

Original article:

Factors Associated with Motivation to Volunteer Among Lecturers in Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia

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Abstract:

Introduction: Volunteerism is an act that should be encouraged especially among the medical and health sciences community. In this study the motivation to volunteer among lecturers and its associated factors were assessed. **Materials and Methods:** This is a cross-sectional questionnaire study involving 91 lecturers who fulfilled the inclusion and exclusion criteria in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Universiti Putra Malaysia (FMHS, UPM) between May and July 2018. The Voluntary Function Inventory (VFI) was used to evaluate the motivations to volunteer. It consists of six subscales; values, understanding, social, career, protective, enhancement. Scoring is on a Likert scale of 1 to 7. Higher scores of each subscale indicates higher motivation. **Results:** The proportion of lecturers who do voluntary work is 85.7%. There were no significant association between the socio-demographic factors and volunteerism. The younger age group had a significant association with “career” subscale (median score = 4.6(IQR =1.8)) compared to the older age group (median score = 3.4(IQR=2.7)) (p=0.047). Female lecturers scored significantly higher for “protective” subscale (median score = 4.6(IQR=1.9)) compared to male lecturers (median score = 3.8 (IQR=2.6)) (p=0.021). Those who volunteered scored significantly higher for “values” subscale compared to those that didn’t volunteer, with a median scores of 5.9 (IQR= 0.8) and 5.4 (IQR 1.1) respectively, (p=0.027). There were no significant association between ethnicity and the income with other subscales. **Conclusion:** The motivations to volunteer for “career motive” were higher for the younger lecturers. Female lecturers scored higher for “protective motive.” Lecturers who were volunteers scored higher for “value motives” as compared to those who were non-volunteers.

Keywords: Motivation, volunteer, lecturers, medical lecturers, Malaysia.

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Introduction

Volunteerism in a nutshell is about individuals or groups giving back to the society and making the world a better place. There are many reasons as to why people opt to volunteer. The motivational factors include altruism, self-motivation, social circle, past experience, not to mention promotional purposes such as academia and boosting of employability.^{1,2} To understand further motivations to volunteer, researchers have used the functionalist theory and divided them into six categories which will be explained later on.³ In the United States, the prevalence of volunteerism was estimated to be around 30-44%.⁴ Malaysia was ranked 20th out of 146 countries for volunteering time according to the Charities Aid Foundation 2018.⁵ Many efforts have been done

by the government to encourage volunteerism and due to those efforts, many groups have emerged to serve their cause.²

A study done in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) identified several factors that looked into what are academicians’ philosophies about volunteerism. These include individual orientation and exposure, religious beliefs, and work related identities, etc.⁶ Looking specifically into academicians, particularly in the field of health and sciences, the level of volunteerism is expected to be higher as they are educators and are exemplary role models for students. Hence, the aim of this study was to determine the motivations to volunteer among these health-related professionals.

Materials and Method

This was a cross-sectional study utilising a

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validated questionnaire conducted in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). Participants of this study were all lecturers in this faculty. Those that were not permanent lecturers or were on long leaves such as study or unpaid leaves were excluded from this study. The sample size estimation was calculated by using two hypothesis formula and from the calculation we got 170 lecturers including 10% attrition rate. The lecturers were selected from a list of lecturers using the random sampling method.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part consisted of questions on sociodemographic factors including details such as age, gender, ethnicity, employment (whether they were teaching the clinical or non-clinical subjects), monthly income, and past volunteering experience. The second part of the questionnaire was adopted from the Voluntary Function Inventory (VFI) developed by Clary, Snyder and their colleagues.³

It consists of a 30-items with six subscales (values, understanding, social, career, protective, enhancement). Each subscale contains five items. The responses were recorded on a Likert-like scale of 1.0 (not at all important/accurate) to 7.0 (extremely important/accurate) to indicate how important each of the items (reasons to volunteer) are to the participants. The final scores were obtained from the average scores on the five items assessed. The higher the score, the greater the importance of that specific motivation. The meaning of each item is specified as following:

