

The Contributing Factors of Volunteer Satisfaction and Intent to Remain among Community Service Volunteers in Organizing Events Course

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ABSTRACT

Malaysians are showing more interest in involving themselves in community service projects recently. Both non governmental as well as private organizations have started to reach more to the needy through various community projects. Locally or internationally, the community service projects usually depend heavily on volunteers. They enable event managers to add and to expand the quantity and diversity of services without exhausting the budget. They are considered a valuable commodity as research has suggested that the available pool of volunteers may be declining due to various reasons which include the volunteer satisfaction. As such, this study examined the satisfaction level of Office Management diploma program students who act as volunteers in community service projects undertaken by them as part of their course requirements. The primary purpose of this research was to investigate the volunteers' satisfaction level and factors that contributed to volunteers' intent to remain in community service projects. A set of questionnaire was distributed to five groups of students taking the Organizing Events (OMT290) course that organized community service as their projects. The data was analyzed for descriptive and inferential statistics using the SPSS Version 20. The findings identified the factors that (highest dimension) lead to volunteer satisfaction and their intent to remain in community service. It was found that the respondents showed high level of satisfaction with the community service experience. Further research on the relationship on volunteer satisfaction and intent to remain would be conducted to contribute to the body of knowledge.

Keywords: community service, volunteers, volunteer satisfaction, intent to remain.

Introduction

The awareness among Malaysians to contribute back to the community has been in the rise recently. Community service events and projects conducted by individuals and non-profitable organizations have continued to emerge in various forms and sizes. The projects were conducted locally and internationally, both funded by the government as well as through donations from the public. This increase, which is likely to continue, is due to national and local governments trying to bolster economic development as well as to uphold the Malaysia spirit introduced by the Honorable Prime Minister of Malaysia. The government through its many agencies along with the non-profitable organizations has been working closely to help out the needy throughout the nation.

With this positive and uplifting boost come limited financial resources and the need for more volunteers to organize the events. Many non-profitable organizations rely on volunteers to help accomplish their service objectives. Volunteers should be considered a valuable commodity, as research has suggested that the available pool of volunteers may be declining throughout the world due to the increasing demands of everyday life, longer working hours, and increased age of retirement (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001; Hidalgo & Moreno, 2009).

Volunteers serve a critical role in the successful management of many events. According to Wilson (2000), a volunteer is defined as a person who performs or gives services of his or her own free will without receiving a salary in return. As stated by Chacon, Vecina, and Davilla (2007), volunteers are a valuable form of capital for many organizations as they help reduce the cost of provision and ease the budget on full time staff. The rising public awareness on doing community service has added up to the need to look for participations from volunteers because a large number of individuals are needed for creating and delivering the community services.

As volunteers constitute a significant labor source for a community service project, researchers and practitioners have recognized job satisfaction of volunteers as an outcome of volunteer experiences (Cuskelly, Hoye, & Auld, 2006). It is believed that the better event organizers understand these sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with event operations, the more effective the management of volunteers as well as the overall

efficiency of the event operations can be. In understanding such factors, event organizers will be better able to formulate strategies to motivate further volunteering and potentially reduce drop-out rates. The failure to retain volunteers not only has an adverse impact on the community service, but also requires organizations to spend extra effort to recruit and train new volunteers (Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001).

As such, the researchers found it important to conduct this research in order to identify the various factors influencing volunteers' satisfaction with their volunteering experience. After going through literature of past studies, it was found that research conducted among the youths as volunteers has been lacking. Therefore, the researchers have selected five groups of semester four students taking the course Organizing Events (OMT290) as part of their Diploma in Office Management syllabus to take part in the study. The students were selected based on their experiences as volunteers in community service projects which they organized in fulfilling the course syllabus. The researchers conducted the study as a pilot for further research and to fill the existing gap with the objectives of:

- RO1: to determine the factors of volunteer satisfaction that contributes to the intent to remain among community service volunteers.
- RO2: to investigate the level of volunteer satisfaction of Office Management diploma program students who organized community service projects for the Organizing Events course and the factors affecting their intent to remain.

The following research questions were also set forth:

- RQ1: What aspects of volunteering for community service project were most satisfying and least satisfying to volunteers?
- RQ2: What are the factors of volunteer satisfaction that contributed to intent to remain among community service volunteers?
- RQ3: What are the levels of volunteer satisfaction towards community service in organizing event course?

Community Service and Volunteering

When a person or a group of people performed certain activities or donated his or their services for the benefit of the public, they are said to be doing community services. The rising awareness among Malaysians, especially among the youths, in involving themselves in community service projects has triggered the researchers to conduct this study. Yayasan Salam Malaysia, Malaysian Aids Foundation, Hospis Malaysia and Global Peace Mission are among popular non-governmental associations and organizations that give community service to the public for free. Without volunteers many non-profitable organizations would have to reduce their activities or may even cease to operate.

