

Motivation for Volunteering in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Saudi Arabians engage in many volunteering activities and are perceived to predominantly volunteer for religious purposes, though we investigate other motivators, especially given the increase of youth involvement. Distinctive and composite patterns of volunteering motivation were assessed using the Voluntary Function Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998). A total of 468 participants (376 volunteers) took part in the study. Results showed that family and friends' involvement in volunteering predicts respondent's volunteering. A gender difference emerged, with males volunteering more than females. Although regional differences emerged, overall, the VFI showed that the main motives for volunteering were values, understanding, enhancement, and social.

Motivation for Volunteering in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Volunteering is growing worldwide. Volunteering offers help and services through third sector organizations that are not available from governmental institutions. This sector is mostly related to civil society and volunteering (Kendall, & Knapp 1995; Osborne 2008; Corry, 2010; Lorentzen, 2010). Volunteer activities are often personal, moral and social obligations, but have also been recognized as some of the main contributors to social and economic development (Van Til, 1988; Cnaan, Handy, & Wadsworth, 1996; Monroe, 1996; Okum & Michel, 2006; Haski-Leventhal, 2009).

Many reasons are given for volunteering. Volunteering is beneficial in many respects for both individuals and society at large. As for society, volunteering can help in establishing economic and social capital. For individuals, people fulfill different motives and a variety of objectives. Proponents of the functional analysis of volunteering (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary et al., 1998; Omotto & Snyder, 1995, 2002) have proposed that people volunteer to satisfy different motives and needs. Clary and colleagues (1998) identified six motives for volunteering: values, understanding, social, career, protective, and enhancement. Details of these motives are provided in the methodology section when explaining the scale used to measure these motives (Clary et al., 1998).

While the fact that motivation is universally important in understanding volunteering, motives tend to differ across cultures (Grönlund et al., 2011). In Saudi Arabia, the public view of volunteering has evolved over time, including the establishment of the Center for Social Development as part of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the early 1960s. The center encouraged the establishment of community committees specializing in voluntary work. In 1990, the Ministry Council issued an influential ordinance that sought to encourage and extend the work of

charitable associations and institutions to participate in social development. Such associations and institutions were organized under the General Directorate of non-government charitable institutions and associations. The number of these entities reached 591, of which 510 were of general nature (philanthropy) and 81 are of specialized in areas such as health, environment, and family counseling (organized under the Ministry of Social Affairs). Despite the institutional emphasis on volunteering in the Kingdom, our review of the literature could not identify any academic studies examining volunteering in Saudi Arabia. Most of what is published consists of general reports and newspapers articles, which essentially state that volunteer activities are prevalent in the society. Beyond governmental institutions, such as the Saudi Red Crescent, volunteer associations are not well organized or institutionalized in matters of promoting and maintaining volunteers. One article in the Asharq Al-Awsat Newspaper, Khukud Alaidan (2007) reported that volunteer work in Saudi Arabia is complicated because the desire to volunteer is often met by a lack of regulations and organizational institutions. There was, however, a recent study conducted at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in the Eastern Province investigating volunteering motives of student volunteers (Jiang, 2011). Results revealed that values, career, enhance function and learning functions of volunteering are the major motivations for Saudis.

The current research explores volunteers' motives, as delineated by the six different functions of volunteering (Clary et al., 1998). The assumptions and theoretical framework in Clary and colleagues (Clary and Snyder, 1999; Clary et al., 1998; Omotto and Snyder, 1995, 2002) can be summarized as follows: One, people do whatever they do for a purpose, and they volunteer to achieve personal goals. Two, may have different motives for doing the same thing. Two people may perform the same volunteer action for different reasons. Third, people may be

motivated by many needs and/or goals- a person may volunteer to forget his problems, develop his skills, and interact with others. Fourth, outcomes depend on the matching of needs and goals to the opportunities afforded by the environment.

By investigating the motives that drive volunteering in Saudi Arabia - particularly volunteering amongst youth - we can gain a better understanding of how to increase volunteering and volunteer retention by increasing the satisfaction of volunteers.

