

Relationship of Environmental Factors Towards Student Participation in Volunteering Activities

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Abstract

Volunteering refers to an action or activities that are performed freely, without the expectation of payment or other material gain, and which benefit both the volunteers and the community they are serving, whether they are official or informal, carried out alone or in groups. Environmental considerations are one of the factors that influence student interest in volunteer work. In the context of this study, the environment refers to people surrounding students who have an impact on their participation in volunteer activities. There are two objectives in this study: to determine who the key players are that affect student involvement in volunteering and to investigate how environmental factors relate to student involvement in volunteering. In this study, 400 students from three public universities who participate in volunteer work participated in a face-to-face survey for this quantitative study (UM, UKM and UPM). Based on the names of the membership of the chosen association, Kelab Penyayang (UPM and UKM), and the Universiti Malaya Volunteer Secretariat (UM), the sample was randomly chosen. The

study's findings indicate that friends and teaching staff (etc. teacher or lecturers) have the greatest influence on student volunteer involvement in charitable endeavours. While there is a relatively strong and significant correlation between environmental factors and student volunteering ($r = 0.44$, $\text{sig} = 0.00$). The findings of this study will likely serve as a guide for those who want to help students develop a culture of volunteering.

Keywords: Students, Volunteering, Environment, Participation

Introduction

Volunteering is the act of performing a service with the intention of assisting a particular person or group; it is performed voluntarily, free from outside pressure, without payment or the expectation of receiving a material benefit; it can be done either individually or in groups; it can also be done formally or informally (Normah et al., 2019). In society, where it has existed since long before civilization and society were formed, volunteering is not a recent phenomena (Nadirah and Arifin, 2013; Harris et al., 2016; Azizan, 2016). Every culture has a

similar history with volunteering, where people initially do it out of a sense of duty to their religion and a strong desire to serve (Mardhiyyah et al., 2013; Azizan, 2016). Depending on a nation's history, ideology, politics, socioeconomics, and culture, volunteering takes on various shapes in every civilization (Rehberg, 2005; UNV, 2011). Human catastrophes including wars, political disputes, economic downturns, and natural disasters inspire people and communities to volunteer as a reaction (Siti Hawa, 2002; Mardhiyyah et al., 2013). As a result, volunteering now transcends national, cultural, religious, and communal divides and is not just local or local anymore (Saifuddin, 2001; Rochester, 2006). Due to its significance for individuals, communities, and nations, volunteering is a global topic that is receiving increasing attention (Ockenden, 2007; Simha et al., 2011).

Participation of Students in Volunteering

Around the 1960s and 1970s, the involvement of student volunteers in volunteer work first came to public attention (Gage III and Thapa, 2012). At the time, the institution provided a range of volunteer opportunities for the community to encourage student volunteers to participate in voluntary work through student associations, student affairs offices, and campus-based religious organisations (Lee and Won, 2011; Gage III and Thapa, 2012; Siti Nazilah, 2014). Campus activities are those that the university sponsors, manages, or both to cultivate and support the development of positive values in students (Raslinda et al., 2006). Although there are volunteer opportunities on campus, Raslinda claims that other agencies or groups are urged to participate in order to raise money for the college and the neighbourhood.

Student volunteers actively participate in volunteer projects sponsored by organisations outside the university in addition to those on campus. It is simpler for them to obtain information about the activities planned by NGOs thanks to good exposure and accessibility. In actuality, there are charitable organisations that will pay students to participate in volunteer work. This is due to the fact that student volunteers who participate in volunteer work are a key resource for the majority of nonprofit organisations that help to fill staffing gaps, raise money, and advance the vision and objectives of the organisation (Astin and Sax, 1998). The institution strongly supports student volunteers' participation in off-campus volunteer work, which does not restrict involvement to on-campus events (Bringle and Hatcher, 1996).

