

# Motivational Factors of Volunteerism among UUM Students in Campus Events

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**Abstract:** This research entails investigation of the motivational factors that leads to volunteerism among UUM students in campus events. As Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) campus is surrounded by beautiful natural environment, it has the potential in attracting tourists. Thus, various events have been organized by the university and students every year to promote the university as one of the tourists' attraction in northern region of Malaysia. Many of these campus events relied on the cooperation and strong commitment by the Department of Student Affairs and thousand of student volunteers. Their contribution is undeniable and has been perceived as important as those given by full time employees. To know their motivational factors and satisfaction level enables organizers to plan, execute and evaluate their volunteers' contribution. Many studies have been done on motivational factors and the level of satisfaction of paid employees but very few on volunteers. This research used a quantitative approach where 250 questionnaires were distributed between December 20 and December 30, 2004, using judgmental sampling technique with 79.6% response rate. The findings revealed that students volunteered for various reasons and the main motive of volunteerism in campus events is to learn something new. This may be due to the reason that as young people they are enthusiastic and looking forward for novelty that can be applied in their future undertakings. Besides knowing their motivational factors, the investigation on their satisfaction level would also provide better insights towards meeting or matching their needs with future career effectively. Results showed that most volunteers were fairly satisfied with their overall experience. In general, most respondents perceived campus events as beneficial and as a great platform for their future career preparation.

**Keywords:** Volunteerism, motivation, satisfaction, campus events.

## Introduction

Volunteerism is a personal investment of people who gave freely of their time, with few tangible rewards. These people are able to create great contributions to the economy and development in which they occur (Kemp, 2002: 109). In this research, volunteerism will be investigated among students for campus events.

Campus events have been part of the Universiti Utara Malaysia community for the past 22 years. The events have significant impacts to the locals and the surrounding area particularly in terms of economy. Job vacancies, inns, restaurants and grocery stores are examples of the blissful stories that are spurred due to the remarkable relationship between the dedicated volunteers, the Department of Student Affairs and the locals. Students have long been involved in campus events either organized by the MPP (Students Representative Council), the JPPK (Committee of College's Student Development) or other students clubs. At the end of 2005, there were 102 student's clubs and 14 Committee of College Student Development (JPPK) registered at Department of Student Affairs (HEP). These students' bodies have organized more than 400 events in a single year involving thousands of volunteers and thousands of Malaysian Ringgit. Nonetheless, organizing campus events need more than money. The money allotted for

carrying out events is not the sole factor in materializing those events. Cooperation and dedication plus the sweat and tears from thousands of volunteers are also the essential ingredients. In addition, cooperation and help from the local community members is also a contributing factor in ensuring the success of those events. In short, this university has proved that its students are capable in conducting and managing many successful events that benefited the university and the locals.

As these volunteers give their time and commitment freely, it is fairly important to understand and acknowledge their motivational factors and self-satisfaction in conducting those events. The purpose of this exercise is basically to lay out data to see the real motives that spur the students' motivation.

## Methodology

Descriptive research design was used in this study prior to its aptitude to clarify the phenomenon of volunteerism. It was based on quantitative data using survey questionnaires that were distributed in 20 – 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2004 to the sample of 250 volunteers of whom 199 gave their responses on schedule. The first section of the questionnaire focused on volunteers' demographic background, while the second section focused on motivational factors. There were 14 factors being used as guidelines to volunteers. They were requested to tick five most important motivational factors for them. The last section of the questionnaires focused on level of satisfaction, using five points of Likert Scale. The content of questions in this section addresses volunteers' self satisfaction in personal accomplishment, satisfaction with working with team members, satisfaction in working with the management, satisfaction in training and orientation and satisfaction on volunteers' overall experience. Applied statistical techniques were used to simplify the findings of the study. The findings will be useful in order to have better understanding about the volunteers thus, crafting strategies in order to sustain the big number of volunteers in the future.

## Findings

Based on the survey results, the predominant demographic profile are as follows; majority of the respondents were females, mostly were semester 6 students, aged between 21 to 25 years of age and interestingly, the majority of respondents were repeat volunteers. This statistic would suggest a very strong bonding between the students and the campus events.

