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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i5/4115>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v8-i5/4115

Received: 26 April 2018, **Revised:** 15 May 2018, **Accepted:** 22 May 2018

Published Online: 28 May 2018

In-Text Citation: (Ramalingam, Sharifuddin, Mohamed, & Ali, 2018)

To Cite this Article: Ramalingam, L., Sharifuddin, J., Mohamed, Z. A., & Ali, F. (2018). Community Garden Programme: The Volunteers' Satisfaction. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 8(5), 432–439.

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Vol. 8, No. 5, May 2018, Pg. 432 – 439

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Community Garden Programme: The Volunteers' Satisfaction

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Abstract

Urban agriculture that is being practised by 800 million people worldwide is beneficial in term of social, economy and environment. Malaysia is practising urban agriculture due to the role it plays in overcoming the dilemma of food insecurity. Urban agriculture is known as food production activities in cities. Community Garden Programme is a type of Urban Agriculture Programme which is supported by various organisations. The main goal of this paper is to identify the volunteers' satisfaction level and those who are really satisfied with the Community Garden Programme. Items used to measure volunteers' satisfaction were adapted from Omoto and Snyder (1995). The survey with 375 volunteers indicated that majority of them were satisfied with the Community Garden Programme. Moreover, elderly males were significantly satisfied with the programme. Hence, approaching elderly male for volunteering in Community Garden Programme may produce fruitful result because highly satisfied volunteers tend to continue with volunteering in the future.

Keywords: Community Garden Programme, Urban Agriculture, Independent Sample T-test, Volunteerism, Malaysia.

Introduction

Urban agriculture is related to activities involving producing, processing and marketing agricultural products such as crops and livestock for food and other uses in urban areas (Xiong et al. 2017). Urban agriculture is being practised worldwide especially by developing countries such as China, India, Cuba, Vietnam, Uganda, Ghana and Kenya due to the benefits it bring to the country and citizens (Corbould, 2013). According to Horst et al. (2017), urban agriculture is beneficial in term of improving food security by increasing access to food, enriching health, building skills, generating income, enhancing community development and solving environment related issues. FAO (2017) claimed that nearly 800 million people are involving in urban agriculture worldwide.

Malaysia is also included as one of the developing countries that are practicing urban agriculture as a major strategy towards improving food security (Tiraieyari et al. 2017). Campaigns such as Green Earth Campaign and Urban Agriculture Campaign by Malaysian government are aimed at promoting Urban Agriculture Programmes among the urban dwellers. There were three types of Urban Agriculture Programmes in Malaysia namely individual programme, community programme and institutional programme (DOA 2015). The concentration of the present study is on Community Programme which is also known as Community Garden Programme. Community Garden Programme is a voluntary programme where organisations such as local governments, Department of Agriculture (DOA), Malaysian Agriculture Research and Development Institute (MARDI) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) provide land, knowledge and other resources like seed, soil and fertilizer to practise urban agriculture (DOA 2015). Malaysian government has invested a huge amount of the money to the programme. However, retaining volunteers for the programme has become the main challenge (The Star, 2014). Therefore, the sustainability of Community Garden Programme becomes a question mark. According to Macdonald et al. (2009), volunteers who were satisfied with their role tend to retain the programme for long term. Nevertheless, the volunteers' satisfaction in volunteering for Community Garden Programme is uncertain. To the authors' awareness, no studies have been done on Community Garden Programme volunteers' satisfaction previously. Hence, this study aimed to fill the gap. The findings of the study were able to contribute to the Malaysian government and the organisations to sustain the Community Garden Programme. The objectives of this study are to determine the volunteers' satisfaction level with their experience in Community Garden Programme and to investigate the effect of socio-demographic characteristics on volunteers' satisfaction.

Literature Review

This section defines volunteer, satisfaction and discuss findings regarding volunteers' satisfaction from previous studies. In year 2002, Kemp described volunteers as individuals who devote their time without anticipating any rewards. Satisfaction is defined as the extent to which an individual considers that an experience induces positive feelings. Hence, satisfaction is a complete affective reaction on good or bad experiences. Satisfaction with their volunteerism task is crucial for the continuous commitment of the volunteers (Hallmann and Zehrer 2015). Therefore, discovering volunteers' satisfaction is essential in predicting their retention (Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley 2002). Additionally, identifying determinants that are associated with positive volunteers' satisfaction is also worthwhile (Alexander et al. 2015). In 2009, Boezeman and Ellemers stated that satisfied volunteers are more likely to stay with their organisations

Alexander et al. (2015) found out that the most satisfied volunteers were white British female who were aged between 16 to 24 years old who worked full time or part time with income level less than £22,000 and had previous experience in volunteerism. Moreover, they also indicated that this group of people were most likely to volunteer in the future. Hallmann and Zehrer (2015) mentioned that volunteers who were single and aged 30 years and older had an association with satisfaction whereas gender, education and income were not significantly correlated with volunteers' satisfaction. The findings of Kulik et al. (2016) were almost similar to findings of Hallmann and Zehrer (2015) where gender, age and education were not significantly associated with general satisfaction of volunteers.

Methods

The study was carried out in the Klang Valley among Community Garden Programmes' volunteers. A multistage random sampling method was applied to select the sample. The volunteers were surveyed using a paper based questionnaire. The response rate of this study was 97% as 390 usable questionnaires were received back out of 402. The volunteers' satisfaction with Community Garden Programme was measured using eight questions which were adapted from Omoto and Snyder (1995) (e.g., "In overall I am satisfied with my experience as a volunteer of Urban Agriculture Programme"; "I look forward to doing my Urban Agriculture Programme's volunteer work"). All items were rated using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Additionally, socio demographic variables such as age, gender, education level, employment status, income, marital status and experience in volunteerism were also included in the survey form. Hypotheses were proposed as below:

- H_{A1}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of younger and elder volunteers.
- H_{A2}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of male and female volunteers.
- H_{A3}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of low and highly educated volunteers.
- H_{A4}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of low and high income level volunteers.
- H_{A5}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of single and married volunteers.
- H_{A6}: There is a significant difference between the satisfaction with Community Garden Programme of low and highly experienced volunteers.

