

Relationship Between Motivation and Organizational Commitment among College Student Volunteers

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Abstract: Organizational commitment is an important element for organizational survival. Numerous studies in this area have looked at the organizational commitment of employees and there is lack of empirical research regarding organizational commitment of volunteers especially college student volunteers. This study aims to investigating the relationship between motivation and organizational commitment among college student volunteers. A quantitative correlation research method was used to collect data. A self-administered questionnaire comprised of a demographic, an adaptation of Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) and Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) was administered to 350 samples from four public universities in Peninsular Malaysia. They were proportionately and randomly selected in the study. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential analysis. The results of the study revealed that overall motivation, altruistic, understanding, self-enhancement and self-protection subscale were positively correlated to organizational commitment. The implications for college student volunteers' managerial practices are discussed and put forward.

Key words: Organizational commitment, motivation, volunteers, college student, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Organizational commitment is a valuable topic in various fields of organizational studies. It is an important element for organizational survival. It is not only has theoretical implications but also contributes to practical implications. According to Dailey (1986), organizational commitment is relevant to volunteers because it can be formed independently from material rewards and plays a positive role in retention of members in the organization. Past literatures have highlighted the importance of retaining committed employees as an aspect of survival for the organization. Organizations also need a committed workforce because organizational commitment leads to important outcomes such as decreased turnover (Phillips and Edwards, 2008). Indeed, employees with a sense of organizational commitment are less likely to engage in withdrawal behavior (Iverson and Buttigieg, 1999). However, numerous studies in this area have looked at the employees (Meyer and Allen, 1997; Meyer *et al.*, 2002). A few studies have examined organizational commitment of volunteers (Dailey, 1986; Pearce, 1993). This study extends the prior research to a

different sample, college student volunteers and investigates the relation of motivation and organizational commitment.

Volunteer work is an activity that is carried out sincerely, with a charitable heart, without force or coercion from any parties, without expecting any remuneration or material returns and to benefit the targeted group (Bahari, 2007). According to Wilson (2000), volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance but narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends. Snyder and Omoto (1992a, b) argued that the term is usually restricted to describe unpaid work that is done for formal organizations and public. College student volunteers in this study refers to college students who are members of a volunteer club at university level that aimed to serve for community welfare.

Previous research: According to Meyer and Allen (1997), past literatures frequently used measures based on the affective commitment approach. An influential conceptualization of affective commitment was proposed by Mowday *et al.* (1979, 1982). Based on this

conceptualization, organizational commitment in this study is defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization. It is characterized by a strong belief in and acceptance of organizations' goals and values, a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

Researchers have focused on motivation factors among volunteers due to the uniqueness of volunteer organization that operating voluntarily. Pearce (1993) informed that uncertainty of volunteer's motivation has led research institutions to study the motivation. Clary *et al.* (1998) also discovered the importance of motivation among volunteers. The study found that volunteers tended to continue their services as the benefits they gained from volunteering activities compatible with their motivation. Motivation has been defined as the process of starting, directing and maintaining physical and psychological activities that includes mechanisms involved in preferences for one activity over another and the vigor and persistence of responses (Richard and Zimbardo, 2002). In this study, motivation is referred to six functions of volunteering that includes altruistic, understanding, self-enhancement, career, social and self-protection.

According to Steers (1977)'s theory, human needs play a major role in motivating behavior. There are five different levels in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. First, physiological needs; these include the most basic needs that are vital to survival such as the need for water, air, food and sleep. Second, security needs; these include needs for safety and security such as the need for pleasant feeling, steady employment and safe neighborhoods. Third, social needs; these include needs for belonging, love and affection. Fourth, esteem needs; these include the need for things that reflect on self esteem, personal worth, social recognition and accomplishment. Fifth, self-actualization needs; that is people are self-aware, concerned with personal growth, less concerned with the opinions of others and interested fulfilling their potential. Another theory that related to this study is Functional Theory. This theory believed that people may have different motives for a particular attitude or behavior and people may have multiple motives for a single attitude or behavior.

