

Social Interaction as Constituent for Youth Volunteerism

Mohd Ramlan Mohd Arshad⁺ and Zaliha Hj Hussin

Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi Mara Malaysia

Abstract. The growing demand for social services has resulted in the increasing demand for volunteers. The lack of an adequate number of volunteers has left many agencies and organizations with the inability to provide services that clients need or desire. This paper aims to explore the issue of volunteerism among youths in terms of social interaction as the constituent. This fundamental study is using cross-sectional survey involving 240 youth volunteers in Petaling Jaya, Selangor and the data collected by using questionnaires. The statistical result ($r = .499$, $p < .01$) shows that social interaction has a significant positive relationship toward volunteerism among youth. Mediation analysis also provides there is a mediation effect of intention on social interaction as Theory of Reasoned Action being adapted and adopted in the framework. Social interaction does reflect the volunteering behavior among youth.

Keywords: Theory of Reasoned Action, Volunteerism, Youth, Social Interaction.

1. Introduction

There are more than 1.2 billion youths in the world today, the largest group of young people in history (United Nation Development Program, 2013). This large cohort has incredible ability and potential, yet at the same time it faces unique vulnerabilities and challenges (United Nation Development Program, 2013). Historically, young people have faced social exclusion, and the recent economic downturn has prompted high unemployment, which particularly affects the younger generation (United Nation Development Program, 2013). Youth in general is disproportionately affected by extreme poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and lack of access to education (United Nation Development Program, 2013). On a typical day, 6.7% of Americans older than 15 years averaged 2 hours of volunteer time (Clerkin et al., 2008). In addition, more than \$295 billion was donated by U.S. citizens (Clerkin et al., 2008). Included in that record figure is the money donated by more than 65% of households with less than \$100,000 annual income (Giving USA Foundation, 2007). Remarkably, though tasked with job responsibilities and a myriad of other pressures, full-time employees recorded the second highest volunteer activity level among all American adults (only part-time workers donated more hours) (Giving USA Foundation, 2007). Based on this evidence, it is clear that giving is a highly regarded and socially valued activity. People are regularly encouraged to dedicate time, money, and other resources as a means to satisfy community or organizational needs (Clerkin et al., 2008). However, people respond differently to requests for time or money because some might attribute their charitable behavior to gaining satisfaction through doing "good" deeds (Clerkin et al., 2008).

Liao-Troth and Dunn (1999) suggests that motivation is a multiplicative function of expectancy (the perceived connection between performance and rewards), an instrumentality (the perceived connection between effort and performance), and valence (the preference one holds for the rewards tendered) where simple deductive reasoning allows for the conclusion that low values of any of these three constructs can result in radically diminished motivation. Chacon and Vecina (2000) declared that, the motivations have long been considered an important factor in distinguishing a long-term volunteer from one who decides to quit. On the other hand, motivations influencing the decision to become a volunteer are different from that influencing volunteerism retention (Gidron, 1984; Oda, 1991; Winniford et al., 1995). It was demonstrated that individuals who think volunteers to be an opportunity to determine capacities and competencies useful to themselves, are involved in the service for a shorter time (Capanna et al., 2002). The above motivations seem to favor the choice to become a volunteer, but not the choice to maintain the commitment. This seems to be typical of young volunteers as a young-adult's motivational framework at the origin of the commitment in voluntary organizations appears to be composite because it bears the same strong value and community-

⁺ Email: ramlanarshad@gmail.com

oriented base as an adult's (Marta and Pozzi, 2008). Moreover, it draws on experiences that lead to a competence and ability necessary for self-growth and to enter the job market (Capanna et al., 2002; Omoto et al., 2000; Wuthnow, 1995; Sundeen and Raskoff, 1994).

As the issue of youth volunteers becoming a major issue throughout the Earth, Malaysia must be a part of the contributors to the idea of youth volunteers. The youth movement in Malaysia is being fostered through government policy which leads to the establishment of 1 Malaysia for Youth (1M4U) project with the aim to ensure a high level of youth participation in volunteering activities. The government had introduced 1M4U as the political program to rejuvenate the ideology of volunteerism among youth in Malaysia which involved allocation of 130 million of funds by the government under the Dana Sukarelawan 1 Malaysia (DRE1M) to enforce volunteering activities throughout the nation (Shari et al., 2013). Even though the government had provided the platform, however it is very important to know the motivational factors that can encourage youth to volunteer. Thus, it is very crucial to know the relationship between social interaction and volunteerism among youth.