Theoretical Background

Volunteering has been studied from different perspectives: economic, social, and individual. As mentioned previously, volunteering can assist in establishing economic and social capital. The concept of social capital relates to the capacity for cooperation in societies. According to Muthuri, Matten, and Moon (2009), researchers in area have tackled issues that lead to improvement of social potentiality to improve social lining. Such concepts include many aspects, such as public spiritedness, assets pertinent to goodwill, sympathy, interaction between members of the community, civic participation, establishment of social norms facilitate cooperation and collective action. Adopting Adler and Kwon's (2002; supplemented by Putman, 1995, and Ostrom & Ahn, 2003) dimensions, Muthuri, Matten, and Moon (2009) proposed a conceptual framework to social capital, which includes actors' relations to social structure, the opportunities available through network interactions, supported by trust, motivation, and ability.

Based on this framework, Muthuri, Matten, and Moon (2009) carried out a case study of three types of volunteering among UK multinational companies in different sectors: education, graduate trainee scheme, and community involvement coordination activities. The volunteering employees were interviewed and reported benefitting in sharing knowledge, acquisition of new

skills, and insights gained about community issues. Moreover, they discovered new perspectives on their own business and uncovered a deeper insight into their satisfaction.

Similar studies have investigated corporate volunteering as a reflection of their contribution to society in what is known as 'social responsibility' (Pajo and Lee , 2011) and pro-social attitudes (Briggs, Peterson, and Gregory, 2010). Pajo and Lee (2011) conducted a study on corporate supported volunteering to identify motives for initiating volunteering and the initiatives' impact on employee motivation and future volunteering. Adopting a case study method, they administered a questionnaire and formed discussion groups. The results revealed that corporate volunteering activity was considerably impactful for the volunteers. The authors identified aspects of their personal motives as being particularly affected, such as altruism and humanitarian motives, learning skills, as well as personal and organizational satisfaction.

Another important area of motivation for volunteering is personal motives. Studies have investigated numerous personal reasons and motives for volunteering, perhaps the most important of which is altruism. Haski-Leventhal (2009) discussed altruism, the action people take in favor of others, differently than some other perspectives. Despite its actions on behalf of others, altruism "is generally based on an egocentric approach and a homo economicus perception of man, seen as a rational being who acts foremost to fulfill his or her own needs and interests. Accepting the Utilitarian approach to morality, it was understood that people only act to enhance their own happiness and avoid suffering. Such an approach has influenced the study of volunteering" (Haski-Leventhal, 2009, p. 292). Indeed, in the sphere of personal motivation, people certainly volunteer to aid subjective well-being. Pilkington, Windsor, and Crisp (2012) conducted an Australian study on older participants, measuring life satisfaction, affect over a number of days, availability of social support, and positive and negative social exchanges. "The

results of this study provide broad support for the notion that being a volunteer is associated with subjective well-being because volunteers tend to report more supportive social ties relative to nonvolunteers" (Pilkington, Windsor, and Crisp, 2012, p. 8)

Clary and colleagues' voluntary functions inventory (VFI; Clary and Snyder, 1999, Clary et al., 1998) identified six sets of motives for volunteering. These were considered as the functions that volunteering fulfills. Many studies have used their scale or used it as a basis for the reliability of whatever they have developed (e.g. Finkelstein, 2008; Marta, Guglielmetti, & Pozzui, 2006; Gage III, and Thapa, 2011, Law, Shek, & Ma, 2011). This scale is described in the methodology section.

In a recent study, Dolnicar and Randle (2007) studied six types of volunteers. "Classic volunteers" were described as motivated by personal satisfaction through doing something of value, and were keen to help others. "Dedicated volunteers" perceive that all motives for volunteering are important. The ones who are "personally involved" to volunteer do so because they have a personal contacts in the volunteering organization. "Volunteers for personal satisfaction" and "altruists" are motivated to offer help to others. "Niche volunteers" are those who have a specific motivation to volunteer, such as gaining work experience, acquiring and improving skills, and to improve their curriculum vitas. This brief summary gives a clear idea that volunteering is done for reasons that achieve different results and fulfill volunteers' individual motives. This study will continue this line of research with a focus on Saudi volunteering, exploring motives in light of the functional approach to volunteering (Clary et al., 1998; Clary and Snyder, 1999; Stukas et al., 1999; Stukas et al., 2009; Gage et al., 2011).

