VOLUNTEERISM AMONG FILIPINO COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Volunteering is an activity that requires time, talent or skills without any financial reward from an individual or group. The purpose of this paper is to analyze discriminants of volunteerism among 785 undergraduate students in the Technological Institute of the Philippines (T.I.P.). To evaluate individual motivation factors, we developed and validated our 'Filipino Volunteerism Questionnaire' which covers five (5) motivational parameters namely: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and social interaction. The discriminant function analysis reveals a significant association between groups and all the predictors. Personal growth (score = 1.975) and recognition (score = -1.201) predict group membership in among 75.6% of the participants to either Group 1 ('high' likelihood) or Group 2 ('low' likelihood) for volunteerism. Our current study adds significantly to the body of knowledge on student volunteerism and may help guide institutions in tailoring programs that may enhance communal volunteerism among the Filipino youth.

Keywords: motivation, volunteerism, civic participation, social theory, community service, youth development, altruism, young citizens, altruism, prosocial behavior.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the mere expression of altruism, or the behavior with the ultimate goal of addressing another's welfare (Engels, 1983), volunteerism is a phenomenon where an individual or a group acts to share resources (time, money, skills, etc.) in response to the need of others without expecting any material reward or incentive. Moreover, it is viewed as a collective expression of people's willingness to help others and contribute to social transformation.

Ingrained deeply in the tradition of Filipinos, whether they be *bayanihan* (a spontaneous but organized assistance to a community member); *damayan* (assistance to others in times of

personal crisis or grief); *kawanggawa* (an act of philantrophy); *pahinungod* (a Roman Catholic virtue of self-sacrifice); or *bahaginan* (spontaneous sharing of what little amount of resources available, e.g., alms), "volunteerism brings in significant benefits to individuals and communities and helps nurture and sustain a rich social texture and a strong sense of mutual trust and cohesion, essential to the stability of Philippine society" (Virola, Ilarina, Reyes, & Buenaventura, 2010).

The volunteer service sector in the Philippines during the last two decades years saw a major consolidation of non-governmental voluntary organizations, such as the Philippine Association for Volunteer Efforts (PAVE) in 1994, and the Voluntary Organizations' Information, Coordination, and Exchange (VOICE) in 2002. As the Filipinos volunteers become more organized and empowered, we take note of several individuals or groups of Filipinos bestowed with various recognitions internationally for volunteerism. In 2009, Efren Peñaflorida Jr., a young Filipino who pioneered "pushcart classes" to educate underprivileged children in the slum areas of Cavite was named CNN Hero of the Year (http://www.cnn.com/heroes). With the goal of erecting low-cost homes for informal settlers, *Gawad Kalinga*, an indigenous volunteering concept that started in 1995, has now become a global movement on housing and community-building for and by very poor sectors (http:www.gk1world.com).

Educating young people to be responsible and caring citizens is a core mission of higher education and volunteerism is one of the potent transformative tools given its well-documented impacts on student development (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Eyler, Giles Jr, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Serving the community through volunteerism has been shown to provide the learning experience that leads to better academic performance, sharpen critical thinking skills (Astin & Sax, 1998); strengthen leadership potentials (Astin & Astin, 2000), and boost one's self-confidence (Astin, Vogelsang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000). Volunteer service in school is also associated with stronger likelihood for students to participate in both future community service (Astin et al., 2000; Hoy, Johnson, & Hackett, 2012) and service-oriented professions at later life (Avalos, Sax, & Astin, 1999). There is also an interesting observation that students exposed to early volunteer work are likely to enter into post-graduate degree programs (Astin & Sax, 1998).

'*What are the underlying motivations as to why people volunteer?*' is a fundamental question that needs to be understood if the value of sustained volunteerism were to be a social goal for schools.