2. Social Interaction in Correlate with Volunteerism

Social inclusion is understood to be a product of societal institutions, procedures and practices, which inevitably produce unequal outcomes for individuals (Garbutt, 2009). These effects depend on how one is positioned at the intersection of different power grids in society (Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran and Vieten, 2006, p. 7). It is, therefore, a multidimensional, relational concept that describes the nature of individual and group relations to the larger society (Silver, 2007, p. 15). In general terms one can understand social inclusion to be a state of privilege that has as its corollary, a state of disadvantage or social exclusion (Garbutt, 2009). Further, as the center, or the socially included is typically a group that is unmarked, it is more common to find working definitions of social inclusion that refer to the marginalized or marginalization, that is, 'as "not social exclusion"' (Cameron, 2006). With this in mind, this report seeks to identify the core of social inclusion, as well margins. In terms of belonging at the local level, this involves identifying 'the locals' as well as those considered not being locals (Garbutt, 2009). Volunteerism also has a significant positive impact on community well-being. It creates ties among people, increases social capital and leads to many social factors that create healthy societies in which people enjoy living (United Nation General Assembly, 2011). A stronger sense of community also leads to more volunteering, as such, this creates a virtuous cycle in which people volunteer, thus strengthening community ties which leads more people to volunteer (United Nation General Assembly, 2011). "Community" includes not just people living in close geographic proximity but also people with common needs, assets and interests where membership of virtual communities can generate feelings of belonging and well-being (United Nation General Assembly, 2011).

Efforts to capture people's subjective experience of community well-being have largely concentrated on the social elements of human well-being (United Nation General Assembly, 2011). Social well-being has been assessed by measures of supportive relationships and trust and belonging (Michaelson et al., 2009). Volunteers are more likely to develop "civic skills", to attach more importance to serving the public interest as a personal life goal and to be more politically active. Thus, in going about their volunteer activities, individuals are also cultivating a mindset that contributes to a social environment that nurtures the well-being of all (Wilson, 2000). The volunteers seem to be caught in a bind (Indra and Sue, 1992). They like the opportunity to exchange experiences with other volunteers but most admit that they avoid meetings associated with their assignments (Indra and Sue, 1992). By establishing trust and reciprocity among citizens, volunteering contributes to a more cohesive, stable and a more prosperous society (United Nation, 1999). For social capital to contribute to social interaction and integration there are needs to be, not only high levels of associational and volunteer activities, but a dense network of crosscutting ties among groups that can be achieved through volunteerism (United Nation, 1999). The point is powerfully illustrated by Ashutosh Varshney (1998) in a study of communal riots in India, which he finds that the states with volunteer organizations and associations as well as informal volunteer groups create harmony and peace when it comes to social interaction and integration between Muslim and Hindu (United Nation, 1999). Volunteerism can be used as the tools in creating social bonding and interaction among people, especially the youth. As youth is the human capital sources for the future, therefore, it is very important for them to bond nicely and the

interaction among them is vital in order to produce a better future. Thus, the spirit of volunteerism must be clearly developed among youth to ensure continuous and sustainable peace and harmony within the nation.

2.1. Theory of Reasoned Action

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 behavior is determined by his or her intention to perform the behavior and that this intention is, in turn, a function of his or her attitude toward the behavior and his or her subjective norm (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). The best predictor of behavior is intentional (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Intention is the cognitive representation of a person's readiness to perform a given behavior, and it is considered to be the immediate antecedent of behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

2.2. Method and Material

Quantitative method was used in this research to drive the understanding of the relationship between social interaction and youth volunteers and the mediating effect on intention to volunteer toward volunteering behavior through a questionnaire. The population was among the youth that joining any youth or voluntary organization in Petaling Jaya, Selangor. The sample for this study comprised of 240 respondents. In order to examine the data, Pearson Correlation Analysis was used to define the relationship between social interaction and volunteerism among youth. Regression Analysis was used to determine the accuracy of the relationship between social interaction and volunteerism among youth and extended analysis by using procedures developed by Baron and Kenny (1986) used in order to examine the mediation effect of intention to volunteer toward family volunteering in achieving volunteerism among youth.

2.3. Findings

2.3.1. Profile of Respondents

In this profile of respondents, the researchers discussed about the respondents demographic such as gender, age, ethnicity, education, occupation, organization represents and year of experience. The result indicates the counts of gender, where 113 respondents are male while 127 respondents are female, which indicates 47.1 percent and 52.9 percent respectively. The age of respondents is set up from 18 to 40 years old and this scope is within the definition of youth given by the government, which is from 15 to 40 years old. The highest participation is from 71 respondents of youth aged from 18 to 21 years old (29.6 %). Conversely, the lowest is from 20 respondents of youth with the age range of between 38 to 40 years old (8.3 %). From the profile information, most of the youth involved in volunteer activities is Malay, as they represent 69.6% of the total number of respondents. For the education level, there are six categories, namely SPM, Diploma, Degree, Masters, PhD 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 are Degree holders, which are 99 youths or 41.3 percent of the total number of respondents. Respondents with SPM are 15.4 %, Diploma holders 23.3 %, Master Degree is 9.6 % and other qualifications are 10.4 %. Unfortunately, there is no respondent with PhD qualification. Furthermore, the total number of respondents who is currently studying comes from the group that respond to the questionnaire with the highest participation rate, which is 33.8 % or 81 of total respondents. On the other hand, the lowest is from the group of the respondents who are unemployed, which are 11 respondents (4.6 %).