Methodology

Participants

468 participants, of whom 376 participants were involved in volunteering, answered biographic questions and the Volunteer Function Inventory. Questionnaires were distributed at meetings of volunteering and self-development workshops in five cities (Riyadh, Dammam, Araar, Jizan, and Jeddah) across Saudi Arabia. These workshops were initiated by various community and governmental authorities to foster philanthropic community activities, with a strong emphasis on volunteering. Due to the nature of Islam and the national culture, philanthropy in the Kingdom is widespread, but takes many forms, ranging from visible community service to anonymous donations. These meetings should represent a cross-section of the visible, traditional kinds of community volunteers from across the different regions of the country, but will not represent all forms of volunteering.

Materials

The Volunteer Function Inventory (Clary et al., 1998)¹ was translated into Arabic through back translation by multilingual academics fluent in both English and Arabic. The questionnaire consisted of 30 questions covering the six functions of the motives for volunteering. All questions had a response scale ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 7 (most important).

The scale includes volunteers' *values*, which shows their altruism and humanitarian concern for others. The second is gaining *understanding*, where volunteers acquire new learning experiences and/or practice their skills (e.g. opportunity for training for students). Third, through *social* motives, volunteers reinforce their social relationships and fulfill their normative

¹ Thanks for Dr. Stukas who granted us the approval to use the VFI, on behalf of the authors. (Personal communication with Dr. Stukas via e-mail dated: March 13th, 2012).

expectations. Fourth, *career* relates to the experience the volunteer adds to his job prospects. Fifth, represents the *protective* motive that helps the person to ease personal problems and minimize negative feelings. Sixth, *enhancement* is a motive to improve their psychological state and improve their self-esteem (Clary et. al, 1998).

Internal reliability for each of these subscales were acceptable (career subscale, $\alpha=.80$; social subscale, $\alpha=.71$; values subscale, $\alpha=.72$; understanding subscale, $\alpha=.82$; enhancement subscale, $\alpha=.75$; protection subscale, $\alpha=.78$). For the career composite, one item ("Volunteering allows me to gain new perspective on things") was omitted due to poor inter-item correlation. Similarly, one item ("My Friends volunteer.") was also omitted from the social composite.. These internal reliability scores are, however, lower than those reported by Clary et al. (1998) and other studies (e.g. Okun, Barr & Herzog, 1998; Clary and Snyder, 1999; and Allison, Okun, & Dutridge, 2002). These reliability discrepancies are likely due to cultural differences in the interpretation of the items, which were designed and tested in Western samples.

The demographics portion of the questionnaire assessed respondents' gender, age, location, education level, income, parents' education and income, and volunteering history (including: Time spent volunteering, the area of specialization in volunteering, and whether their friends or family members were engaged in volunteering).

Procedure

The King Fahd University of Petroleum and Mineral's volunteer outreach program is informed about many of the community service events taking place across the Kingdom, and actively takes part in many of them. One author, Salem Al-Dini, also coordinates the volunteer outreach program, and personally oversees activities at these meetings, or sends a representative to do so. Through the volunteer outreach program's presence at these meetings, data was

collected through dual strategies. First, paper surveys were directly distributed to attendees at the meetings and workshops. Second, links to an online version of the survey were distributed at the meeting to various regional volunteer organizations, where they were further distributed to their members for further recruitment.

