

Student Volunteer as A Catalyst for Change

Subbarao, A.^{1*}, Chong Chin Wei¹, Nasreen Khan¹, Nirmaladevi²

¹ Faculty of Management, Multimedia University, Cyberjaya, Malaysia

² Institut Pendidikan Guru Kampus Ilmu Khas, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

*Corresponding Author: anusuyah.subbarao@mmu.edu.my

Accepted: 15 August 2021 | Published: 1 September 2021

Abstract: *Technology can have the ability to be alienating, but by constantly searching for ways to use it in the service of creating real-world culture and personal relationships, digital talent can turn that on its head. To promote volunteering, mentoring, parenting support, and group events on a much wider scale, they may be able to use social networks. Very often Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) or organisations face difficulties in getting volunteers to help them in some events for the benefits of mankind. Hence, a communication bridge is needed here to facilitate university students' engagement in community life. The overall aim of this research is to develop a digital platform that bridge university students with various volunteering opportunities. This is to foster the social integration of youth within communities, enhance youth employability, social inclusion, and contribute to the delivery of basic services and actions in partnership with NGOs and organisation's Community Service Responsibility (CSR) projects, to realise their full social, economic and human potential. We conducted semi structured interview sessions among students from tertiary education. As a result, the paper concludes that the digital platform did connect the students to the NGOs with various volunteering opportunities. The platform offers a unique opportunity for students to make a difference to their local community during their time at university, as well as improve their skills.*

Keywords: volunteer, university students, digital platform, youth, Non-Government Organizations

1. Introduction

In this era of global change and technological advances, youngsters are absolutely crucial for social revolution. They contribute with their limitless energy, creative ideas and dedication to innovation and human development. They provide an insurance for the generations to come and give us the hope to contribute to a cheerful, healthy and rich future but all this may be hindered by widespread joblessness, a lack of access to reliable healthcare, limited opportunities for education and a lack of positive political influence. Social neglect and lack of proper training are other challenges which contribute to the risk of the lack of productive channelling of the creative thinking that youth possess.

Therefore, how can youth participation be sustainably promoted and nurtured? With the underlying value of reciprocity, accountability and dedication, youth volunteerism is one of the most vital delivery channels for social, environmental and economic change, having a positive effect with its potential to change the mind-sets, perceptions and behaviours of people (Clary et al., 1998). It creates a sense of obligation for others and also gives a sense of self-worth and belonging to young minds. It also complements formal training to teach the skills needed for

the job market, such as leadership, the ability to work with others, critical thinking, preparation, leadership, innovation, communication and negotiation.

Having said so, there are very limited resources in Malaysia for young people especially university students to access the opportunities of offering their volunteering services. There is no proper platform for them to identify volunteering opportunities. On the other hand, very often NGOs or organisations face difficulties in getting volunteers to help them in some events for the benefits of mankind. Hence, a communication bridge is needed here to facilitate university students' engagement in community life.

The overall aim of this research is to develop a digital platform that bridge university students with various volunteering opportunities. This is to foster the social integration of youth within communities, enhance youth employability, social inclusion, and contribute to the delivery of basic services and actions in partnership with NGOs and organisation's CSR projects, to realise their full social, economic and human potential.

2. Literature Review

Volunteerism is a strong way of hooking individuals in overcoming development challenges, and it can help remould the speed and quality of the development (UNV, 2015). It helps people from the very roots of their development all the way to the top. Adding to that, it has the capabilities to have positively powerful impacts on both the volunteers and on the communities where they input. In fact, UN Youth Volunteers Programme has been held to create and sustain the engagement of the youth population in global peace and sustainable humane development through volunteerism which brought the voice of youngsters into the development discourse and helping young people realise their entire social, human and economic capabilities (Youth and volunteerism, 2015).

Over the years, UN youth volunteers had been providing services to many countries such as Bangladesh, Viet Nam, Yemen, Guatemala, Ukraine, and Peru. For example, youth volunteer programmes in Cambodia have made a difference in reducing poverty, eradicating illiteracy, improving health, promoting gender equality, and protecting human rights and the environment (UNV report, 2017). Mohammed has been a tireless volunteer since the age of 15 and has pioneered in the respective field of health advocacy for youngsters in war zone Yemen. He has contacted his peers using various methods to raise awareness on major issues such as HIV/AIDS and adolescent reproductive health in Yemen which is a LEDC. In addition, UNV has also established a number of its own initiatives that promote university-level volunteering in partnership with leading universities in Europe, and the successful online volunteering service which opens up possibilities for young people to volunteer off-site through the Internet.