At its most basic, volunteering in community service is a discretionary activity which is essentially a donation of time. It is about giving unpaid help through groups, clubs or organizations to benefit other people or the environment (Sherrod, Flanagan, & Youniss, 2002). Wilson (2000) suggested that volunteering is basically a satisfying or enjoyable experience (or a combination of both) which could be in a serious, casual or project based forms.

Hence, events volunteering, as conducted by the respondents in this study could be classified as project-based leisure which is a short term, reasonably complicated, one-off or occasional, though infrequent, creative undertaking carried out in free time. Wilson (2000) further stated that the important feature of leisure perspective is that the main reason for volunteering is self-interest, as the volunteers primary purpose lies in having a fun or satisfying experience.

Volunteers Satisfaction and Intent to Remain

Previous research has examined the satisfaction of volunteers in a variety of contexts including social services (Finkelstein, 2007; Galindo-Kuhn & Guzley, 2001), and events (Costa, Chalip, Green, and Simes, 2006; Doherty, 2009). As stated by Finkelstein (2007), satisfaction depended on the volunteer experience fulfilling the goals of the volunteers at the onset of the experience. Costa et. al (2006) found that training was important for

satisfaction as it provided the opportunity for volunteers to share their opinions and experiences. In doing so, this contributed to their sense of community at the event itself, which positively impacted their level of satisfaction. From all these studies, there is evidence that satisfaction is multi-faceted.

The researchers have therefore, adapted the questionnaire from Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) Volunteer Satisfaction Index as the research instrument for the study. In an effort to develop a consistent and reliable instrument that recognized volunteer satisfaction as multifaceted, Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) designed the Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) utilizing previous constructs from various studies. The instrument measured five dimensions of volunteer satisfaction: communication quality, organizational support, participation efficacy, work assignment, and group integration. The findings from previous research produced positive results in regards to supporting the reliability and validity of the VSI.

Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) defined communication quality as the basic nature of communication that a volunteer received from the organization they are volunteering for. The second element, organizational support involved two components: educational (the resources, such as training provided to improve the quality of experience) and emotional (the relational environment that exists between organizational members and volunteers). Participation efficacy was the notion that through their participation, volunteers will benefit someone other than themselves. Meanwhile, work assignment which is the fourth element in the instrument was defined as a task which gives the volunteer an opportunity to develop abilities and skills to suit their own needs. Lastly, group integration referred to the social aspect of the relationship that volunteers develop with other volunteers.

Apart from understanding volunteer satisfaction, it is also of utmost importance to understand future volunteering intention among volunteers. This includes both volunteers with prior experience and first time volunteers. As stated by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001), if volunteers do not have a satisfying experience, it is plausible to make the assumption that they would leave one organization to perhaps volunteer at another organization. Boezeman and Ellemers (2007) further stated that pride in the organization and respect from the organization predicted organizational commitment among volunteers.

Research has also provided evidence of overall satisfaction among volunteers with the experience at various events. Bang and Chelladurai (2003) stated that volunteers were satisfied with the quality and level of responsibilities they were assigned. Similar to previous findings, Du (2009) noted that the volunteers were satisfied with their experience but those who had knowledge about persons with disabilities prior to the Special Olympics Summer Games tended to feel more satisfied with their volunteer service. Interestingly, volunteers were satisfied with the factors relevant to contribution and beneficiary to others while also concerned about the communication between the volunteers and the management. Doherty (2009) noted volunteers will be more likely to engage in future volunteering behaviour to the extent that they have experienced positive outcomes as a result of that behaviour in the past; similarly they will be less likely to volunteer again if they have experienced negative outcomes.

Research Framework

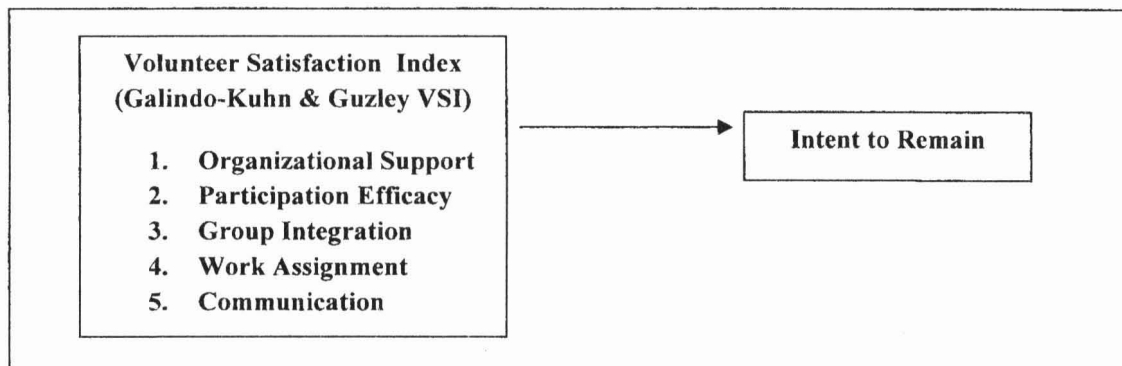


Figure (1): The Contributing Factors on Volunteer Satisfaction and Intent to Remain among Community Service Volunteers in Organizing Events Course