2.3.2. Pearson Correlation to determine relationship as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between social interaction and volunteerism

No	Construct Variables	1	2
1	Volunteering behavior	-	
2	Social Interaction	.499**	-

** p < .01

The relationship between social interaction and volunteering behavior, with accuracy of $r = .499$, $p < .01$, shows that there is significant relationship however, there is only moderate positively relationship. So, researchers do accept the H1.

2.3.3. Mediation effect using Baron and Kenny:

H2: Social Interaction mediated by Intention to volunteer to achieve volunteering behavior

Variables	Model 1 DV-Volunteerism	Model 2 DV-Intention	Model 3 DV-Volunteerism	Model 4 DV-Volunteerism
IV-Social Interaction	.499**	.484**	-	.208**
MV-Intention to volunteer	-	-	.701**	.601**
R ²	.249	.492	.234	.525
Durbin Watson	1.596	1.588	1.732	1.694
Sig.	.000	.000	.000	.000

p < .01

Table shows the difference in the level of accuracy based on R² value. Model 1 shows the value of R² is .249, which explains that the level of accuracy is 24.9%. However, with the existence of mediator as in Model 4, it the variation accuracy increases to R = .525, which is clear that 47.5 % of accuracy cannot be explained by social interaction as the antecedent toward volunteerism among youth. Durbin-Watson values prove that the value is between 0 and 4, which is perfect according to Field (2009). According to Baron and Kenny (1986), firstly, regression is conducted with social interaction predicting volunteerism, secondly, regression with social interaction predicting the mediator (intention), thirdly regression with intention predicting volunteerism. With reference to the procedure, the result of the first 3 model is significant this model 4 is being used to determine whether there is full mediation or partial mediation. Model 4 had explained that the intention is fully mediated social interaction to achieve volunteerism as the inclusion of intention as a mediator it drop the relationship between IV (Social Interaction) and DV (Volunteerism) from $\beta = .499$ to $\beta = .208$ and significantly Intention (Mediator) become weaker from $\beta = .701$ to $\beta = .601$. So, researchers do accept hypothesis 2.

2.3.4. Discussion

In assessing volunteerism among youth, social interaction is examined and the positive relationship shows that social interaction is one of the factors that motivate youth to join volunteering activities. This result can logically be accepted, as it is the nature of humankind to create new friends and have contacts with people close to them. A study by Smith (1994) finds that social interaction is the factor that encourages people to volunteer. In addition, a research by Zappa and Zavarrone (2010) indicates that volunteers evaluate either the quantity or the quality of ties built with their peers. Therefore, only some kinds of relationships, with very specific content, structure and benefits, have an effect on their level of volunteering satisfaction and, with reference to the content, it is pointed out that co-working ties, weak by definition, are more able to affect satisfaction than solidarity ones (Zappa and Zavarrone, 2010). The outcome of this research adds to the evidence of the theoretical and the practical implication in studying volunteerism.

The study finds that social interaction has a significant relationship to volunteering behavior even though the level of significance is positively moderate. The result of social interaction ($\beta = .499$, $p < .001$) proves that social interaction is the factor that can lead to volunteerism among youth in Petaling Jaya. A study, previously conducted by Emma (2005), shows the same result, where social interaction or social integration, which can be defined as making new friends and new contacts, is the determinant of volunteerism among

youngsters and adults, based on a social psychology theory. The result from this study is also consistent with the research by Zomeren et al., (2004), which states that group-based emotion is shown to be a predictor of volunteers and this is preceded by a social opinion support. In defining group-based emotion, Zomeren et al., (2004) includes communication and interaction among the members as the determinant. Morrow-Havel et al., (2002) also states that social interaction, when tested in determining the level of volunteers in terms of civic engagement, is proven as the main factor. In terms of practical implications, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) model provides the information on the relationship of volunteer motivation factors-intention to volunteer-volunteering behavior in this study. The TRA models imply that beliefs should be enhanced for the sake of intention. In adapting and adopting the TRA model in this study, the volunteer motivation factors need to be strengthened to further encourage youth to volunteer. The significant result shows that social interaction is mediated by intention to affect volunteering behavior among youth in Petaling Jaya. These should correspond to the youth's needs and interests, especially for boys to ensure that the intention can be translated into volunteering behavior (Clary et al., 1994).

2.3.5. Conclusion

In conclusion this study shows social interaction is one of the constituents toward volunteerism and this is in line with previous researches that social interaction is positively related to volunteerism among youth (Smith, 1994, Zomeren et al, 2004, Emma, 2005 and Zappa and Zavarrone, 2010). A 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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