centers for organizing community service, with many volunteer initiatives being coordinated through mosques, temples, and churches (Azmi et al., 2021). For example, Islamic teachings strongly encourage Zakat (charity) and Sadaqah (voluntary giving), which promote not only financial contributions but also the giving of time and effort to assist those in need (Halim et al., 2022). Similarly, other faiths in Malaysia emphasize compassion, service, and charity, which further incentivize youth to engage in volunteer activities as a reflection of their religious beliefs.

Moreover, religiosity does not merely act as an external motivator but also influences internal moral values, which contribute to the likelihood of volunteering. Religiously committed individuals often internalize values such as altruism, empathy, and social responsibility, which naturally lead to higher engagement in volunteerism (Saroglou, 2019). Among Malaysian youth, religiosity fosters a sense of obligation to help the less fortunate, particularly through organized religious events like charity drives or community support groups (Halim et al., 2022). The connection between religiosity and volunteerism in Malaysia demonstrates that religious teachings and practices are powerful motivators for prosocial behavior, especially in fostering a culture of service and social responsibility among youth.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

This study involved a sample of 419 Malaysian youth aged between 15 and 30 years. Participants were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure diverse representation across various demographic categories, including gender, socioeconomic status, and geographic location (urban and rural areas). The sample was drawn from secondary schools, universities, and community centres across Malaysia. Participants were required to have basic literacy skills in Malay or English to complete the self-report questionnaires. The sample size of 419 was determined through a power analysis to ensure sufficient statistical power for detecting relationships between the variables.

### **Procedure and Measures**

Participants were recruited through social media advertisements, educational institutions, and community outreach programs. Informed consent was obtained prior to participation, and all procedures followed ethical guidelines approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Data were collected through an online survey, which was accessible to participants via a secure link. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete and included questions assessing social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism.

### *Volunteerism*

Volunteerism was measured using the Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI), a validated tool that assesses individuals' motivations for engaging in volunteer work. The scale includes 15 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always), with higher scores indicating more frequent engagement in volunteer activities. Sample items include "I volunteer because I want to give back to the community" and "Volunteering helps me make new social connections." In the current study, the VFI demonstrated high internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.89.

### *Social Media Usage*

Social Media Usage Social media usage was assessed using the Social Media Use Scale (SMUS), a validated scale that measures the frequency and intensity of social media engagement. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Never, 5 = Always), with higher scores indicating more frequent social media use. Sample items include "I use social media to stay informed about volunteer opportunities" and "I follow organizations that promote volunteerism on social media." In this study, the SMUS showed strong reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87.

### *Gratitude*

Gratitude was measured using the Gratitude Questionnaire-Six Item Form (GQ-6), a widely used tool for assessing the disposition to feel gratitude. This scale consists of 6 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores reflecting a greater sense of gratitude. Sample items include "I have so much in life to be thankful for" and "I feel grateful for what life has given me." In the current study, the GQ-6 demonstrated good internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84.

### *Self-Esteem*

Self-Esteem was measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), a widely validated instrument that assesses global self-worth. The RSES includes 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 4 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. Sample items include "I feel that I have a number of good qualities" and "I am able to do things as well as most people." In this study, the RSES showed excellent reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91.

### *Religiosity*

Religiosity was measured using the Religiosity Scale, which assesses the degree of religious commitment and involvement. The scale consists of 10 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), with higher scores indicating greater religiosity. Sample items include "My religious beliefs influence my everyday actions" and "I participate in religious activities regularly." The scale demonstrated strong internal consistency in the current study, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.88.

## **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the levels of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism among participants. Pearson correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between the independent variables and volunteerism. Additionally, multiple regression analyses were performed to determine which factors were the strongest predictors of volunteerism. The significance level for all statistical tests was set at  $p < .05$ .

