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Research paper

Engineering Students' Motivation towards the Involvement in Volunteerism

Rosmahalil Azrol bin Abdullah[1]*, Mohd Hasril bin Amiruddin[2], Zulida binti Abdul Kadir[3], Robijah binti Kamarulzaman[4]

**Corresponding author E-mail: azrol@uthm.edu.my*

Abstract

This study aims to examine the students' motivation towards their involvement in volunteer activities. 399 students of Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia were selected as the samples of this study. This study employs the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) by Clary et.al. (1998). The findings were analysed using the IBM SPSS Statistics (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) Version 22. The pilot study was conducted and the Alpha Cronbach value was 0.835. The results showed that the function of "understanding" (mean = 5.41) was the most dominant influence on respondents' perceptions towards volunteer activities. The findings also found that there was a weak positive relationship between the motivational function and the student's academic achievement. In addition, several research proposals are presented to further enhance the concepts of appreciation and sustainability in volunteer activities.

Keywords: *Volunteerism; Motivation; Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI); Academic Achievement*

1. Introduction

Volunteer activity intends to do a job without any charges and not expect any retaliation for the work done (1). Freeman (2) defines voluntary activities as work done without financial rewards. This makes social output, which will not require any paid resources. In addition, Lindenmeier (3) states that volunteerism is a charitable activity. These volunteer activities are seen as a foundation that binds their relationship to development. In addition, such activities can strengthen the trust and solidarity of fellow human beings, hence giving them the opportunity to engage in volunteer activities (United Nations Volunteers, 2016).

The world sees this volunteerism as something important for the community development. Consequently, United Nation has declared 5th December as International Volunteer Day. The purpose of the International Volunteer Day is to reward volunteers who spend their time, energy and expertise helping those in need for universal development (United Nations Volunteers, 2016). It also enables all nations to promote commendable attitudes such as discipline, responsibility, patriotism, working in groups and attentive to the problems around (4).

In general, developed countries with high population rates such as Australia, Germany, and Japan are having stable and active volunteer organisations. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of Japan (2016), 33.5% of eligible Japanese people are involved in formal volunteer activities and 66.7% of them are involved in volunteer activities at least once a month. Most of them possess a bachelor's degree and have a permanent job. Among the common activities are social and health, education, and culture.

2. Literature Review

Malaysia is a country that is moving towards a well-developed country. To mark Malaysia to be at par with Japan, Malaysia is lagging behind when it comes to the involvement of volunteerism among the citizen. Malaysians are still lacking of the understanding the concept of volunteerism and assume that volunteerism activities are carried out by certain parties (5). This statement is supported by the Ministry of Youth and Sports that voluntary activities in Malaysia are not encouraging and the situation is getting worse. Campaigns should be held primarily for youths to attract them to engage in volunteer activities (6). One of the efforts is "Malaysian Volunteer Awards", which was held on December 12, 2016. This programme was launched by the Prime Minister of Malaysia to create the awareness on the concept of volunteerism among youths.

The concept of volunteerism is simply considered to be acknowledged, but not as a culture to be practiced in Malaysia (7). Nevertheless, Malaysian society has been exposed to volunteer activities since school. For example, pupils in primary schools are required to be a member of any association as a co-curriculum activity. There are many associations such as scouts, girl guides, and red crescent at the primary level, while pupils are introduced to "Puteri Islam", fire cadet and police cadet teams at secondary school level. In fact, the Ministry of Education also provides special credit for those involved in the associations to continue their studies at university or at any higher level of education (4).

The Malaysian Volunteer Council was set up by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to further the government's efforts to introduce the concept of volunteers among university students. According to Thapa (8), as the effort to promote volunteerism activities, an attractive and suitable environment is essential in institutions of higher learning. Through the Malaysian Volunteer Council, students are provided voluntary activities to provide them with an opportunity to appreciate what the Malaysian Ministry of Educa-

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tion (2006) has promoted, which is soft skills. There are seven skills associated with individual personality traits and hopefully through the promotion, the university successfully produces first-class graduates who have the skills to meet the requirements of the industry.