Value	Volunteerism as an opportunity to express altruistic and humanitarian values.
Understanding	Able to gain new experiences, knowledge, skills and abilities through volunteering activities.
Social	A chance to develop new relationships and expand social circle.
Career	An avenue for career-related skills for career advancement or preparation.
Protective	An escape from negative feelings possibly turning feelings of guilt into appreciation.
Enhancement	Helping others as a way of maintaining positivity and boosting self-esteem in personal growth and character development.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive analysis was performed for socio-demographic factors (age, gender, ethnicity and income) and the prevalence of volunteerism

among the participants of this study. For analytical analysis, association between socio-demographic factors (age, gender, ethnicity and income) and volunteerism was assessed using Fischer's exact test. Association between socio-demographic factors (age and gender) and motivation to volunteer (value, understanding, enhancement, social, career, protective) was assessed using Mann Whitney U test whereas association between socio-demographic factors (ethnicity and income) and motivation to volunteer (value, understanding, enhancement, social, career, protective) was assessed using Kruskal-Wallis test. The association between volunteerism (had volunteered once and had never involved in volunteering work) and motivation to volunteer (value, understanding, enhancement, social, career, protective) was assessed using Mann-Whitney U test. All these tests were performed using IBM SPSS Statistics v25.0 for Windows.

Ethics

Ethics approval was obtained from the UPM Ethics Committee for Research Involving Humans Subject (JKEUPM) (JKEUPM-2018-163).

Results

Out of the 170 approached lecturers to participate this study, only 91 agreed and completed the questionnaire, giving a response rate of 53.5%.

Socio-demographic factors and volunteerism

The socio-demographics characteristics of respondents can be seen in Table I. The majority of the lecturers that participated in this study were aged 30 to 49 years old (n=80, 87.9%), female (n=70, 76.9%), Malay (n=70, 76.9%), non-clinical lecturers (n=46, 50.5%) and having a monthly income of RM10,000 to RM19,999 (n=50, 54.9%). The proportion of volunteerism is tabulated in Table 2 which shows that among 91 lecturers that participated in this study, majority of them (n=78, 85.7%) have done volunteering work in the past. This reflects as the prevalence of volunteerism among lecturers in Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, UPM as 85.7%.

Association between socio-demographics factors and volunteerism.

Table 3 shows the association between socio-demographic factors and volunteerism among lecturers (N=91) in FMHS, UPM. According to Fisher's Exact test, there is no significant association between all the socio-demographic factors and volunteerism.

Association between socio-demographic

characteristics and motivation to volunteer

Table 4 shows the association between age group and motivations to volunteer. According to Mann-Whitney U test, there is a significant difference in career motives score in lecturers who are aged 49 years old and below and lecturers who are aged 50 years old and above ($p=0.047$). Career motives score is higher among lecturers who are aged 49 years old and below.

Table 5 shows the association between gender and motivations to volunteer. Mann-Whitney U test was used to determine the association of gender and motivation to volunteer. It was noted that there was a significant difference in protective motive score between male and female lecturers. Protective motive score in females are significantly higher than in males.

The association between volunteerism and motivations to volunteer is tabulated in Table 6. Mann-Whitney U test showed that there is a significant difference in "values motive" score among volunteers and non-volunteers ($p=0.027$). The values motive score is significantly higher among volunteers than non-volunteers. Also, among both volunteers and non-volunteers, values served as the primary motivation to volunteer.

Discussion

A response rate of 53.5% was obtained from this study. One of the contributing reasons to this low response rate was that the list of new lecturers were just joined the faculty. The lists were not yet updated during the data collection period. Some of the lecturers approached were either on study or unpaid leave. Others did not respond to the questionnaires despite several reminders through the respective departments' office clerks, leaving the questionnaire in their pigeon hole and also reminders via emails.

Volunteerism among lecturers

From our study, the proportion of volunteerism among lecturers of FMHS, UPM was at 85.7%. This is much higher than the prevalence of volunteerism of adults in general in the United States.⁴

A review done by Morell-Howell states that 23.5% of adults above 65 years old are volunteers, 30.8% are in 45-54 age group, while 31.5% volunteer for the 35-44 year old.⁷

The higher prevalence is probably due to the fact that lecturers in FMHS, UPM work closely with the community as they are academicians and researchers in the field of medical and health sciences.