## **Results and Discussion**

Descriptive statistics for social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism are presented in Table 1. The results show that participants reported moderate to high levels of engagement across these variables. The mean score for social media usage ( $M = 27.4$ ,  $SD = 3.80$ ) suggests that a significant proportion of youth are highly engaged in digital platforms. Gratitude ( $M = 28.7$ ,  $SD = 4.10$ ) and religiosity ( $M = 29.3$ ,  $SD = 4.00$ ) were also reported at relatively high levels, indicating strong personal values that may influence prosocial behavior. Volunteerism ( $M = 26.9$ ,  $SD = 4.20$ ) was moderately high, with 56.56% of participants reporting high involvement in volunteer activities.

The results show that the majority of Malaysian youth in this study exhibit high levels of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and engagement in volunteerism. These findings align with existing literature on Malaysian youth, where social media platforms are commonly used for engagement in social activities, including volunteerism (Lim & Ismail,



2021; Rahman & Teo, 2021). The mean score for social media usage ( $M = 27.4$ ,  $SD = 3.80$ ) reflects the significant role social media plays in modern youth engagement. With 59.43% of participants reporting high usage, it's evident that Malaysian youth rely heavily on digital platforms to connect with their communities and access volunteer opportunities (Mahmood et al., 2021).

The high levels of gratitude ( $M = 28.7$ ,  $SD = 4.10$ ) and religiosity ( $M = 29.3$ ,  $SD = 4.00$ ) also highlight the importance of cultural and moral values in shaping prosocial behavior among Malaysian youth. In Malaysia, gratitude is often fostered through cultural norms of reciprocity and community responsibility, which are further reinforced by religious teachings (Chan & Abdullah, 2021; Wong & Lim, 2022). Approximately 58.48% of youth reported high levels of gratitude, which may explain the relatively high levels of volunteerism in this sample, as individuals with greater feelings of gratitude tend to express their appreciation through acts of service (Algoe, 2018).

The findings related to self-esteem ( $M = 26.7$ ,  $SD = 4.25$ ) indicate that youth who possess a positive self-image are more likely to engage in volunteerism. As 60.38% of participants reported high self-esteem, this suggests that confidence in their abilities motivates Malaysian youth to actively contribute to their communities (Baumeister et al., 2020). The role of religiosity in predicting volunteerism is also critical, with over 61% of participants demonstrating high religiosity, reflecting the influence of religious beliefs on encouraging altruistic behavior, especially within collectivist and religiously inclined societies like Malaysia (Saroglou, 2019; Halim et al., 2022).

Finally, the moderate to high levels of volunteerism ( $M = 26.9$ ,  $SD = 4.20$ ), with 56.56% of participants engaging actively in volunteer work, underscore the active civic engagement of Malaysian youth. This reinforces the notion that young people in Malaysia are keen on participating in prosocial activities, often facilitated by digital engagement, gratitude, self-worth, and religious values (Wong et al., 2021).

Table 1

*Level of Social Media Usage, Gratitude, Self-Esteem, Religiosity, and Volunteerism Among Malaysian Youth (N = 419)*

Level	n	%	Mean	SD
<u>Social Media Usage</u>			28.70	3.80
Low	45	10.74		
Moderate	125	29.83		
High	249	59.43		
<u>Gratitude</u>			26.70	4.30
Low	57	13.60		
Moderate	117	27.92		

High	245	58.48		
<u>Self-Esteem</u>				
Low	43	10.26	26.70	4.25
Moderate	123	29.36		
High	253	60.38		
<u>Religiosity</u>				
Low	49	11.70	29.30	4.00
Medium	114	27.21		
High	256	61.10		
<u>Volunteerism</u>				
Low	59	14.08	26.90	4.20
Medium	123	29.36		
High	237	56.56		

A Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism among Malaysian youth (see Table 2). The results indicated that all the independent variables were significantly correlated with volunteerism, suggesting that higher levels of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity are associated with greater engagement in volunteer activities.

The strongest positive correlation was observed between gratitude and volunteerism ( $r = .71$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This result is consistent with previous research, which highlights the positive influence of gratitude on prosocial behaviors, including volunteerism (Algoe et al., 2013; Grant & Dutton, 2012). Youth who express higher levels of gratitude are more likely to engage in volunteer work, as gratitude fosters a sense of giving back to the community.