In the context of the mandatory community service at tertiary education as implemented through the National Service Training Program (NSTP) and mandated by law under the Republic Act 9163 or the NSTP Act of 2001, there is a lack of local researches on the interaction between extrinsic factors and the intrinsic motivations among students. These data can help assess the success of the program and suggest methods to better implement NSTP. Studies have shown that when a pro-social behavior is subjected under external control,

intrinsic motivations may decrease (Gagné, 2003; Stukas, Snyder, & Clary, 1999). For students required to volunteer in order to graduate from college, a follow-up study found that the positive association between prior volunteer experience and future intentions to volunteer was no longer significant. In corollary, when students were subjected to less external control, their past experience as volunteers strongly predicted future interest in volunteering (Stukas et al., 1999).

There are very few researches performed on student volunteerism in the Philippines (Cardenas, Sulabo, Villancio, Domingo, & Tan, 2013; Lalap, Dy, Saguiguit, & Dizon, 2013; Santillan, 2012). To our knowledge, this study is the first to investigate the intrinsic motivations of Filipino students with regards to volunteerism. A cohort of 785 Filipino undergraduate students enrolled at the Technological Institute of the Philippines were surveyed for their personal motivations for volunteering using a 'Filipino Volunteerism Questionnaire' which covers five (5) motivational parameters namely: achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and social interaction. Students rated only social interaction and recognition as the key motivating factors for volunteerism. The implications of these results are discussed in terms of developing strategies that are most effective in engaging student volunteers within and beyond the mandatory NSTP.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Respondents

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Our cohort involves 785 (26.17%) full time freshmen undergraduate students, aged 16 to 20, male and female, at the time of survey, and who were enrolled in engineering (29.43%), architecture (12.10%), maritime (14.65%), business (14.01%), education (3.18%) and information technology (26.62%) programs of the Technological Institute of the Philippines in Quezon City during SY 2013-2014 (**Table 1**).

The study protocol and structured questionnaires had been reviewed and approved by the Research & Development Management Office (RDMO) of T.I.P.

Instrument

The instrument for this study was a specifically-designed "Filipino Volunteerism Questionnaire" (FVQ). The questionnaire was constructed to analyze the relationship of student's propensity to volunteer in community service with the five (5) motivational factors, namely, achievement, recognition, responsibility, advancement and social interaction. The operational definitions of the motivational factors are shown in **Table 2**.

FVQ consists of 25 items; with each item presenting a hypothetical situation or scenario of a community outreach program with which the willingness of the respondent to volunteer was evaluated based on a 3-point Likert scale. It is important to bear in mind that responses to hypothetical scenarios may be different from actual situation. The FVQ takes 15 to 20 minutes

to accomplish it. Besides these constructs, demographic information such as gender, civil status, age and type of education program were also gathered.

To assure the clearness, accuracy and consistency of the questions, we pre-tested our initial questionnaire to 120 students. After excluding and modifying questions from an initial pool of 50 questions, the final version of the FVQ was created.

Data Analysis

For the pre-test, the internal consistency of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha > 0.7 was taken as reliable (Santos, 1999). Discriminant function analysis was used to predict the motivation of participants to volunteer. Statistical significance was considered when p value <0.05. These analyses were performed using SPSS 20.0

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Volunteerism has become a meaningful activity across all ages (adolescents, adults in the workforce, and retirees). It is one of the most basic expressions of human behavior and arises out of long established traditions of sharing and reciprocal exchanges. Scholars defined volunteerism as a personal or group contribution to society sans monetary compensation (Caldwell, Farmer, & Fedor, 2008) intended to benefit non-kin or strangers (Penner, 2002). It is also an individual action driven by "free will", not as an obligation stipulated by law or contract, or driven by an academic requirement (Hockenos, 2011). However, there are some who argue that volunteerism is an instrumental activity done to achieve ends which the volunteer finds rewarding (Smith, 1981).

Based on the theory of altruism and selflessness, the primary reason for such prosocial behavior is to help others (Phillips, 1982; Rehberg, 2005). As volunteers provide their time and efforts, they share different views or motives for volunteering.

It is believed that motives play a significant role in long-term, voluntary prosocial behaviors (Rioux & Penner, 2001). However, there is no single theoretical framework that institutions can utilize to effectively motivate and sustain volunteering efforts.