The Relationship of Environmental Factors and Student Volunteering Participation

Individuals in the student's environment, such as family members, peers, teachers, and neighbours, have a significant impact on the student's willingness to volunteer (Holdsworth, 2010; Gronlund et al., 2011). The socialisation process is crucial in determining how pupils behave and what they believe. Students are more motivated to participate in volunteer work when positive ideals related to volunteering are reinforced in the activity setting (Gasiorek and Giles, 2013). If their parents or close friends volunteer as well, students are more likely to do so as well (Stukas et al., 1999). To ensure that involvement occurs permanently and constantly for a long period of time, the spirit of volunteerism among students needs to be fostered at a young age (Astin et al., 2000; Papadakis, 2004; Fauziah et al., 2015).

According to Azimi and Turiman (1996), friends have a significant impact on encouraging students to participate in voluntary work. When a student has a difficulty, they frequently turn to friends rather than their parents for advice (Mardhiyyah et al., 2013). Students that lead gregarious lifestyles and like spending time with several friends have different behaviour

and thought habits. Students who are in a pleasant environment frequently behave well and participate in activities that advance both their own interests and the common good. When students are in a bad environment, they frequently exhibit harmful symptoms (Mardhiyyah et al., 2013). He claims that the lack of interest and excitement for volunteering is also connected to students' engagement in harmful activities.

There is no doubting that lecturers and other teaching staff members in the academic setting play a significant part in promoting student engagement in voluntary endeavours. Even Holdsworth (2010) believes that lecturers or teaching personnel have a greater impact on students' decision to volunteer than parents do. This circumstance arises as a result of the fact that the majority of university students are forced to emigrate and live distant from their relatives. Students spend a lot of time with friends and teachers as a result, which reduces the control or influence that parents have over their children. In addition, most parents in today's society have hectic lives and must fulfil a variety of obligations in order to survive (Saifuddin, 2001). However, a research by Gage III and Thapa (2011) demonstrates that parents still have the ability to persuade children to participate in voluntary work. According to the study's findings, the majority of students (40.2%) said their parents were the reason for their engagement, followed by teachers (23.4%), friends (15.9%), people from their religion (11.2%), people from other organisations or societies (6.5%), and others-other (2.8%). In conclusion, socialisation from the environment has the power to mould a person's behaviour and ideas. While a bad atmosphere may make students more susceptible to developing unhealthy symptoms, a pleasant setting will inspire student volunteers to participate in voluntary activities. It is certain that the people closest to a student volunteer such as their parents, siblings, other family members, friends, and teachers play a significant influence in shaping their volunteerism. The strength of environmental effect on student volunteers is a topic of significant discussion. According to certain researchers like Cnaan and Cascio (1998); Gage III and Thapa (2011), parents are the primary motivators for student volunteerism. On the other hand, studies like Mardhiyyah et al (2013) and Azimi and Turiman (1996) observed that peers had greater effect than parents to encourage student volunteers to participate in volunteering activities. In fact, some researchers, like Holdsworth (2010), believe that teaching staff such as teachers and lecturers have a greater impact on student volunteers' participation in voluntary activities. But the researcher believes that every social group, including parents, relatives, friends, teachers, politicians, religious believers, community members, and so on, has a role to play in encouraging civic behaviour among student volunteers.

Methodology

To achieve the study objective, a quantitative approach was used. According to Neuman (2011), the quantitative approach is based on the positive enquiry research method where research is carried out through experimentation or survey and data that is collected is analysed using statistical research. In this study, the survey method involving structured questionnaires was used. The survey used a structured questionnaire that was distributed among student volunteers who are members of the Sekretariat Kesukarelawan Universiti Malaya or SEKRUM association and Kelab Penyayang at three public universities, namely UM, UKM and UPM. The population for this study involves student volunteers who are part of selected student associations at public universities around Malaysia. Sekaran and Bougie (2009) suggested that the suitable sample size for most research ranges from 30 to 500 people. However, this study does not involve students from all the many associations formed