Self-esteem also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with volunteerism ( $r = .68$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This aligns with the literature suggesting that individuals with higher self-esteem are more confident and likely to participate in social and prosocial activities, such as volunteering (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Omoto & Snyder, 2002). Youth who feel good about themselves may be more inclined to contribute positively to society through volunteer efforts.

Religiosity was significantly positively correlated with volunteerism ( $r = .65$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This finding supports previous studies that have linked religiosity with increased prosocial behavior, including volunteerism (Penner et al., 2005; Saroglou et al., 2005). Religious values often emphasize helping others, which may motivate youth who are more religious to engage in volunteering as part of their faith practice.



Social media usage was moderately positively correlated with volunteerism ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ). This suggests that social media platforms may play a role in promoting volunteerism, as they provide a space for individuals to learn about volunteer opportunities, connect with like-minded individuals, and be influenced by social norms (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Rotman et al., 2012). Youth who are active on social media might be more exposed to and encouraged to participate in volunteer activities through their online interactions.

The results of this study highlight the significant relationships between social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism among Malaysian youth. The strongest predictor of volunteerism was gratitude, indicating that fostering gratitude among youth may be an effective way to encourage volunteer behavior. This is in line with previous research, which suggests that individuals who feel grateful are more likely to engage in acts of kindness and giving (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Volunteerism could be framed as an expression of gratitude, motivating youth to give back to their communities.

Self-esteem also plays an important role in promoting volunteerism. Youth with higher self-esteem are more likely to feel confident and empowered to engage in volunteer activities, as they may see themselves as capable of making meaningful contributions. This finding suggests that programs aimed at building self-esteem in youth could have the additional benefit of increasing volunteerism, contributing to both personal and societal wellbeing.

Religiosity, as expected, was positively associated with volunteerism, reinforcing the idea that religious teachings and values encourage helping behaviors. Volunteer programs within religious institutions or communities may continue to be effective in promoting prosocial behavior among youth.

The moderate correlation between social media usage and volunteerism suggests that social media platforms can be leveraged to increase youth participation in volunteer work. Since social media is a dominant tool for communication and information sharing among youth, it can serve as an important medium for promoting volunteer opportunities and fostering a sense of community involvement. Encouraging positive social media engagement related to volunteerism could further amplify these effects.

In conclusion, the study provides valuable insights into the factors that promote volunteerism among Malaysian youth. Fostering gratitude, enhancing self-esteem, reinforcing religious values, and utilizing social media platforms may all be effective strategies in encouraging youth volunteerism, contributing to the development of a more engaged and prosocial society. An interesting avenue for future research is the exploration of mediating factors that might illuminate the pathways through which these influences operate. For instance, social media usage may significantly impact levels of gratitude among youth, as platforms often highlight altruistic behaviors and showcase community engagement initiatives. By exposing youth to stories of kindness and acts of service, social media can enhance feelings of gratitude, which in turn motivates individuals to engage in volunteerism.

Table 2

*Correlations between Social Media Usage, Gratitude, Self-Esteem, Religiosity, and Volunteerism*

Variable	Volunteerism	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Media Usage	.61**	.001
Gratitude	.71**	.001
Self-Esteem	.68**	.001
Religiosity	.65**	.001

N = 419, \*\*  $p < .001$

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the predictive power of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity on volunteerism. The overall regression model was significant,  $R^2 = 0.692$ ,  $F(4, 414) = 225.32$ ,  $p < .001$ , indicating that 69.2% of the variance in volunteerism was explained by the independent variables.

Among the predictors, gratitude emerged as the strongest predictor of volunteerism ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), religiosity ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and social media usage ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These findings suggest that although all factors significantly contribute to volunteerism, gratitude plays the most substantial role in predicting volunteer activities among Malaysian youth.