According to Steer (1977), there are four categories of factors influence organizational commitment. They are personal factors, role-related characteristics, structural characteristics and work experiences. In this research, motivation factor is classified under personal factor category. Findings supported the link between motivation

and commitment among volunteers. The findings encompass diverse constructs of motivation and individuals' linkage, involvement and commitment with organizations. Sharififar *et al.* (2011)'s study of sport event volunteers found that the motive factors such as career, material, purposive and protective factors have the power to predict the amount of sports volunteers' commitment. While, Hyejin *et al.* (2009) found that interpersonal contacts, love of sport and personal growth as volunteer motivation factors had a significant influence on the volunteers' commitment to the sporting event. The result also revealed that the volunteers' commitment and motivations, community involvement and extrinsic rewards were found to be important variables in predicting intentions to continue to volunteer for future sporting events. Ryan *et al.* (2001)'s study of long-term volunteers from three environmental stewardship programs in Michigan found that helping the environment and learning were important initial motivations. Other motivations including social factors and project organization were found to be significant predictors of volunteer commitment. Study conducted by Jimenez *et al.* (2010) found that people will remain as volunteers in so far as this satisfies the motivations that are relevant for them at the first stage. Omoto *et al.* (2010)'s study of people involved in AIDS service organization which included volunteers, clients, staff and supporter found that other focused rather than self-focused motivation better predicted AIDS activism and civic engagement. Whereas Omoto and Snyder (1995)'s study of AIDS volunteers indicated that greater motivation and less social support predict longer active volunteer service. Research conducted by Nelson *et al.* (2004) found that the satisfaction of one state's largely older volunteers' altruistic, affiliation and self-improvement motives corresponded to increased organizational loyalty and better performance across several dimensions. Younger volunteers served for shorter periods and were more highly motivated by the self-improvement need.

Objective of the research: This study aims to investigating the relationship between motivation and organizational commitment among college student volunteers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample and procedure: This study used a quantitative correlation research method. Data was obtained through a set of self-administered questionnaire comprised of demographic, volunteer motivation and organizational commitment. Motivation scale is an adaptation of

volunteer function inventory (Clary *et al.*, 1998) to measure motivation using 35 items that are rated on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging, not at all important/accurate (1), not important/accurate (2), slightly not important/accurate (3), neither not important/accurate nor important/accurate (4), slightly important/accurate (5), important/accurate (6) and strongly important/accurate (7). Aspects of motivation addressed are: altruistic, understanding, career, social, self-enhancement and self-protection. Organizational commitment questionnaire (Mowday *et al.*, 1979) was used to measure organizational commitment using 15 items which are rated on a 7-point Likert type scale ranging strongly disagree (1), moderately disagree (2), slightly disagree (3), neither disagree nor agree (4), slightly agree (5), moderately agree (6) and strongly agree (7). Cronbach's alpha of all constructs showed a high reliability for overall motivation scale (0.96), altruistic (0.87), career (0.84), self-protection (0.86), self-enhancement (0.86), social (0.81), understanding (0.88) and organizational commitment (0.82). The samples were chosen by stratified random sampling. A total of 350 questionnaires were administered to the college student volunteers who were studying in four public universities in Peninsular Malaysia. The participants were asked to anonymously and voluntarily complete the questionnaire and return it to the researchers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents' background: The mean age of the participants was 21.86 years with an average of 13.55 months of involvement in the current volunteer club. The majority of them were Malays (93.5%), Muslims (95.5%) and more than half were female (68.4%). The average time contributed to the club was 7.35 h/month. The correlation coefficient between motivation and organizational commitment was examined using the Pearson's correlation. As hypothesized, there was a positive correlation between motivation and organizational commitment ($r = 0.233$, $p < 0.01$). The data was further analyzed for each subscale of motivation using Pearson's correlation. Results showed a positive correlation between understanding and organizational commitment ($r = 0.317$, $p < 0.01$), altruistic and organizational commitment ($r = 0.304$, $p < 0.01$), self-enhancement and organizational commitment ($r = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$), self-protection and organizational commitment ($r = 0.176$, $p < 0.01$) (Table 1). These positive correlations indicated that the college student volunteers who are more motivated are also more committed to the club. However, social and career motives were not significant. This study revealed a weak significant positive correlation with overall motivation and four out of six

Table 1: Pearson's correlations among overall motivation, motivation of understanding, altruistic, self-enhancement, self-protection, career and social with organizational commitment among Malaysian college student volunteers

Motivation	Organizational commitment
Understanding	0.317**
Altruistic	0.304**
Self-enhancement	0.231**
Self-protection	0.176**
Career	0.103
Social	0.086
Overall motivation	0.233**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

motives (understanding, altruistic, self-enhancement and self-protection) with organizational commitment. These findings indicated that motivations were weakly and partially contributed to the organizational commitment among Malaysian college students volunteers. The findings also showed that the understanding motive was important rather than the other motives whereas social and career motives were not important for organizational commitment among college student volunteers.

