

Altruism as Motivational Factors toward Volunteerism among Youth in Petaling Jaya, Selangor

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Abstract. The aims of this paper is to describe the result of a study on altruism as volunteer motivation factor and the mediation effect of intention toward volunteering behavior among youth by adapting theory of reasoned action. This fundamental study is using cross-sectional survey involving 240 youth volunteer in Petaling Jaya, Selangor and the data collected by using questionnaire. The statistical result ($\beta=.294$, $p<.001$, $r: .349$) shows that altruism has significant positive relationship toward volunteerism among youth. However, there is no mediation effect of intention on altruism as Theory of Reasoned Action being adapted and adopted in the framework. The knowledge of volunteerism should be spread to encourage youth to join volunteering activities and narrowed down the definition of youth in Malaysia to ensure the youth can be easily identified and get them involved in community development programmes.

Keywords: Theory of Reasoned Action, Altruism, Volunteerism, Youth

1. Introduction

According to Kemp (2002), volunteerism is a personal investment of people who spend their time freely with no rewards. These people are able to make great contributions to the economy and development. In the United States, about 59 million people did volunteer work from September 2001 to September 2002 (Raslinda, 2003). Nowadays, youth volunteerism is very crucial in developing a community. The youth is the root for the development of a nation and the creation of good leaders in the future. Thus, well-shaped youth can begin by encouraging them to join volunteer activities. Volunteerism is related to the helping behaviour among people. Volunteering, however, is a specific form of helping behaviour, involving a longer-term commitment (Wilson, 2000). Due to its beneficial effect on the society, helping behaviour has been the target of much research attention (Batson, 1991). Specifically, volunteering "calls for considerably more planning, sorting out of priorities, and matching of personal capabilities and interests with type of intervention" ,in other words, "volunteers (a) often seek out opportunities to help others; (b) may deliberate for considerable amounts of time about whether to volunteer, the extent of their involvement, and the degree to which particular activities fit with their own personal needs; and (c) may make a commitment to an on-going helping relationship that may extend over a considerable period of time and that may entail considerable personal costs of time, energy, and opportunity" (Clary et al., 1998, pp.1517).

The history of volunteerism in Malaysia does not differ much from other societies (Siti Hawa, 2002). It began with individuals' commitment to religious as well as charitable altruism and it is also a form of response towards human tragedies due to wars, political conflicts and economic crisis (Siti Hawa, 2002). The majority of people who join volunteer activities are retirees, while time and energy are the main obstacles for younger generations and professionals to be fully involved in volunteer activities (Siti Hawa, 2002). The government of Malaysia is emphasizing on the issues of youth development, especially the ones regarding the issues that are related to volunteering and social engagement. The Malaysian approach to youth development calls for all development agencies to work together (Azimi & Turiman, 1994). These agencies are given the roles of providing conducive educational climate and environment for young people to learn and participate as well as to be creative and innovative through constant interaction and guidance (Azimi & Turiman, 1994).

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A trend of corporate volunteering, in which large corporations or for-profit companies organize employees to volunteer on a designated day, has also increased (Fahrentold, 2003). Current research on the subject reveals that certain segments of the population are more likely to volunteer and that different lifestyles contribute to the likelihood that one will volunteer (Fahrentold, 2003). Therefore, recruiting youth volunteer is becoming an important issue as their motivation and energy levels are higher, which can provide good returns. Looking at the prevalence of volunteerism, it is surprising to know that very little is known about youth volunteering, the motivations for volunteering and the psychological effects of volunteering (Johnson et al., 1998). Thus, the level of youth participation in volunteer work is still low. In defining and understanding volunteerism in youth, one must be concerned on the reasons and factors that can motivate or encourage him or her to volunteer. This paper focuses on the real involvement of youth in volunteer work and looks at the altruism as motivational factor for youth to join volunteering activities.

2. Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA)

Theory of Reasoned Action posits that individual behaviour is driven by behavioural intentions where behavioural intentions are a function of an individual's attitude toward the behaviour and subjective norms surrounding the performance of the behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Theory of Reasoned Action suggests that a person's behaviour is determined by his or her intention to perform the behaviour and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his or her attitude toward the behaviour and his or her subjective norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The best predictor of behaviour is intention (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behaviour, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

2.1. Altruism as Motivational Factor toward Volunteerism

“True” altruism has been defined as “voluntary, intentional behaviour motivated to benefit another that is not motivated by the expectation of external rewards or avoiding externally produced punishments or aversive stimuli” (Chou 1996: pp.297). Furthermore, Monroe (2002: pp.107) states that altruism consists of the following: “1) Altruism must involve action. Good intentions or well-meaning thoughts are not enough. 2) The action must have a goal, although the goal may be either conscious or reflexive. 3) The goal must be designed to help another. If another person’s welfare is an unintended or secondary consequence of behaviour motivated primarily to further one’s own welfare, the act is not altruistic. 4) Consequences are less important than intentions. 5) Altruism sets no conditions. The purpose of the altruistic act is helping another; there is no anticipation or explanation of reward for the altruist. In addition to these five points, conceptualizations of altruism often contain a sixth: 6) Altruism must carry the risk of diminution of the actor’s well-being”. Altruism from the Latin means ‘for the others’, caring for the ‘alter’ (Haski-Leventhal, 2009). Haski-Leventhal also sees altruism as to increase helper’s satisfaction. However, most of the scholars believe that altruism is the behaviour of helping the need and less fortunate with no return. It is the behaviour of helping others for the benefits of the society without the intention to gain any rewards for the works done (Piliavin & Charng 1990). A youth who becomes a volunteer, normally, does not receive any payment for the work that he or she does. Prior research on volunteerism suggests that intention to volunteer is positively related to altruistic value (Piliavin & Charng 1990).

It is found that altruism is a key motivator in choosing to join the volunteer fire service, which supports the external validity of the dictator game in predicting real-life behaviour (Carpenter & Myers, 2007). Volunteerism, by its very nature, is altruistic (Paul, 2000). Volunteering for a worthy cause offers people an opportunity to express their humanitarian concerns and translate their deeply-held values into actions (Paul, 2000). Burns et al., (2006) finds that altruism is positively related to volunteerism among youth and adolescence. It also indicates that, among the various factors that motivate young people and adults to volunteer, altruism appears to be involved with each. Therefore, regardless of the primary factor that motivates a young adult to volunteer, altruism may play a role as well; altruism seems to be pervasive throughout the various motivations to volunteer (Burns et al., 2006). Furthermore, a survey report on Volunteering in America 2009 found that more than one third of America's 61.8 million volunteers (35.9%) served with or through a religious organization in 2008, more than any other type of organization (Rao Ying

et. al., 2010). Volunteers who serve for faith-based organizations are also more likely to continue their services to the organizations for a longer period of time and students volunteer because they want to serve the community or help those that are less fortunate organization (Rao Ying et. al., 2010).

2.2. Method and Material

A quantitative method is chosen as the research design. A cross sectional survey technique was used in order to collect data to improve the understanding on the relationship between altruism and volunteering behavior among youth. The population was among the youth joining any youth or voluntary organization. The organizations involve those providing social service to the local community in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The sample for this study comprised of 240 respondents. Purposive sampling method for quantitative research design was used as this study required information from specific group which are youth who becoming volunteer or social workers, thus it conform to the objective of the study. Regression Analysis was used to determine the relationship between altruism and volunteering behavior among youth. The analysis was extended by using procedures developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) in order to examine the mediation effect of intention toward altruism in achieving volunteering behavior among youth.

2.3. Finding

2.3.1. Profile of Respondents

Demographic profile analyzed were gender, age, ethnicity, education, occupation, organization represented and year of experience. The result indicated the counts of gender, where 113 respondents were male while 127 respondents were female which is 47.1 percent and 52.9 percent respectively. 71 respondents or 29.6 % was from youth age 18 to 21 and they represented the highest group. Conversely, the lowest was from 20 respondents whose age range between 38 to 40 years old (8.3 %). From the profile information, most of the youths involved in volunteer activities were Malays (69.6%). For the education level, there were six categories, namely SPM, Diploma, Degree, Masters and others. In others category, the respondents may have either certificate, ‘A’ level or ‘O’ level, as there are several institutions in Petaling Jaya that offer such level of education. From the survey, most of the respondents were degree holders, which were 99 youths or 41.3 percent from the total number of respondents. Respondents with SPM were 15.4 %, diploma holders 23.3 %, master degree was 9.6 % and other qualifications were 10.4 %. 81 respondents or 33.8 % of the total respondents were found still studying and they represented the highest group. Furthermore eleven respondents or 4.6 per cent of the total respondents were found to be unemployed and they represented the lowest group.