Table 3

*Regression Analysis for Social Media Usage, Gratitude, Self-Esteem, and Religiosity on Volunteerism*

Variable	Volunteerism			
	B	SE. B	Beta, $\beta$	<i>p</i>
Social Media Usage	.33	.08	.29	.001
Gratitude	.56	.10	.44	.001
Self-Esteem	.50	.10	.40	.001
Religiosity	.47	.11	.35	.001
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b>	.692			
<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b>	.684			
<b>F</b>	225.32			

$R^2 = 0.692$ , Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.684$ ,  $F = 225.32$  ( $p < .005$ )

The multiple regression analysis revealed that gratitude was the strongest predictor of volunteerism ( $\beta = 0.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ), followed by self-esteem ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ), religiosity ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and social media usage ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These results emphasize the dominant role of gratitude in motivating youth to engage in volunteer work. Individuals who feel grateful for their own circumstances are more inclined to volunteer as a way of giving back to society, supporting previous findings that gratitude fosters prosocial behaviors (Algoe, 2018; Watkins et al., 2020).

The significant role of self-esteem as a predictor of volunteerism ( $\beta = 0.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ) suggests that youth who have a positive self-concept are more likely to participate in volunteer

activities. This aligns with the notion that self-esteem not only motivates individuals to volunteer but is also enhanced by their involvement in prosocial behaviors, as volunteering provides a sense of accomplishment and purpose (Baumeister et al., 2020). For Malaysian youth, this self-confidence can be attributed to cultural and social support systems that validate prosocial contributions (Wong et al., 2021).

Religiosity ( $\beta = 0.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ) also significantly predicted volunteerism, reinforcing the idea that religious beliefs and practices strongly influence prosocial behavior. In Malaysia, religious institutions often serve as facilitators of volunteer work, encouraging individuals to live out their faith through acts of service (Saroglou, 2019; Azmi et al., 2021). The results further suggest that the moral and ethical teachings of religious communities play a central role in guiding youth toward volunteerism, making religiosity a crucial factor in understanding volunteer behavior in this context.

Lastly, social media usage ( $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $p < .01$ ) was a significant but weaker predictor of volunteerism compared to the other variables. While social media plays an essential role in facilitating access to volunteer opportunities and connecting individuals with causes, it appears that intrinsic factors like gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity are more potent motivators for youth volunteerism (Rahman & Teo, 2021; Huang et al., 2020). However, the significant influence of social media underscores its utility as a platform for fostering volunteer engagement in a digital age, especially for Malaysian youth who are highly active online (Mahmood et al., 2021).

### **Promoting Volunteerism Among Malaysian Youth: Policy and Practice Recommendations**

The findings from this study have several important implications for policy and practice, particularly regarding strategies to foster volunteerism among Malaysian youth. The results indicate that social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity play significant roles in motivating youth to engage in volunteer activities. Therefore, policymakers, educators, and community leaders should focus on leveraging these factors to promote greater youth engagement in prosocial activities like volunteerism.

Firstly, the strong influence of gratitude on volunteerism underscores the need for gratitude-based interventions in educational and community settings. Programs that encourage youth to reflect on and express gratitude could increase their likelihood of engaging in volunteer work. Schools and organizations could implement gratitude journals, reflective exercises, or campaigns that highlight the importance of giving back to the community (Watkins et al., 2020; Chan & Abdullah, 2021). These initiatives would not only enhance youths' sense of gratitude but also inspire them to take action by contributing their time and effort to help others.

Additionally, social media usage can be strategically harnessed to promote volunteerism. Since social media serves as a powerful tool for communication and engagement, platforms should be used to disseminate information about volunteer opportunities and to mobilize youth for social causes (Rahman & Teo, 2021). Community organizations and NGOs could collaborate with social media influencers and use targeted campaigns to attract youth participation in volunteerism, creating a digital culture of service (Huang et al., 2020).

Moreover, self-esteem plays a critical role in youth volunteerism, suggesting that programs aimed at enhancing self-esteem could have a positive impact on volunteer engagement. Schools and youth organizations should design programs that promote personal growth and self-worth through leadership opportunities, skill-building activities, and recognition of volunteer efforts (Baumeister et al., 2020). Empowering youth to see themselves as capable contributors to society can increase their motivation to volunteer, ultimately fostering greater civic engagement.