As a member of the Malaysian Volunteer Council, Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM) has provided many volunteer-related activities or programmes. UTHM Volunteer Club has planned and implemented these programmes and participation received from various faculties. Based on statistics from the Student Affairs Office (2016), the volunteer-related activities have increased from 190 programmes in the year 2011 to 382 programmes by 2015. It is an encouraging increase to see the number of programmes conducted. Unfortunately, when comparison is made with the number of students registered as UTHM students, the percentage of student involvement is not much change; approximately the difference between 0.02 to 0.03%.

There are many studies conducted on volunteering, especially on investigating the volunteer functions. Clary et al (9) examined the motive of a person in the volunteer's activities. They have produced an instrument to examine this problem. Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) is established with six categories: 1) Values 2) Understanding 3) Enhancement 4) Career 5) Social 6) Protective

Table 1: The Motivations for Volunteering (9)

Function	Definition / Concept
Values	the person is volunteering in order to express or act on important values, such as humanitarianism and helping the less fortunate.
Understanding	the volunteer is seeking to learn more about the world and/or exercise skills that are often unused.
Enhancement	the individual is seeking to grow and develop psychologically through involvement in volunteering.
Career	the volunteer has the goal of gaining career-related experience through volunteering.
Social	volunteering allows the person to strengthen one's social relationships.
Protective	the individual uses volunteering to reduce negative feelings, such as guilt, or to address personal problems.

Using the same instrument, Bricker & Millington,(10) find that the main motive of their respondents involved in volunteer activities is 'values'. Muhamad & Alauddin, (11), as well as the study by Mlčák & Záškodná (12) also share the same finding, which is 'values'. 'Values', 'Understanding', and 'Enhancement' are three major motives found in (9, 13-15). Findings by Rokach and Wanklyn (16) are almost similar to the findings of the study above, where the respondents choose 'values', 'understanding', and 'career', instead of 'enhancement'. While the study conducted by Gonzalez (17) found that volunteers are more concerned with 'understanding' as the main motive compared to 'value', followed by 'career' and 'protective'

Haski-Leventhal et. al., (18) in his study also noted that university students who involved in volunteering activities were seen to exhibit more systematic discipline and time management. A study was conducted by researchers in Malaysia in investigating the relationship between motivational functions of university students and academic achievement of students. (19) state that there is a positive correlation between academic achievement (GPA aspect, Writing Skills, and Critical Thinking Skills) and student involvement in volunteer activities. This study was conducted by taking a sample of 500 students from five private universities in Malaysia.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted at Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM), where the population of this study is bachelor degree students from eight faculties. The variables adopted are from the VFI (Volunteer Functional Indicator) by Clary et al (9) encompassing the 'values', 'understanding', 'career', 'social', 'enhancement' and 'protective'. The survey method was employed to obtain more consistent and accurate information. There were 399 samples from various faculties ranging from 20 to 25 years old.A pilot study was conducted three months before the actual date of data collection, involving a total of 30 first-year students. The alpha value 0.835 was derived from the pilot study where it shows that the reliability of this instrument is high while for the actual data collection, the alpha value obtained was 0.956.

The questionnaire consists of three parts: The respondents' background, Part 1, and Part 2. There are 6 questions regarding the background of respondents, 30 questions for Part 1 (reasons for respondents' involvement in volunteerism), and 18 questions for Part 2 (the output obtained from respondents' involvement in volunteer activities). Respondents are required to answer all the questions.

Results obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 22. Normality test was also conducted and the results showed that the data distribution was normal with the skewness and kurtosis values -1.563 and 1.859 respectively. Descriptive analysis was conducted to obtain mean, mod, frequency, percentage, and standard deviation. In addition, a correlation analysis of two variables was also used to find the correlation between academic achievement and motivation function.