Results

Results indicate that the volunteering population in Saudi Arabia is relatively young. The majority of volunteers are students of secondary (16.5%) and university population (65.1 %). Early and middle career-aged volunteers represented 18.2% of the sample, and late career (46 years and above) and senior over 50 years of age represent less than 1%. Regarding gender, males volunteer more than females (62 and 38%, respectively). While two thirds of the sample volunteered only occasionally (61.7%), the rest volunteered on regular basis (27.7% weekly and 9.8 % monthly). While a quarter of the participants volunteered in more than one area (25 %), most others were doing so in many varied areas, such as environment, health, and youth activities (42.6 %), others specified that did so in areas of visiting hospitals (12.5%), working with orphanages (11.2%), handicapped (2.4%), and centers caring for the elderly (1.9%). Most participants volunteered between one to five years (57.7%), 20.8% volunteered between six to 10 years, and 13% volunteered more than 11 years. The majority of participants' parents were educated at the secondary and university levels (68% of fathers and 59% of mothers). Lastly, 61.44% of the respondents reported that at least one member of their families participated in volunteering and the majority had at least one friend who volunteered (86.7%). All frequency descriptive statistics can be viewed in Table 1.

Exploring volunteering motives

The VFI scale revealed higher means for Saudi volunteers on each of the motive subscales as compared to those reported for a Western sample (Clary et al., 1996). These means can be viewed in Table 2.

A series of *t*-tests revealed significant gender differences on three of the VFI motives for volunteering. Females reported higher levels of motivation on the career subscale, $t(1, 372) = -3.31, p < .001$, and the understanding subscale, $t(1, 372) = -2.18, p < .05$. Males reported higher levels of motivation on the social subscale, $t(1, 372) = 2.31, p < .05$. No gender differences emerged on the values, enhancement, and protection subscales. Means for males and females on each subscale can be viewed in Table 3.

Given the geographic diversity of this sample, regional differences were also explored. A series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) analyses were performed on each of the VFI subscales across each of the regions. There were clear differences between regions on the social subscale, $F(4, 371) = 6.13, p < .001$, and protection subscale, $F(4, 371) = 2.82, p < .05$. These differences were mainly driven by particularly high scores by participants in the Southern region of Saudi Arabia. No significant differences were observed on the career, understanding, enhancement, and values subscales.

Who volunteers?

Exploratory bivariate correlations of participants' demographic and background information revealed several predictive factors for volunteering. The volunteering activity of family members significantly positively predicted if the participant volunteered himself, $r(443) = .21, p < .001$, as did the volunteering activity of friends, $r(454) = .14, p < .01$. The participants' sex also predicted their volunteer status, with women being more likely volunteer than men, $r =$

.12, $p < .05$. Parents' education level also predicted a greater likelihood of volunteering ($r = .14$, $p < .01$ for father's education; $r = .15$, $p < .001$ for mothers' education).

Discussion

The findings of the study showed that the descriptive data from the VFI scale used was comparable to the original study (Clary et al., 1998) and others (e.g. Allison, Okun, and Dutridge (2002). Other replications made some changes to the scale, such as Chinese (Law, et al., 2011) and Italian (Marta et al., 2006) investigations that looked at the scale in the light of the changes in motives for volunteering in the newer generation (e.g. The findings show that most volunteers are young, both males and females and encompass different educational and economic levels.). Aside from the removal of two items due to cultural mistranslation, the scale as developed by Clary and colleagues (1998) appears to measure volunteering motives appropriately and accurately in a Saudi sample, which was demonstrated by comparable means and internal reliabilities across the international samples.

The sample of respondents showed that they have different combinations of reasons for volunteering. The nature of the Saudi Society, being a collectivistic and religious society, explains the reason that the values motive was the most endorsed among respondents. Youngest generations were inclined to seek to be motivated for enhancement and understanding. Many individuals in the sample endorsed more than one motivation. They do not volunteer for one particular reason, but rather for many personal and social reasons. Those who see volunteering as altruistic (e.g. Monroe, 1996; Haski-Leventhal, 2009) argue that this social motivation may contradict personal motivation. However, research has shown (e.g. Marta et al., 2006; Clary et al., 1998; Clary and Snyder, 1999; Stukas et al., 2008) that volunteering serves individual volunteers and the recipients; it serves as both instrumental and social involvement. Social

involvement can only be achieved if both parties benefit - volunteers and recipients (e.g. Haski-Leventhal, 2009).

The reasons for the differences across regions and gender in some aspects of the functions of volunteering may be understood in light of possible cultural differences. Some evidence has started to show that different societies, depending on their cultural specificities, differ on behavioral aspects such as motives for volunteering (e.g. Grönlund et al., 2011). Hence the differences between regions can fall in that realm. Due to regional cultural differences, respondents' motives for volunteering differed across Saudi regions, namely on social, protection values, understanding, and enhancement.