Methodology

A set of questionnaire was used as the instrument of this study. The study used cluster sampling method where five out of seven groups of semester four students were selected as the respondents. 105 questionnaires were distributed to students of Diploma of Office Management and Technology taking the Organizing Events course (OMT290).

The Volunteer Satisfaction Index designed by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) was adapted to measure volunteer satisfaction in this study. Section A, included items designed to gather demographic information such as: age, gender, and previous volunteer experience while Section B consisted of 35 items which measured the five dimensions of volunteer satisfaction: Communication Quality (6 items), Organizational Support (6 items), Participation Efficacy (6 items), Work Assignment (9 items), and Group Integration (8 items). The responses to each item were measured using a 5 point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*).

The Cronbach's Alpha reliability tests were conducted to assess the reliability of instruments from the internal consistency aspect. The results of the reliability test were shown in Table 1 with the overall dimension score was .86 levels. The Group Integration dimension scale achieved Cronbach's Alpha reading of .86. Furthermore, scale of Participation Efficacy and Work Assignment was .87. Organizational Support reliability coefficient score was .85 and Communication Quality was .83. The result indicated that the instrument is reliable for this study which achieved above .60 (Sekaran, 2007).

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Scales	Actual Survey Reliability Coefficient (Alpha) (n=105)
Volunteer Satisfaction	.864
Group Integration	.863
Participation Efficacy	.871
Organizational Support	.848
Work Assignment	.871
Communication Quality	.826

The data was analyzed using the Statistical Package in the Social Science Software (SPSS) version 20.0. The descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were employed to analyze the data and answer the research questions. Frequency of distribution and measure central tendency were used in presenting and summarizing the data. Descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviation and percentage appropriate were used to describe the first and second research questions of the study.

With regards to the other research questions and types of data, a statistical technique was employed, using inferential statistic which is Pearson's correlation, to determine the extent to which volunteer satisfaction influences future volunteering. The level of significance was set at $p < 0.05$ for the analysis.

Findings and Analysis

Demographic Profile

One hundred and five respondents participated in the study where 25 (23.8%) were males and 80 (76.2%) were females. As showed in Table 2, the respondents who took part in the study with the age range of less than 18 years old was only 1 (1.0%), 18-20 years old were 86 (81.9%), 21-23 years old were 17 (16.2%) and more than 23 years old were 1 (1.0 %). It is also shown that 69 respondents have had experience in involving with community service activities previously while another 36 respondents were never involved in any community service activity.

Table 2: Demographic Information of Respondents

Items	Demographic Information of Respondents	
	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	25	23.8%
Female	80	76.2%
Age		
Less than 18 years old	1	1.0%
18 to 20 years old	86	81.9%
21 to 23 years old	17	16.2%
Less than 23 years old	1	1.0%
Volunteer Experience		
Yes	69	65.7%
No	36	34.3%

RQ1: What aspects of volunteering for community service project were most satisfying and least satisfying to volunteers?

Table 3: Aspects of Volunteering for Community Service

Items	Mean	SD
How appreciative the clientele is	3.9714	.56257
The freedom I have to carry out the community service	4.0000	.45993
The amount of time spent with others	4.0000	.60447
The fit of the volunteer work to my skills	4.0286	.48945
The difference that my volunteer is making	4.0476	.61050
The amount of effort I put	4.0476	.48795
The realism of the picture of what my volunteer experience would be like	4.0571	.51569
The way others relate to me	4.0667	.52379
The convenience of this job to my schedule	4.0667	.54184
The chance to receive additional skills	4.0857	.50219
The accuracy of information I have been given	4.0857	.52099
The influence of my participation is having in the lives of clients	4.0952	.49076
The amount of interaction with other volunteers	4.0952	.56371
My ability to do the job as well as anyone else	4.1238	.53160
The chance I have to utilize my knowledge and skills	4.1238	.40892
The relationship with other volunteers	4.1333	.65143
The flexibility I am given to fit my volunteer work into my life	4.1333	.57289
How worthwhile the contribution is	4.1429	.52676
The training I have received	4.1524	.55089
The level of challenge the volunteer job provides	4.1619	.60644
The resources I have been given	4.1810	.49577