4. Results and Findings

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive analysis of respondents' involvement in volunteer activities. Six constructs of volunteer engagement motives are shown in Table 1. The findings show that 'understanding' has the highest mean of 5.41 (SD = 0.883), followed by 'values' with 5.0 (SD = 0.891), 'enhancement' with 5.07 (SD = 0.942), 'protective' with 4.67 (SD = 1.059) and 'social' with the lowest mean value of 4.27 (SD = 1.073).The findings are inconsistent with literature (12, 14, 15, 20) but consistent with the study conducted by Gonzalez (17). However, 'value' and 'career' are among the main motives of the respondent's choice.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis on the Respondents' Motive towards the Involvement in Volunteer Activities

Motivation Function	Mean (Std. Dev.)
Understanding	5.41 (0.833)
Values	5.32 (0.804)
Career	5.09 (0.891)
Enhancement	5.07 (0.942)
Protective	4.67 (1.059)
Social	4.27 (1.073)

The highest motivational factor contributing to the involvement of volunteers among UTHM students is from the 'Understanding' factor. It is a long-term learning process and is more geared towards the individual factor of volunteer involvement (21). In addition, Malaysians are still lacking of understanding pertaining the concept of volunteerism (5). Those involved in volunteerism in Malaysia are mostly retirees because young people and professionals face some difficulties in finding time to engage themselves in voluntary activities (22). Furthermore, young people and professionals are getting less exposure and involvement in volunteer

activities. So it answers the question that they need to understand the concept of volunteerism as the first step to develop understanding in the field of volunteerism. This is a strong reason why the respondents of this study choose 'understanding' instead of other motives

Based on Table 3, the result of the analysis found that there was a significant correlation between academic achievement with four motivational functions namely 'values', 'understanding', 'career' and 'improvement' but not significant to 'social' and 'protective' functions. The findings can be summarised that there is a weak positive relationship (23), based on the value of r = 0.129 for 'understanding', r = 0.127 for 'career', r = 0.119 for 'values', and r = 0.114 for 'enhancement'. Even it is statistically significant on the relationship between the student academic achievement level and the motivational function, but the relationship between these two variables is weak. Therefore, this study partially rejects the hypotheses that there is a strong correlation between the level of academic achievement and student motivation towards volunteerism.

Motivation Function	(p)	Correlation
Understanding	0.010	.129
Career	0.011	.127
Values	0.018	.119
Enhancement	0.023	.114
Social	0.096	.056
Protective	0.068	.094

The results show that there is still significant correlation between academic achievement and motivational function in the context of UTHM. 'Values', 'understanding', 'career' and 'enhancement' functions are the students top choices. It is supported by a study by Astin & Sax (24) which explains that the involvement of university students with volunteer activities can improve their achievement in terms of curriculum and co-curriculum

5. Conclusion

This study shows that 'understanding' has been plotted as a major factor in their involvement in volunteer activities. Many studies on the motive of involvement in volunteer activities are carried out abroad but not much conducted in Malaysia. Therefore, more studies need to be conducted in the future to look at the details of volunteer engagement motives in volunteer activities in Malaysia (7).

This study proves that there is a relationship between student academic achievement and motivational function in volunteer activities. The excellence of UTHM's students in academia also contributes to the involvement in volunteerism, especially involving values, understanding, career and enhancement. Therefore, this study supports the theory of motivational function by (25), which shows that each individual acts on an activity based on his/her own needs.

These volunteer activities are seen as an active activity in developed countries such as Australia and Japan. However, in the Malaysian context, volunteerism is still scarce and inadequate. There are not many studies conducted on volunteerism activities in Malaysia involving university students (19) Therefore, this study is expected to further enhance the literature review of volunteers in Malaysia. As a future research line, a comparison between volunteer activities can be done in gaining motivational trends among volunteers. In addition, comparisons of qualitative and quantitative findings can be made to see the differences and similarities of the findings.

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