First as the majority of respondents are at university level, many are guaranteed a job after graduation (a commonality in the Saudi Arabian market), so the idea of volunteering for advancing their chances for jobs is not really an issue for the majority of the sample. Most respondents seem to have given a low scoring to the question asking if they volunteered for different career options, indicating possibly that they have already their prospects for a job. The differences in the social function may be due to the sub-cultural varieties in the Kingdom.

The Southerners have the highest mean on the social motivation for volunteering. These areas are relatively remote, suggesting that respondents may seek to volunteer to find venues for mingling with others. The Western respondents had the second highest mean. This may be explained by the fact that respondents of this region come from the cosmopolitan town of Jeddah and its neighboring towns where the city type overwhelms personal relationships making individuals somehow isolated, hence looking in volunteering as a venue for socializing. Alternatively one could speculate that they seek more socializing because they live in an area that is more open to others. The Western region, whether Jeddah or the other two holy cities

(Mecca and Medina) in the region receives people from all over the world. Eastern region is similar due to its importance in the international economy. Compared to other regions, these areas experience more openness to the outside world compared to other regions of the country.

With regard to the protection subscale of volunteering motivation, Southerners again, had the highest mean score. The nature of the South and its isolation from the other parts of the country, as well as the close netting of the tribal culture, may lead them to see volunteering as a duty (e.g. Long, 2005), especially those instructed to help others in formal education. As for participants in the West and Center regions, where affluence is apparent, participants may engage in volunteering to protect themselves from some guilt towards those who are less fortunate than they are; hence benefiting the psychological wellbeing of the volunteers (e.g. Pilkington, Windsor, & Crisp, (2012).

The understanding, values, and enhancement subscales revealed no significant differences across regions. This lack of differences could be due to the relatively homogenous nature of culture across the regions of the Kingdom (e.g. Long, 2005). It would be expected that values are shared as the religion upholds helping others, bolstered by tribal traditions that promote the helping of others. Enhancement and understanding are in nature related to new generations who are looking forward to a prosperous life. It is perhaps this same motivation that drives many of them to become university educated.

The results of the present study showed that Saudi volunteers are no different from others. Many tend to volunteer because members of their families and friends do volunteer, which goes along with related research worldwide (e.g. Francis, 2011). Saudis seem to volunteer as function of personal and social and value motives (Clary et al., 1998; Clary and Snyder, 1999). These important values can certainly be related to the religious and cultural aspects

prevalent in the society (Aldraehim, Edwards, & Watson, 2012; Long, 2005), which dominates aspects including work (Al-Shehry, et al., 2006). Al-Gahtani (2007) discussed how these activities may be related to the fulfillment of motives that are personal. Indeed, Aldraehim et al., (2012) stated that "There are many principles that form Saudi's culture based, firstly, on religion, then on the tribal system. Saudi Arabia has a unique position in the Islamic world since it is home to the two Holy Mosques for Muslims. Islam plays a significant role in Saudi's culture by defining the social manners, traditions, obligations, and practices of society. Kinship and tribal systems still impact on the individual's place in society and could affect their success or failure, both in the traditional and in the new areas of activity," (p. 745).

The findings of this study carry potentially important implications for how volunteers are recruited and retained. Nationwide, the values and understanding domains were rated as being the most motivating when it comes to initiating and maintain volunteering activities; thus, highlighting the aspects more relevant to these domains could serve to increase the number of citizens volunteering and maintain satisfaction toward these volunteers' service. Given that the pattern of results across the different motivational domains follows that illustrated in Western samples, volunteering agencies in the Kingdom should look to the strategies that have arisen from research in those countries, and possibly adapt them to work within the local culture. This study also illustrated that motives for volunteering differ across the regions of Saudi Arabia. Ministries and community organizations would likely benefit from specializing their promotion and awareness campaigns by highlighting the motives identified in a regionally-specific way.