Synder's functional approach theory suggests that human behavior is motivated by specific 'selfish' goal or needs (Clary & Snyder, 1991). In this case, people volunteer because it may serve one or more goal needs. Indeed, motivation is the cause of underlying behavior that is characterized by willingness and volition (Guay et al., 2010). Such motivation to volunteer can be either intrinsic or extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation is animated by personal enjoyment, interest, or pleasure. Volunteers might receive internal rewards as a direct result of their activities and because they simply like to "help others" (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Some groups even consider that extrinsic motivation is the expectation of material rewards, albeit not necessarily monetary (Meier & Stutzer, 2004).

Here, we present a model describing the influence of motivational factors in volunteerism among our cohort of Filipino college students. Based on the operational definition of the 5 motivational factors presented in **Table 1**, of these variables, we categorized as being 'intrinsic' both the fators of personal growth and responsibility. Whereas, recognition, advancement, and social interaction are grouped as 'extrinsic' motivational variables since they cover anything that can influence a person outside of the 'self' and are non-tangibles that can be acquired to influence at a decision.

Using discrimant function analysis, we were able to categorize the cohort into two groups: Group 1 – 'high' likelihood, and Group 2 – 'low'-likelihood for volunteerism (**Figure 1**). Interestingly, we observed that students in Group 1 have low motivational scores compare those in Group 2. This may indicative these students who show high probability of engaging in volunteer service are not influenced by the motivational factors of this study. It may also mean that they are willing to commit themselves to support community service even if they do not get any reward.

Personal growth (discriminant score = 1.975) and recognition (discriminant score -1.201) emerged as the major predictors for group membership. Additionally, these factors help differentiate students who have, arbitrarily, a "high" likelihood to volunteer versus those who have "low" volunteerism propensities since all the motivational variables produced high F-values (**Table 3**). As additional proof, these 5 motivational variables show both high lambda (0.656) and chi-square (329.294) values. This model explains 52.5% of the variations based on the calculated eigenvalues.

Emerging as strong predictor is 'personal growth' which is defined as the subjective experience of change, in behavior, thoughts, and feelings. Such may take form with a greater mastery of one's everyday environment (Bauer & McAdams, 2004; Geise, 2008). Students may be attracted to volunteer activities if the opportunity for learning, improvement of skills and development of self-esteem become highlighted by the volunteer service organization. In corollary, volunteerism is also associated with positive outcomes in personal growth: self-knowledge, self-esteem and personal efficacy.

We found in this study that 'recognition' is also a predictor of volunteerism among the students. Recognition is defined as a psychological state involving deep appreciation for the contribution, time and commitment of a volunteer (Caracciolo, 2003). Our cohorts acknowledged that various forms of recognition, such as monetary rewards, certificates, additional grades and popularity in the school community, may attract those students who belong to Group 2 to support community service. Of note, majority of research findings failed to mention recognition as factor influencing a volunteer's desire to engage in civic activities (Clary et al., 1998; Gage & Thapa, 2012; Houle, Sagarin, & Kaplan, 2005).

This study focused on the undergraduate students since this population has a unique propensity for volunteerism and may act as 'breeder' for the national pool of volunteers. College students, in general, have more flexible time schedules to volunteer compared to others, i.e. newly graduates who are preoccupied in seeking jobs or those who are already employed. Through

their vast student networks, such as student organizations and fraternities, the student are also able to influence other young people to undertake volunteer assignments (McCabe, White, & Obst, 2007).

From this, we recommend teachers should be creative in recruiting students to volunteer. They should consider that mandating students to volunteer may weaken their interest to participate in future community work (Stukas et al., 1999). Given the importance of motivational factors, the office of community extension service of a learning institution should design program or activities that may attract students to become regular volunteers.

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Table 1. Demographics of the participants.