After the preliminary analysis, 375 responses were left for further analysis. Descriptive analysis was performed to describe the volunteers' characteristics and their level of satisfaction with Community Garden Programme. An independent sample t-test was conducted to determine whether there were any significant differences in satisfaction between the two groups of selected socio demographic characteristics.

Results and Discussion
Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristic	Frequency(n)	Percentage (%)
Age (years old)		
20-29	23	6.1
30-39	67	17.9
40-49	107	28.5
50-59	126	33.6
60 or older	52	13.9
Gender		
Male	172	45.9
Female	203	54.1
Education level		
Primary education	27	7.2
Secondary education	216	57.6
Tertiary education	132	35.2
Employment status		
Not working	52	13.9
Retired	52	13.9
Housewife	81	21.6
Government sector	39	10.4
Private Sector	151	40.3
Income		
Less than RM 2500	270	72.0
RM 2500-RM 5000	81	21.6
More than RM 5000	24	6.4
Marital status		
Single	40	10.7
Married	335	89.3
Experience in volunteerism		
Less than 2 years	295	78.7
2-3 years	73	19.5
More than 3 years	7	1.9

The demographic attributes of the Community Garden Programme volunteers are provided in Table 1. Majority of the volunteers were older than 40 years old (76.0%) with 54.1% female volunteers. More than one-third of the volunteers had tertiary education (35.2%) and work in private sectors (40.3%). The income level of the respondents was predominantly less than RM2500 (72.0%). Almost all of the volunteers were married (89.3%). The results also showed that most of the volunteers had less than two years' experience of volunteering in the Community Garden Programme.

Respondents' Level of Satisfaction

Table 2: Volunteers' satisfaction level with Community Garden Programme

Level	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Low (1.00-3.00)	1	0.3
Moderate (3.01-4.99)	58	15.5
High (5.00-7.00)	316	84.3

The overall mean of volunteers' satisfaction with their experience in the Community Garden Programme was divided into three levels for reporting purposes. The mean score less than 3.00 is an indication of low level of satisfaction, 3.01 to 4.99 is an indication of moderate level of satisfaction and more than 5 is an indication of high level of satisfaction. Most of the volunteers, 84.3% (n=316) had high level of satisfaction with the Community Garden Programme, followed by 58 volunteers who had moderate level of satisfaction (15.5%) and one of the volunteer had low level of satisfaction (0.3%) (Table 2). It shows that the volunteers have been highly satisfied with their involvement in Community Garden Programme. According to Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) volunteers who are satisfied with their volunteer job tend to remain in the volunteer organisation. Therefore, the result implies that the chances of the volunteers to continue volunteering in the Community Garden Programme is high.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test of volunteers' satisfaction by demographic profile

Variables	Frequency (n)	Mean	SD	t	p
Age					
Less than 49 years old (Younger)	185	5.57	0.77	-2.705	0.007
49 years old and above (Elder)	190	5.80	0.86		
Gender					
Male	172	5.79	0.77	2.140	0.033
Female	203	5.61	0.87		
Education level					
Primary and secondary education (Low)	243	5.70	0.86	0.318	0.751
Tertiary education (High)	132	5.67	0.77		
Income					
Below RM1500 (Low)	187	5.62	0.88	-1.558	0.120
RM1500 and above (High)	188	5.75	0.77		
Marital status					
Single	40	5.59	1.04	-0.789	0.430
Married	335	5.70	0.80		
Experience in volunteerism					
Below 9 months (Low)	176	5.68	0.83	0.065	0.948
9 months and above (High)	199	5.69	0.83		

The independent sample t-test was performed to measure the differences in volunteers' satisfaction with Community Garden Programme between age, gender, education level, income,

marital status and experience in volunteerism. Table 3 provides the results of independent sample t-test. Based on the result, only two hypotheses were supported out of six. The result shows that there was a significant differences between volunteers who aged less than 49 years old ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 0.77$) and 49 years old and above ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 0.86$), $t(375) = -2.705$, $p < 0.05$ in their satisfaction. Therefore, H_{A1} was supported. There also was a significant differences between male ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 0.77$) and female volunteers ($M = 5.61$, $SD = 0.87$), $t(375) = 2.140$, $p < 0.05$ in their satisfaction. Hence, H_{A2} was supported. The result demonstrates that male volunteers who aged 49 year old and above were highly satisfied with the experience of Community Garden Programme. The outcome of the study was contradictory with Alexander et al. (2015) who found out that young female volunteers were more satisfied.

Conclusion

A survey was conducted among Community Garden Programme volunteers to inspect their satisfaction level and which group of volunteers were highly satisfied with the programme. The outcome of the survey indicated that majority of the volunteers were satisfied with Community Garden Programme. Furthermore, it also specified that elderly male volunteers were highly satisfied with the programme. According to the previous researchers satisfied volunteers were more likely to stay in the volunteering organisations for future volunteerism. Therefore, elderly male volunteers tend to remain as volunteers in Community Garden Programme in the future. Thus, recruiting elderly male volunteers will be able to sustain the Community Garden Programme.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the Ministry of Education (MOE) and Research Management Center, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) for the financial support through FRGS Vote No: FRGS/1/2015/SS01/UPM/02/13 – 5524755.

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