**Table 1: Summary of gender distribution**

| Gender       | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|
| Male         | 59            | 29.6           |
| Female       | 139           | 69.8           |
| Non-response | 1             | 0.5            |
| TOTAL        | 199           | 100.0          |

**Table 2: Summary of semester distribution**

| Semester   | Frequency (N) | Percentage (%) |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| Semester 1 | 6             | 3.0            |
| Semester 2 | 23            | 11.6           |
| Semester 3 | 5             | 2.5            |

|              |            |              |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| Semester 4   | 52         | 26.1         |
| Semester 5   | 7          | 3.5          |
| Semester 6   | 93         | 46.7         |
| Semester 7   | 9          | 4.5          |
| Semester 8   | 3          | 1.5          |
| Non-response | 1          | 0.5          |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>199</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

**Table 3: Summary of age distribution**

| <b>Age</b>   | <b>Frequency (N)</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|--------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Below 20     | 17                   | 8.5                   |
| 21-25        | 179                  | 89.9                  |
| 26-30        | 2                    | 1.0                   |
| Above 30     | 1                    | 0.5                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>199</b>           | <b>100.0</b>          |

This study also revealed that the respondents were fairly satisfied with their overall experience on their past volunteerism. In terms of individual factor analysis, the personal accomplishment has the highest mean followed by team performance, management of the organizer and training or orientation by the organizer.

**Table 4: Summary of satisfaction level**

| <b>Satisfaction</b>                   | <b>Mean</b> | <b>Standard Deviation</b> |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Overall experience                    | 3.73        | 0.717                     |
| Personal accomplishment               | 3.67        | 0.691                     |
| Team performance                      | 3.59        | 0.579                     |
| Management of the organizer           | 3.43        | 0.730                     |
| Training/orientation by the organizer | 3.43        | 0.623                     |

## **Relationship between variables**

### **Gender and motivational factors**

A t-test was used to identify the significant relationship between gender and motivational factors (Table 5 and 6). The test revealed that there were significant effects of gender on the “socializing with community” and “to gain leadership skills” ( $p < 0.05$ ). Male respondents ( $N=58$ , mean=1.48) were more likely to choose “socializing with community” as their important motive than female respondents ( $N=139$ , mean=1.29).

**Table 5: Socializing with community by gender**

| <b>Gender</b> | <b>Socializing with community</b> |             |             |                 |             |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
|               | <b>N</b>                          | <b>Mean</b> | <b>S.D.</b> | <b>t-values</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
| Male          | 58                                | 1.48        | 0.504       | 2.657           | 0.009*      |
| Female        | 139                               | 1.29        | 0.454       |                 |             |

Note: \*Significant at  $p < .05$

The finding also revealed a significant relationship between gender and “to gain leadership skills” ( $p=0.008$ ). Female respondents considered this as a popular motive ( $N=139$ ,  $mean=1.57$ ) compared to males ( $N=58$ ,  $mean=1.36$ ) (Table 6).

**Table 6: To gain leadership skills by gender**

| Gender | To gain leadership skills |      |       |          |       |
|--------|---------------------------|------|-------|----------|-------|
|        | N                         | Mean | S.D.  | t-values | Sig.  |
| Male   | 58                        | 1.36 | 0.485 | -2.674   | .008* |
| Female | 139                       | 1.57 | 0.497 |          |       |

Note: \*Significant at  $p < .05$

## Discussion and Conclusion

Campus events in this study refer to sponsored or non-sponsored events or activities that are organized and conducted within the university, aiming at fostering good morale values among members and participants alike. These campus events have also attracted outside people to take part thus spurring local economy.

Managing volunteers who are not working for money may require special attention from management or organizers. The results of the study create new insight besides endorsing previous researchers’ findings about the subject. This study demonstrates the importance of knowing their demographic factors and satisfaction levels. Ability to know and acknowledge these factors will enable organizers to plan, execute and evaluate their volunteers’ contributions. The time spent to understand why people volunteer can help the management find the most specific and best position for their volunteers. (Silverberg, Marshall and Ellis, 2001).

Managing volunteers is very much like managing paid employees. The general perception is that every individual in uniform that offers help to other people is a part of the organization. Therefore, to ensure the standards of services remain high at all times, the management should plan, implement and evaluate each and every one of its volunteers as much as paid workers. They all are being seen as an ambassador to the participating organization.