Association between socio-demographic factors and volunteerism

From this study, the associations between sociodemographic factors [i.e. age group ($p=0.079$), gender ($p=0.725$), ethnicity ($p=0.249$), monthly income ($p=0.637$)] and past involvement in volunteering showed no significant associations. However, Choi *et al.*'s study in the geriatric population found that people who usually volunteers were of the younger age group (mean age=75.5) than those who did not (mean age=77.6). They also reported those who volunteer were reported to be having a higher income than those who do not.⁸

A study done on volunteerism across Europe found that men were likely to volunteer than women. Apart from that those who are "healthy, better educated, religious, older, married, living in a larger household" volunteer more frequently than others.⁹

Association between socio-demographics factors and motivation to volunteer

In this study, we found career motives score in lecturers who are aged 49 years old and below is significantly higher than lecturers who are aged 50 years and older. This result is similar with few previous studies that report career motive as an important motivation among the younger volunteers.^{3,10,11}

Previous studies also found the older population consider social motive as an important reason to be involved in volunteering activities.¹⁰⁻¹²

However, in this study we do not find any association for other motives that might be the reason for the lecturers to volunteer according to age. Omoto *et al.* mentioned that motives for volunteering might change over a person's lifetime.¹³

The results reflect that, this may be due to the number of lecturers who aged 50 years old and above that participated in this study are less (11.0%, $n=10$) compared to those who are aged 49 years old and below (89.0%, $n=81$).

In this study it is found that there is a significant association between gender and motivations to volunteer in the protective motive. Protective motive score in female lecturer are significantly higher as compared to males showing that most of the female lecturers participate in volunteerism to escape from feeling of negativity and personal problems. Other studies have found gender differences in motivations to volunteer. Switzer *et al.*'s study about motivation to volunteer among

medical students in Midwestern Medical School found that male students considered understanding, values and career motives as reasons for volunteering while female students considered that values, understanding and enhancement motives as reasons for volunteering.¹⁴

Another study performed among undergraduate students and done by Papadakis, Griffin and Frater (2004) at SUNY College in Brockport found that there is a significant association between gender and motivation to volunteer.¹⁵

Values, understanding and enhancement motives scores in female students were found to be significantly higher as compared to male students.¹⁵ In this study we found no significant association between ethnicity and motivation to volunteer. This is in contrast to a previous study by Latting (1990); who found that African Americans were more likely than Caucasians to indicate that values serves as a motivation to volunteer.¹⁶

This study found that, there is no association between monthly income and motivation to volunteer. This is a novel finding that has not been reported in most of the previous studies. Freeman (1997) argued that volunteerism is a so-called “conscience-good” which indicates that people were mostly morally obligated to participate in volunteering work if they were asked to do so.¹⁷ This indicate that more people will volunteer if asked to do so rather than waiting for them to do it on their own.

Knowing what motivates different kinds of people to be involved in volunteering works can go a long way in promoting volunteerism among public. We can mould the volunteering program to suit the targeted population or target a right population with a specific program in mind with the data obtained from this study. Hence, this will increase the volunteer recruits and volunteering rate. Volunteering helps to calm the body, mind, and soul. To progress as a civic-minded community, we should not only focus on the worldly possessions but also keep in mindful view of our physical health and mental health. Doing good and encouraging it at the same time among others, is what makes the world go round.

Conclusion

The prevalence of volunteerism among the participants of this study was high. This study noted that the career motive as an important motivation factor among the younger volunteers. Moreover, gender is a significant factor for the protective motivation to volunteer. And lastly,

lecturers who scored higher scores on the value motive scale were also more likely to volunteer. With the specific profile of the participants, it is hoped that this will increase the volunteerism rate further.

Recommendations

We recommend that this study should be done on a larger sample of lecturers from various faculties and universities. We also recommend conducting a qualitative study to look at other possible reasons for volunteerism that has not been explored yet.