Because volunteers typically do not derive any monetary rewards from their volunteer activities, the critical factor in voluntarism is the motivations of volunteers. Hence, understanding the motivations of volunteers has been a subject of much research (Benson et al., 1980). According to researchers, the motivations of volunteers are different from non-volunteers, and even amongst the volunteers, motivations play a key part in volunteers, who served for only for the short-term or for the long-term.

The functional theories are one of the most popular strategies for discovering the motivations of volunteers (Smith, Bruner, White, 1956). This method attempts to understand the social and psychological needs, wants, plans, and motives of individuals who are seeking to satisfy themselves using their own will and intellectuality. According to this theory, similar beliefs or

behaviours may fulfil different psychological functions for different individuals. Hence, in volunteering, people engage in volunteer work in order to achieve important psychological goals, and different individuals will be seeking to satisfy different motivations through volunteer activity (Clary, Ridge, Stukas, Snyder, Copeland, Haugen & Miene, 1998).

Young volunteers for various motives compared to older people (Smith et al., 2010). A major driver when it comes to the youth population is the once in a lifetime opportunity to achieve job-related experience which would be vital in helping them further advance in their careers (Eley, 2003). It is also argued that university-based volunteering enables students to apply theoretical learning, transfer and develop skills (Buckingham-Hatfield, 2000) and it enables students to engage in local community, improving knowledge and awareness of social issues (SVE, 2006). In addition, Low et al., (2007) found a range of benefits for being volunteers, which include empowerment, the development skills for employability, professional and personal identity and an increase in confidence and self-esteem. Similarly, Brewis et al (2010) identified that student experiences of volunteering have a positive impact on their personal development, skill acquisition and employability. Adding to that, workplace abilities, network communication and experience can also enhance student CVs.

As many researchers have pointed out, the motivations of volunteers vary across culture, society and the economy. In Malaysia, a study of 310 students from four public universities revealed that college students were driven by egoistic motives, feeling of loneliness, and career needs (Nazilah, Rozmi & Fauziah, 2017). The lack of an altruistic motive in Malaysians youths is further confirmed by a study on 251 youths (aged 15-25), which reported that youths were driven by benefits, need and reasons. Benefits include learning to improve responsibility skills, widening interest, constructing relationships, cultivation of team spirit, and encouraging socialisation within the community setting. The need to volunteer is connected with the desire to enhance leadership potential and build communication skills. Finally, the main reason of volunteering includes using leisure time sustainably, going through new experiences for the gain of additional knowledge and new ideas, increases in self-confidence and self-esteem, building mental stability, and overall getting a wider and clearer view of the realities in life.

However, Brewis et al. (2010) has learned that the lack of time, proper funding and opportunities are the main reasons for students not participating in voluntary activities. Adding to that, the subtle need for students to participate in paid work during their school years and the costs of unpaid work, such as traveling have also been identified as major issues when it comes to student volunteering (NCCPE, 2010).

3. Methodology

Recruitment events including seminar / talks and advertisement through social media or flyers will be held to create and promote the awareness and provide opportunity for students to register in a website. This website will store the students' information including available time, physical capabilities into a database. If NGO or some event planners looking students to help them for better society purposes, they can register themselves as a recruiter in the website. An email will be delivered to all registered students and a link is provided for them to read all the details (nature of events, service expected from volunteers, date and time, transportation arrangement etc) of the events and allow them to confirm their attendance for the events in the website.

Students are recommended to share their volunteering experience together with some pictures of event in the website for future volunteers' reference. These sharing also allow the NGOs understand the services MMU students can provide. A digital certificate indicating total hours

of volunteering as a form of gratitude will be given to all volunteers at the end of this project respecting their hard work and time at the end of the events. Survey forms will be filled to understand how each other's felt and collect any feedback or suggestion to improve next event recruitment. In addition, questionnaires that consists of information such as awareness of volunteerism, motivations and potential challenges will also be distributed to students. SPSS will be used to analyse the data.

4. Results and Discussion

The outcome of this research is a platform in the form of website that match opportunity and volunteers. It will allow volunteers to register themselves in the website and a company or NGO will request help from the registered volunteers in their society-beneficial projects / events as in Figure 1.



Figure 1: Registration Page

If NGO or some event planners looking students to help them for better society purposes, they can register themselves as a recruiter in the website as in Figure 2.