Finally, religiosity emerged as a key factor influencing volunteerism, particularly in the Malaysian context, where religious teachings emphasize service to others. Religious institutions should continue to promote volunteerism as a moral and spiritual obligation, providing structured opportunities for youth to engage in charitable activities (Azmi et al., 2021; Saroglou, 2019). Collaborative efforts between religious organizations and community groups could strengthen volunteer initiatives, especially during religious holidays or events, which traditionally encourage acts of giving.

### **Practical Applications for Educational and Community Institutions**

The significant relationships between social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism provide clear guidance for practical applications in educational and community contexts. Gratitude programs can be integrated into school curricula or extracurricular activities, with a focus on helping youth develop an appreciation for their circumstances and channel that gratitude into volunteer work (Algoe, 2018; Watkins et al., 2020). Initiatives like “volunteer appreciation days” or gratitude campaigns could further motivate youth to contribute to their communities.

In addition to gratitude programs, social media campaigns should be actively employed to reach and engage youth. Schools, NGOs, and volunteer organizations can create online platforms and apps dedicated to volunteerism, making it easier for youth to find opportunities, register, and share their experiences on social media. By normalizing the use of social media for prosocial purposes, these platforms can inspire a broader culture of volunteerism among digitally connected youth (Rahman & Teo, 2021).

Self-esteem-building programs can be introduced in both educational and community settings to foster personal development and confidence among youth. Activities such as peer mentoring, public speaking workshops, and leadership camps can help young people build self-esteem, which, in turn, increases their propensity to engage in volunteer work (Lim & Zakaria, 2022). Recognizing and rewarding volunteer efforts can further enhance self-worth and motivate continued participation in prosocial activities.

Finally, religious institutions should remain central to volunteer efforts in Malaysia. Churches, mosques, temples, and other religious organizations are well-positioned to organize volunteer activities, particularly those aligned with religious teachings that emphasize service and charity. Religious leaders can encourage youth involvement by highlighting the spiritual rewards of volunteerism and offering volunteer opportunities during religious events (Saroglou, 2019; Halim et al., 2022).

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

While this study provides valuable insights into the factors that influence volunteerism among Malaysian youth, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality between social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, religiosity, and volunteerism. Future research should employ longitudinal studies to better understand how these factors evolve over time and whether changes in one variable, such as gratitude, lead to increased volunteerism (Day & Allen, 2004).

Additionally, the study relied on self-reported measures, which may introduce biases such as social desirability bias. Participants might have overreported their volunteer activities or underreported negative traits due to cultural norms or social expectations. Future studies could benefit from using mixed methods, incorporating peer-reported or observational data to validate self-reported behavior (Silva & Zainuddin, 2020). Combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews could provide a more nuanced understanding of the motivations behind youth volunteerism.

Another limitation is the sample's restriction to Malaysian youth, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural contexts. Future research should explore how these factors influence volunteerism in different regions or countries, particularly in more individualistic cultures where the motivations for prosocial behavior may differ (Wong & Lim, 2022). Comparative studies could provide insights into the role of cultural values in shaping volunteerism across different societies.

Lastly, future research should investigate additional variables that might influence the relationship between these factors and volunteerism, such as self-efficacy, cultural identity, or community involvement. These variables could serve as mediators or moderators, offering a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics behind youth volunteerism.

### **Conclusion**

This study highlights the significant influence of social media usage, gratitude, self-esteem, and religiosity on volunteerism among Malaysian youth. Gratitude emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by self-esteem, religiosity, and social media usage, demonstrating the critical role these factors play in motivating youth to engage in volunteer activities. The findings underscore the importance of fostering both personal and community-oriented values to encourage prosocial behavior among young people.

The study's results have practical implications for educators, community leaders, and policymakers who aim to promote volunteerism. By implementing gratitude-based programs, leveraging social media platforms, enhancing self-esteem, and encouraging religious engagement, stakeholders can effectively nurture a generation of youth who are committed to contributing to their communities.

Future research should continue to explore the interplay between these factors, employing longitudinal designs and incorporating additional variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of youth volunteerism. Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on prosocial behavior and provides actionable insights for enhancing volunteerism in collectivist cultures like Malaysia.

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