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Table 1: Distribution of Respondents by Socio-demographic Characteristics

Socio-demographic factors (N=91)	Frequency, <i>n</i>	Percentage, %
Age group		
28 years old and below	1	1.1
30 to 49 years old	80	87.9
50 years old and above	10	11.0
Gender		
Male	21	23.1
Female	70	76.9
Ethnicity		
Malay	70	76.9
Chinese	14	15.4
Indian	6	6.6
Others	1	1.1
Employment group		
Clinical lecturers	45	49.5
Non-clinical lecturers	46	50.5
Monthly income		
RM9,999 and below	36	39.6
RM10,000 to RM19,999	50	54.9
RM20,000 to RM29,999	4	4.4
RM30,000 and above	1	1.1

Table 2: Distribution of Respondents by Past Volunteering Experience

Past volunteering experience (N=91)	Frequency, n	Percentage, %
Yes	78	85.7
No	13	14.3

Table 3: Association between Socio-demographic Factors and Volunteerism

Socio-demographic factors	Past volunteering experience				<i>p</i> value
	Yes		No		
	n	%	n	%	
Age group					
29 years old and below	0	0.0	1	100.0	.079 ^a
30 to 49 years old	68	85.0	12	15.0	
50 years old and above	10	100.0	0	0.0	
Gender					
Male	19	90.5	2	9.5	.725 ^a
Female	59	84.3	11	15.7	
Ethnicity					
Malay	57	81.4	13	18.6	.249 ^a
Chinese	14	100.0	0	0.0	
Indian	6	100.0	0	0.0	
Others	1	100.0	0	0.0	
Monthly income					
RM9,999 and below	29	80.6	7	19.4	.637 ^a
RM10,000 to RM19,999	44	88.0	6	12.0	
RM20,000 to RM29,999	4	100.0	0	0.0	
RM30,000 and above	1	85.7	0	0.0	

^a Fisher's Exact Test is used because expected count less than 5 is more than 20%

Table 4: Association between Age Group and Motivations to Volunteer

Motivation Score (Range: 1.0-7.0)	49 years old and below		50 years old and above		Z statistic	p value
	Median (IQR)	Rank	Median (IQR)	Rank		
Career	4.6(1.8)	4	3.4(2.7)	6	-1.991	.047*
Social	5.0(1.7)	3	4.3(2.4)	4	-.668	.504
Values	5.8(1.0)	1	6.2(1.8)	1	-.988	.323
Understanding	5.8(0.9)	1	5.3(1.8)	2	-.714	.475
Enhancement	5.2(1.4)	2	4.9(1.5)	3	-.961	.336
Protective	4.6(1.9)	4	3.5(2.3)	5	-1.602	.109

*p value < 0.05

Table 5: Association between Gender and Motivations to Volunteer

Motivation Score (Range: 1.0-7.0)	Male		Female		Z statistic	p value
	Median (IQR)	Rank	Median (IQR)	Rank		
Career	4.6(2.6)	4	4.6(1.5)	5	-0.113	.910
Social	5.2(1.8)	3	5.0(1.6)	4	-0.231	.817
Values	5.8(0.9)	1	5.9(1.0)	1	-.833	.405
Understanding	5.6(0.8)	2	5.8(1.0)	2	-.232	.817
Enhancement	5.2(0.8)	3	5.1(1.4)	3	-.080	.936
Protective	3.8(2.6)	5	4.6(1.9)	5	-2.302	.021*

*p value < 0.05

Table 6: Association between Volunteerism and Motivations to Volunteer

Motivation Score (Range: 1.0-7.0)	Volunteers		Non-volunteers		Z statistic	p value
	Median (IQR)	Rank	Median (IQR)	Rank		
Career	4.5(2.3)	5	4.6(1.0)	4	-.716	.474
Social	5.2(1.8)	3	4.4(1.6)	5	-1.762	.078
Values	5.9(0.8)	1	5.4(1.1)	1	-2.205	.027*
Understanding	5.8(1.0)	2	5.2(1.0)	2	-1.663	.096
Enhancement	5.2(1.4)	3	5.0(0.8)	3	-1.035	.300
Protective	4.6(2.1)	4	4.2(1.6)	6	-.971	.331

*p value < 0.05

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