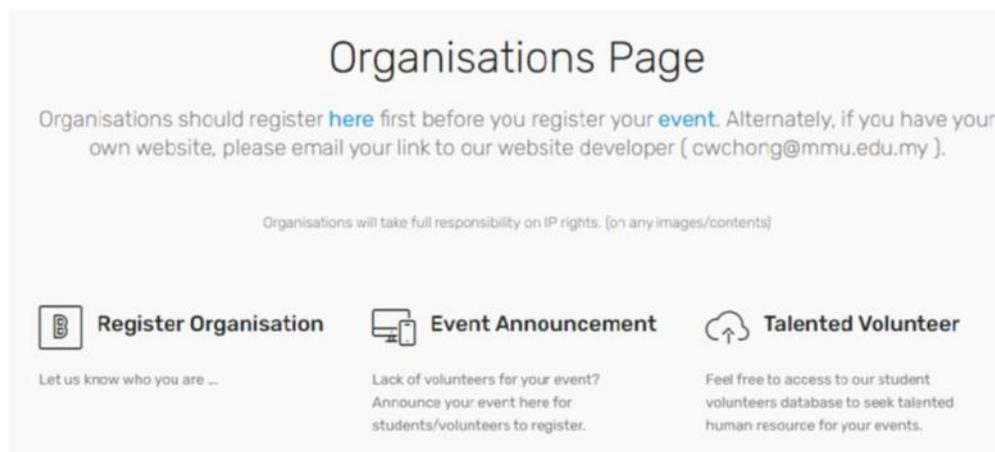


Figure 2: Organization Registration Page

Students are recommended to share their volunteering experience together with some pictures of event in the website for future volunteers' reference. These sharing also allow the NGOs understand the services MMU students can provide as in Figure 3.



Figure 3: Testimonial Page

5. Conclusion

The digital platform offers easier communication bridge among youth and participating organisations/ NGOs in volunteering opportunities. This would critically enhance the cooperation levels among the youngsters and also this would improve the engagement of society to achieve a long lasting, healthy and content society. Volunteerism can help developing students' expertise and capabilities to improve social inclusion in youth and active participation to create a long lasting and sustainable future.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express appreciation for the support of the sponsors Project Number MMU/RMC/RI-MiniFund/FOM/2018/02.

References

- Benson, P., Dohority, J., Garman, L., Hanson, E., Hochschwender, M., Lebold, C., Rohr, R., & Sullivan, J. (1980). Intrapersonal correlates of spontaneous helping behavior. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 110, 8-95.
- Brewis, B., Russell, J. & Holdworth, C. (2010) Bursting the bubble: students, volunteering and the community. London: National Co-ordinating for Public Engagement (NCCPE).
- Buckingham-Hatfield, s. (2000) Student community partnerships in higher education: promoting skills for life and work. London: CSV.
- Clare Holdsworth (2010) Why Volunteer? Understanding Motivations For Student Volunteering, *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 58:4, 421-437, DOI: 10.1080/00071005.2010.527666
- Clary, E., Snyder, M., & Stukas, A. A. (1998a). Volunteer motivations: Findings from a national survey. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(4), 485-505.
- Clary, E. G., Ridge, R. D., Stukas, A. A., Snyder, M., Copeland, J., Haugen, J., & Miene, P. (1998b). Understanding and assessing the motivations of volunteers: a functional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74(6), 1516- 1530.
- Eley, D. (2003) Perceptions of and reflections on volunteering: The impact of community service on citizenship in students, *Voluntary Action*, 5(30), 27-46.
- Hamzah, Suandi, Shah, Ismail & Hamzah, 2016. Understanding the reasons for Malaysian Youth Participation in Volunteering Activities. *Athens Journal of Science*, Vol 3 (1).
- Low, N., Butt, S., Ellis Paine, A. & Davis Smith (2007) Helping out: a national surbey of volunteering and charitable giving. Cabinet Office: London.

- National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (2010) Student Volunteering: background, policy and context. NCCPE, Bristol.
- Nazilah, Rozmi & Fauziah (2014), The role of egoistic motives for Malaysian College Students' Involvement in Volunteering Activities. *Asian Social Science* 10 (19).
- Smith, M., Bruner, J., & White, R. (1956). *Opinions and personality*. New York: Wiley.
- Student Volunteering England (2006) *SVE response to University UK' Studentification: a guide to opportunities, challenges and practices"*, SVE: London.