How often the organization acknowledge the work I do	4.1810	.63217
The availability of getting help	4.1905	.55635
How interesting my volunteer work is	4.1905	.55635
The degree in which the organization communicates to volunteers	4.2000	.52623
The amount of permission I need to do things	4.2000	.54420
The access to information I have	4.2095	.54939
The friends I have made	4.2095	.59960
The degree to which I feel I belong in the organization	4.2381	.58051
The amount of information I received	4.2381	.50997
The opportunities to learn new things	4.2571	.51940
The way to provide performance feedback	4.2667	.59269
The progress I have seen in the event success	4.3238	.54588
The support received from people in the organization	4.3429	.53401
The intention to do future volunteering	4.4286	.49725
The ability to effectively help	4.4571	.93219

According to the responds given, it was found that the ability to effectively help has been ranked as the most satisfying aspects of volunteering to volunteers ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .93219$), followed by the intention to do future volunteering ($M = 4.43$, $SD = .49725$) and the support received from people in the organization ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .53401$). Meanwhile, the findings showed that the least satisfying aspects of volunteering to volunteers is the way they felt how appreciative the clientele is to their volunteering work ($M = 3.97$, $SD = .56257$).

RQ2: What are the factors of volunteer satisfaction that contribute to the level of intent to remain among community service volunteers?

Table 4: Factors of Volunteer Satisfaction that Contribute to the Level of Intent to Remain

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Group Integration	105	4.13	.61579	2.50	8.75
Participation Efficacy	105	4.14	.42958	2.50	5.00
Organizational Support	105	4.16	.40257	3.00	5.00
Work Assignment	105	4.15	.36316	3.00	4.89
Communication Quality	105	4.20	.40745	3.00	5.00

The factors of volunteer satisfaction were dimensioned into five, namely Group Integration, Participation Efficacy, Organizational Support, Work Assignment and Communication Quality. Communication Quality has been ranked as the highest factor that contributed to the level of volunteer satisfaction ($M = 4.20$, $SD = .40745$). It was followed by Organizational Support ($M = 4.16$, $SD = .40257$), and Work Assignment ($M = 4.15$, $SD = .36316$). Participation Efficacy ($M = 4.14$, $SD = .42958$), and Group Integration ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .61579$), were identified as the factors that contributed lowest to the level of volunteer satisfaction among respondents.

RQ3: What are the levels of volunteer satisfaction towards community service in organizing event course?

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Volunteer Satisfaction

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
Volunteer's Satisfaction	105	3.00	4.77	4.1536	.36167

The findings in table above show the mean score ($M = 4.1536$, $SD = .36167$) for volunteer satisfaction towards community service. The high mean score indicated a higher level of satisfaction in measuring the involvement in community service.

The overall mean of the respondent's satisfaction on community service was computed in order to divide the level of satisfaction into three levels: low, moderate and high.

Table 6: Level of Volunteer Satisfaction toward Community Service

Level	Frequency	Percent
Low	0	0
Moderate	8	7.6
High	97	92.4
Total	105	100.0

As shown in the above table, the percentage distribution of respondents by the level of satisfaction towards community service indicated that 92.4 per cent and 7.6 percent of them revealed high and moderate levels of satisfaction respectively.

Conclusion

The Volunteer Satisfaction Index (VSI) designed by Galindo-Kuhn and Guzley (2001) which consisted of the five dimensions of volunteer satisfaction has shown that the majority of the respondents ranked Communication Quality and Organizational Support to be the most important factors for them to volunteer. As stated by Payne (2005), effective communication between employees and employers should be practiced in organizations in order to increase job performance. Therefore, the study supported the notion that the basic nature of communication that a volunteer received from the organization they are volunteering plays a very vital role in ensuring their intent to remain for future volunteering jobs. It can also be concluded that without the understanding and the support from the organization in terms of providing the resources, such as training provided to improve the quality of experience and the environment that exists between organizational members and volunteers, then the volunteers might not have any intention to remain for future volunteering jobs.

Therefore, it is recommended that the organizers to prepare adequate and appropriate training as well as giving proper emotional support to fulfill these aspects of satisfaction level of the volunteers. The ability to effectively help which was identified as the most satisfying aspect of volunteering in the VSI showed that the majority of the respondents were willing to sacrifice their free time and energy to contribute in the service community projects undertaken by them. It is suggested that the goodwill and the noble acts by these respondents be supported with proper orientation and training by the organizers in order to produce a well-balanced person as inspired by the university and the nation. The contribution of volunteers to the success of an event is very significant for every organization. It is of utmost importance for the organizations to have an understanding of the volunteers' underlying motivations in volunteering in the event on the first place (Bang & Chelladurai, 2003). It is hoped that by understanding their motivation, then the issue of retention will not be of a problem to the organizer, more so in community service projects.

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