Results showed the links between overall motivation and four subscales (understanding, altruistic, self-enhancement and self-protection) with organizational commitment as stated in the research hypotheses. The findings are consistent with previous studies among volunteers (Sharififar *et al.*, 2011; Hyejin *et al.*, 2009; Ryan *et al.*, 2001; Omoto *et al.*, 2010).

In terms of motivation and commitment (retention) among volunteers, the same results were also reported (Jimenez *et al.*, 2010; Hyejin *et al.*, 2009; Omoto and Snyder, 1995). On the other hand, Nelson *et al.* (2004) found that the relationship between motivation and commitment in term of loyalty and performance. Based on the previous studies, researchers found that motivation was related to commitment among volunteers. However, this study indicated that part of the relationships exist among college student volunteers. It might be due to the different construct of motivation as well as commitment. Majorities of previous studies have looked at the commitment in terms of volunteer involvement. This study examined the organizational commitment which focused on the emotional linkage towards organization.

The researchers argued that part of the results of this study that inconsistent with the hypotheses, on the other hand supported Maslow and Functional Theory. It indicated that the needs of career and social motives were not salient or no more important for organizational commitment purpose among college student volunteers. In other words that the needs to fulfill career-related experience and to strengthen social relationships were not important if the college student aimed to gain organizational commitment. Meanwhile, other motives

namely understanding, altruistic, self-enhancement and self-protection were more salient for organizational commitment purpose. Thus, organizational commitment allowed them to fulfill these motives.

The understanding motive was the most influential motive. The researchers assumed that the college environment influenced the thought of college student volunteers which indirectly influenced their needs to learn more about the world and to exercise their skills. Furthermore, at this stage of age namely late adolescent, their social concerns did not played a major role. Besides that this study also discovered the low level of relationships of variables. This situation probably explained that motivation was not strongly important for the sake of organizational commitment. The college student volunteers could fulfill their needs without necessary to have a strong emotional linkage with organization. They even could fulfill their important motives through their involvement and commitment with volunteering activities. On the other study, Nazilah *et al.* (2012) found that satisfaction was moderately related to organizational commitment among undergraduate volunteers. Thus, the researchers assumed that personal needs (motivation) and organizational needs (satisfaction) might had different impact on the organizational commitment.

Despite of the contributions of this study, there are several potential limitations and compelling needs for further research. First, there is a limitation of external validity. Since, the data of this study were collected from a single volunteer club, the generalization of the findings is limited. Therefore, it is necessary to expand the data sources to include various types of Malaysian college student volunteers' societies. It may be worthwhile to extend this study to include college student volunteers' societies across other countries with different cultures. Second, the instrument used to measure organizational commitment in this study addressed to the overall of organizational commitment. Therefore, the findings should be confirmed in further research on specific component of organizational commitment to reach conclusions regarding the relationship among the specific components of the variable. Third, the research method and the statistical tools used in this study are not sufficient to confirm cause and effect between the variables. Thus, more empirical research using advanced research methods and statistical analyses should be conducted to examine motivation and organizational commitment.

CONCLUSION

This study has theoretical and practical importance. The findings supported the theory of Maslow (1954)'s hierarchy which stressed on the existence of humans'

needs. In this study, motivation was considered as a need that must be fulfilled by college student volunteers. It also supported Functional Theory that different functions may serve the same attitude or behavior and an individual may have more than one function for a particular attitude or behavior (Katz, 1960). According to this theory, people are goal-directed, different people may do similar things for different reason and anyone may be motivated by more than one need. Thus, organizational commitment is tied to the ability of the college student volunteers' experience to fulfill their important motives.

The results of the study also provide valuable information for student affairs and development division of the higher public educations of Malaysia and volunteer's professionals to understand the relationships between motivation and organizational commitment among Malaysian college student volunteers. They should recognize that certain motivations such as understanding, altruistic, self-enhancement and self-protection were positively related to organizational commitment. Therefore, they should facilitate, provide and encourage those motivations among college student volunteers to improve organizational commitment. Chancellors' of universities as well as related officers and advisors should pay attention to establishing systems and programs that encourage motivation at the individual and society level. The findings of this research can create an avenue for future research that will lead to improvements in this critical area of college student volunteers practice.

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