In addition, youth volunteers who volunteered through Selangor Youth Council (Petaling Jaya District) were the majority of respondents for the study, with 57 (23.8%). Youth volunteers who chose Rotary Club PJ have the lowest participation rate, with only 10(4.2%). The respondents from other organizations were volunteers from volunteer organizations such as Yayasan Nurul Ehsan, Yayasan 1Malaysia or Persatuan Pelindungan Alam Sekitar. In terms of experience, the youth volunteers who only had below than 1 year of experience in doing volunteer work belong to the group with the highest participation rate, which takes up almost half from the total respondents. From this analysis, the volunteers who had 1 to 3 years’ experience represented 34.6 %, 4 to 6 years were 18.3% and more than 6 years were 4.2 %.

2.3.2. Regression Analysis for Determining Relationship as Follows

H1: There is positive significant relationship between altruism and volunteering behaviour

Construct	DV-Volunteering Behavior
Altruism	.294**
R ²	.349
Durbin Watson	1.717
Sig.	.000

** Significant at $p < 0.001$ level

Table 1 show that there is a significant relationship between altruism and volunteering behaviour among youth where ($\beta=.294$, $p< 0.001$) and ($r=.349$). So, the researchers do accept the H1.

2.3.3. Mediation Affects Using Baron and Kenny as Follows:

H2: Altruism is mediated by intention to volunteer to achieve volunteering behavior

Variables	Model 1 DV-Volunteerism	Model 2 DV-Volunteerism	Model 3 DV-Intention	Model 4 DV-Volunteerism
IV-Altruism	.294**	-	.196**	.199**
MV-Intention	-	.629**		.485
R ²	.590	.549	.701	.746
Durbin Watson	1.717	1.823	1.588	1.728
Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

According to Baron and Kenny (1986) firstly the independent variable must be shown to affect the dependent variable, secondly, the dependent variable must affect the mediator and thirdly the mediator must affect the dependent variable and perfect mediation holds if the independent variable has no effect when the mediator is controlled. Thus, from table 2, there is no mediation effect of intention on altruism to achieve volunteering behavior. So, researchers reject the H2.

2.3.4. Evaluation of Findings

The present study added up to the literatures which support altruism as the important motivation factors for youth to join volunteering activities. Previous studies such as in Burns et. al (2006) and Carpenter and Knowles-Meyes (2007) found that altruism play a role as well in shaping volunteer attitude among youth. This finding reflects the theoretical framework in assessing volunteerism among youth. However, the strength of regression which is only 34% explained that even though altruism is positively significance toward youth volunteerism, the accuracy of the framework in determining volunteerism is not too high.

One of the volunteer motivation factors which is altruism found to be significant when the mediator is controlled which is not suit to the procedures in determining the mediation effect. A study by Baron and Kenny (1986), altruism is not mediated by intention to volunteer toward volunteering behaviour. Thus, a finding of this research contradicts with the theory of reasoned action.

2.4. Recommendation

- Spreading volunteerism knowledge

In order to achieve this, it is suggested that volunteer organizations work together with school administrators to design and develop plans to influence and encourage the students to join volunteer activities. The students should understand that volunteerism could be one of the ways they can contribute to the community development. In short, those in volunteer organizations and in schools need to have mutual goals to help develop the community.

- Narrow down the definition of age for youth

It is recommended, the age of youth to be narrowed down to 15 to 25 like some other countries as suggested by the United Nation. For example, in Bangladesh, people with age from 15 to 30 are considered as youth, Brunei Darussalam, age 15 to 35 and India, age 15 to 34.

2.5 Conclusion

In conclusion this study shows altruism is one of the motivational factors toward volunteerism and this is in line with previous researches that altruism is positively related to volunteerism among youth (Paul, 200; Burns, 2006; and Rao Ying, 2010). Comprehensive policy is needed to motivate youth in all sectors to be involved in volunteering activities which can help contribute to community development.

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