The contribution of volunteerism is very significant that a success or a failure of any events is very much depends on the volunteers themselves. Their tireless commitment, which frequently surpasses the commitment of paid employees, is amazing. In this case study, their desires to learn something new and to contribute something good (altruism), are among the popular motives for most volunteers. This clearly supports Maslow’s theory of need for self-esteem and self-actualization. These volunteers can make a direct contribution, feel the sense of need to participate, and see the results without a feeling of being blanketed with their career advancement perspectives. This truly articulates the good feeling of doing something worthwhile and at the same time develops a greater respect for oneself (Driver, 1989). In much previous research, many of the researchers grouped their findings into several categories with strong affirmation on altruism. The study by Phillips (1982) and Johnston, Twynam and Farrell (1999), categorized volunteerism into two, altruistic and individual. Fischer and Schaffer (1993) found altruistic, ideological, egoistic, material/reward, status, social relationship, leisure and time as motives for volunteering. Wearing (2001) discovered altruism, travel/adventure, personal growth, cultural exchange/learning, professional development, right time/right

place as motives for participating by volunteers. This research also found altruism as the motive for volunteering though altruism falls second after to learn something new. This brings a new insight in volunteerism where previous study highlighted altruism as the main motive but in this study the researcher found ‘to learn something new’ as the leading motive among volunteers. The explanation that can be made from this is that the respondents are still students and that at this age they are eagerly looking for new skill and experience to be learned. Alas, new study must be carried out to ascertain this finding.

**Table 7: Summary of volunteerism motives (N=199)**

| Motivational factors                        | Agree |      |
|---|-------|------|
|   | N     | %    |
| To learn something new                      | 166   | 83.4 |
| Contribute something good                   | 133   | 66.8 |
| Socializing with community                  | 130   | 65.3 |
| To share skills                             | 115   | 57.8 |
| To gain leadership skills                   | 97    | 48.7 |
| For fun                                     | 80    | 40.2 |
| To do something different from ordinary job | 63    | 31.7 |
| To help friends                             | 58    | 29.1 |
| To be part of the team                      | 57    | 28.6 |
| For recognition                             | 38    | 19.1 |
| Satisfaction from accomplishment            | 35    | 17.6 |
| To feel needed                              | 25    | 12.6 |
| To keep busy/escape                         | 12    | 6.0  |
| Other                                       | 1     | 0.5  |

Besides knowing their motivational factors and categories, to know their satisfaction level should give management better insight towards meeting or matching their needs with jobs effectively (Silverberg, Marshall and Ellis, 2001). For this research, it used their satisfaction on personal accomplishment, team performance, management, training/orientation, and overall experience as measurement tools in predicting volunteers’ likelihood to volunteer again and helping the organizer to develop better volunteer management plans. The results from the measurement show most of them were fairly satisfied with these five factors. Further investigation may be needed if this or similar types of festival organizers want to know more about their subjects’ motivation factors and satisfaction levels.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Further Study**

This research encountered several limitations. First of all, it is a case study of campus events and the generalizations made are limited to a similar case or condition only. Besides that, it did not emphasize on the type of campus events, which differences type of events might involve different type of motivational factors.

Choices of research methodology may influence the findings too. There are several methods that can be used to further this type of research. A focus group and interviews with participants are two of them. The researcher is aware of the potential of using either of these two qualitative methods may give a slightly different set of findings.

Besides that a comparative study between two or more similar campus events that run concurrently would give a better insight about this topic.

To investigate volunteerism contribution fully, which means on its economic, socio-cultural, and other forms of its spillover should be the most interesting research agenda in the near future. Its findings will strengthen the general perception about volunteer contributions to the society as a whole.

The real contribution of the study goes to the UUM Department of Student Affairs. They can use the findings to develop a better training program, properly plan volunteers' job tasks and if possible arrange it according to their specialty. They could create a new system where students who are interested to volunteer can register their name along with their area of interest and assigned them to any events which fit their interest. The strategy of putting the right person for the right job might increase the efficiency in campus events and expectantly attract more of them in the future.

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