	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Age		
20 years old	3	0.38 %
19 years old	10	1.27 %
18 years old	15	1.91 %
17 years old	190	24.20 %
16 years old	567	72.23 %
Gender		
Male	485	61.78 %
Female	300	38.22 %
Program		
Engineering	231	29.43 %
Architecture	95	12.10 %
Maritime	115	14.65 %
Business	110	14.01 %
Education	25	3.18 %
Information Technology	209	26.62 %

Table 2. Operation definitions of the motivation factors.

Social Interaction
Refers to the situation where individual is motivated to
volunteer if it gives time to mingle with friends and meet
new friends.

Recognition
Refers to the situation where individual is motivated to
volunteer if their contribution is recognized i.e. commendation
or awards.

Personal Growth
Refers to the situation where individual is motivated to
volunteer if opportunities to improve their skills, talents
and self-esteem are present in the volunteering work.

Responsibility
Refers to the situation where individual is motivated to
volunteer if there is a felt need to help people and
community.

Advancement
Refers to the situation where individual is motivated to volunteer if employment opportunities and career development is present in the volunteering work.

Table 3. Tests of equality of the group means

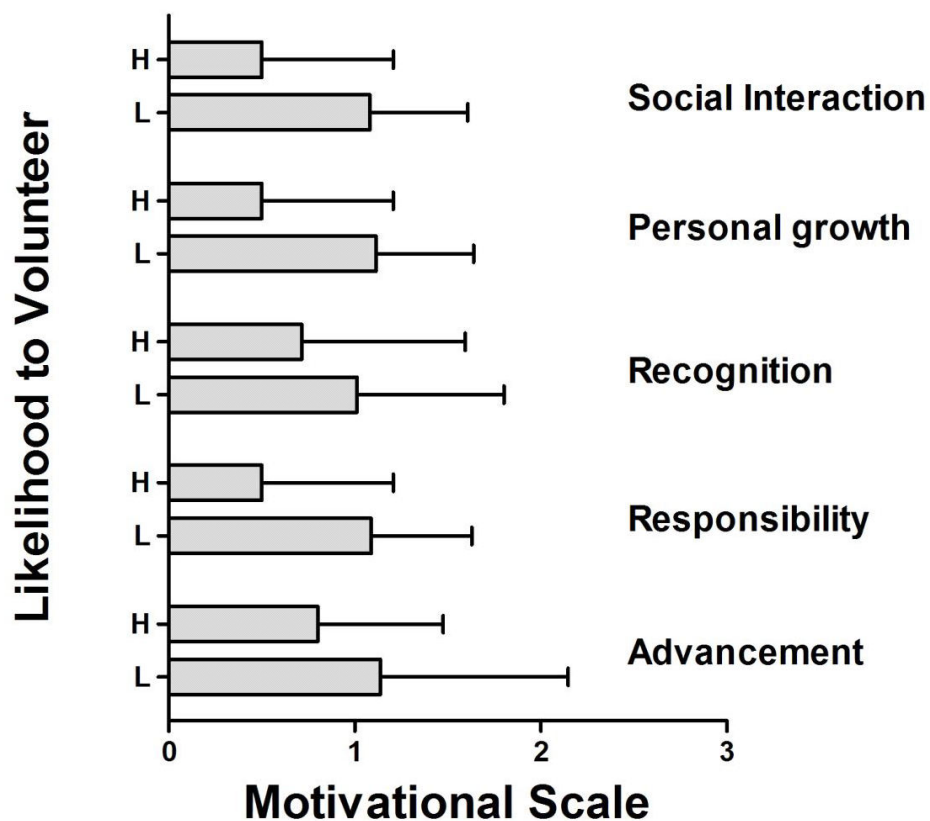| Motivational factors	Wilks' Lambda	F-value	Significance
Social Interaction	0.681	365.982	p<0.0001
Personal growth	0.874	112.765	p<0.0001
Recognition	0.921	66.835	p<0.0001
Responsibility	0.878	108.341	p<0.0001
Advancement	0.883	103.757	p<0.0001

Figure 1. Motivational scale of the students grouped according to their likelihood to volunteer (H – high; L- low). The grouping was based on discriminant analysis performed.