A potential limitation of this study is the omission of other motivational aspects for volunteering, such as the involvement of youngsters in volunteering for reasons of keeping busy and allowing opportunities to socialize. Of course, other aspects beyond values can be further

investigated. Research has shown that there are reasons of volunteering despite the universality of functional motives (e.g., Grönlund et al., 2011). Also, this study was limited in scope, not allowing us to address how committed these individuals are to future volunteering.

To sum up, volunteering in Saudi Arabia is becoming more widespread, with both female and male participating in volunteer activities in all regions of the country and in different social aspects. The VFI functions, except career and protective have been found to relate to volunteering. This goes in line with a recent study (Jiang, 2011). Values, social, understanding, and enhancement functions of volunteering were the major motivations for Saudi volunteers. However, this research was limited to Saudi volunteering motives based on the VFI (Clary et al. 1998). There is a need to further investigate the possibility of adapting an Arab revised version of the VFI scale taking into account some attempts, like the Chinese (Law et al., 2011), factors, such as the changes in youths motives to volunteer in matters of personality factors, as well as social norms (e.g., Francis, 2011),

Notes

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Table 1

VFI Means for Saudi and American Samples

Motivation sub-scales	Saudi n=376	Clary et al. n=533
Social	4.6410	2.95
Protection	4.7293	3.25
Career	5.1172	4.54
Enhancement	5.5862	4.64
Understanding	5.8669	5.13
Values	5.9064	5.37

Running Head: MOTIVATION FOR VOLUNTEERISM

Table 2

Demographic Frequencies

Variables	Descriptions	Volunteering n= 376		All Sample n=468	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Age	16-18 (Middle, Secondary)	62	16.5	88	18.80
	University (19-25)	245	65.1	296	63.25
	Early Career (26-35)	55	14.7	61	13.30
	Middle career (36 -45)	13	3.5	18	3.85
	Late career (46 or older)	1	0.3	5	1.07
Sex	Female	143	38.0	186	39.7
	Male	233	62.0	282	60.3
Region	Eastern	101	26.9	111	23.7
	Southern	79	21.0	99	21.2
	Northern	31	8.2	56	12.0
	Western	76	20.2	89	19.0
	Central	89	23.7	113	24.1
Volunteer Education Level	Middle secondary	68	18.1	105	22.44
	University	308	81.9	363	77.56
Father Education	Primary	67	17.8	89	19.0
	Middle	38	10.1	51	10.9
	Secondary	45	12.0	63	13.5
	University	190	50.5	225	48.1
	postgraduate (8 MS. 13 PhD)	21	5.6	22	04.7
Mother Education	Primary	108	28.7	146	31.2
	Middle	39	10.4	51	10.9
	Secondary	63	16.8	80	17.1
	University	151	40.2	174	37.2
	postgraduate (7 MS. 1 PhD)	8	2.1	8	1.71
Number of years volunteering	1-5	217	57.7		
	6-10	78	20.8		
	11-15	30	8.0		
	≥ 16	19	5.0		
Frequency of volunteering	Weekly	104	27.7		
	Monthly	37	9.8		
	Occasional	232	61.7		
Area of Volunteering	Hospitals	47	12.5		
	Orphanage	42	11.2		
	Elderly	7	1.9		
	Handicapped	9	2.4		
	Other	160	42.6		
	Multiple	94	25.0		
Member of Family volunteering	yes	231	61.44	256	41.0
	no	143	38.03	192	54.7
	Missing	2	.53	20	4.3
Friend volunteering	yes	326	86.7	386	82.48
	no	50	13.3	82	17.52

Table 3

VFI Means across Gender

Sub scale	sex	<i>n</i>	Mean	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Career	male	233	4.8964	-3.310-	372	.001
	female	143	5.4769			
Social	male	233	4.7715	2.310	372	.021
	female	143	4.4283			
Values	male	233	5.8867	-.471-	372	.638
	female	143	5.9385			
understanding	male	233	5.7689	-2.177-	372	.030
	female	143	6.0266			
enhancement	male	233	5.5356	-1.053-	372	.293
	female	143	5.6685			
protection	male	233	4.7176	-.192-	372	.847
	female	143	4.7483			