based on volunteerism. Instead, in this study, the researcher has chosen only one student association from the three universities selected, namely SEKRUM (UM), Kelab Penyayang (UKM) and Kelab Penyayang (UPM). The justification for the selection of these associations is based on three aspects, i.e. function, objective, and activeness of the association. The selection of respondents is based on their membership in any of these associations and is chosen randomly. Simple random sampling is used to ensure that each subject in the population has an equal chance of being chosen as a study respondent. The simple random sampling process begins with acquiring the name lists for these associations. From these lists, random draw of votes was carried out to select the respondents. 134 university students were selected from SEKRUM (UM), 133 from Kelab Penyayang (UKM) and 133 from Kelab Penyayang (UPM). This resulted in the total 400 respondents for this study from the three selected associations. Data acquired from the survey were analysed using SPSS software. Two analysis methods were used, namely descriptive analysis (percentage analysis) and inferential analysis (correlation analysis).

Results and Discussion

The Impact Students' Participation in Volunteering Activities

According to Table 1, the study's findings demonstrate that students' closest friends are the primary motivators for participating in volunteer activities (78.6). Additionally, teaching staff such as teachers and lecturers play a crucial role in promoting student engagement in voluntary work (74%). These results demonstrate that external factors have a greater influence than family institutions such as family members and relatives (40.6%) (Table 1).

Table 1

The Impact Students' Participation in Volunteering Activities

Influence Participation	Number	Percentage (%)
Family members	144	29.1
Relatives	57	11.5
Friends	389	78.6
Teachers	187	37.8
Lecturers	179	36.2
Local Community	148	3.4
Voluntary Organization	17	2.0
Politicians	10	0.4
By oneself	2	
Social media		

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Azimi and Turiman (1996); Mardhiyyah et al (2013), who discovered that friends had the greatest influence over student volunteers' participation in voluntary work. When a crisis arises, most kids turn to their peers rather than their parents for advice. Students that lead gregarious lifestyles and like spending time with several friends have different behaviour and thought habits. Holdsworth (2010) believes that friends have a greater impact on students' participation in volunteer work since most students spend more time at universities than at home and most of them live far from their family. This reduces the perceived effect of parents on student volunteers' participation in voluntary activities. In fact, according to Saifuddin (2001), parents today have a hectic daily schedule and a variety of professional responsibilities that make it impossible for them to participate in volunteer activities and consequently fail to provide a positive example for children to do

so. This result contrasts with that of Cnaan and Cascio (1998); Gage III and Thapa (2012), which found that family members have a significant impact on students' decision to volunteer. The same is true of Holdsworth's (2010) study, which contends that lecturers and other members of the teaching staff have a significant impact on students' decisions to participate in voluntary work.

The Relationship of Environmental Factors and Student Volunteering Participation

The study's findings, as displayed in Table 2, indicate that the environmental factor and student volunteers' participation in voluntary activities where the environmental factor was noted have a fairly strong and significant ($r = 0.44$, $\text{sig} = 0.00$). This shows that environmental factors are an important element that has a positive relationship with student involvement in volunteering activities. The findings of this study are consistent with those of several other studies, including those by Azimi and Turiman (1996), Mardhiyyah et al. (2013), Holdsworth (2010), and Siti Raba'ah et al. (2015), which found that socialisation from parents and society can influence an individual's beliefs and behaviour. They contend that the development of positive values instilled in people by favourable environmental circumstances is related to the engagement of student volunteers in voluntary activities.

Table 2

The Relationship of Environmental Factors and Student Volunteering Participation

Environment Factor		Participation
Environment	Pearson correlation	.447
	Sig (2-tailed)	.000
	N	387

Correlation is significant at the level $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Conclusion

The empowerment of students depends on their participation in voluntary activities. One of the key elements in encouraging student engagement in volunteer activities is a welcoming environment. Therefore, encouraging student engagement in volunteering and establishing it as a habit in their everyday life requires the help of family, friends, and the teaching staff.

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