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# Humanitarian Aid Involvement factors among IMARET volunteers

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**Abstract**---In many domains, core activities of people's lives would be disrupted if volunteers were not present to provide much-needed help especially medical-based mobile clinics that rely heavily on the labour of volunteers. This study was designed to identify the factors related to humanitarian aid involvement of volunteers, to discover the background of volunteers attending Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia (IMAM) Response and Relief Team (IMARET) mobile clinic and outreach mission and to determine the association between the humanitarian aid involvement factors and the background of volunteers. This cross-sectional study used Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI) scale to measure the motivation factors of volunteers and total of 178 volunteers were recruited. Among the six motivation factors such as values, protective, understanding, enhancement, security and social factors being studied, understanding factor was found out to be the highest factor that motivated the volunteers. Based on the Fisher's Exact Test, the motivation factors were found to have no association with the demographic data of volunteers. This study suggests that non-profit organisations should be aware that people joining volunteering or humanitarian aid work were not influenced by their sociodemographic characteristics.

**Keywords**---humanitarian aid; volunteer; motivation factors

## **Introduction**

Many community agencies face a discrepancy between the demands and the supply of volunteers [1]. Thus, the recruitment of volunteers is a significant concern for many organisations and agencies. The most frequently asked, and the most perplexing question in the field of voluntary action—why do people volunteer? This concern the needs, motives and desires of individuals who decide to give freely of the time, energy, and skills to work in a humanitarian aid agency [2]. Therefore, it is essential to discuss how the identification of the motives expressed by volunteers will help volunteer coordinators to organize their recruitment efforts around themes that are focused on fulfilling the specific needs of their target group. However, there is very little research in Malaysia that studies on how the background of volunteers will influence the factors of joining in humanitarian work. This study aims to reveal the most common factors of joining humanitarian work and also to associate between the background information of volunteers to the factors of humanitarian aid involvement.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### ***2.1 Study design and sampling***

This study was a cross-sectional study. Target participants were taken using a convenience sampling method by online survey from August 2019 until December 2019. The questionnaire was in bilingual, Malay and English to promote respondents' understanding. This study targeted volunteers involved in IMARET mobile clinics in Selayang, Selangor, Malaysia and Orang Asli Medical Outreach mission in Gua Musang, Kelantan, Malaysia. A total 178 responses out of 190 respondents were included in this study.

### ***2.2 Instruments***

The data collection for this study was done using online questionnaire which included questions which were taken from a study of Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) by Clary et al., 1998 [3]. Ten participants have taken part in the pilot study to test the reliability of the questionnaire. Internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire was measured by using Cronbach's alpha value. All six subscales reached the acceptable value for Cronbach's alpha.

There were three sections in the questionnaire. First section was to determine whether the volunteer has answered the questionnaire before and whether the volunteers has volunteered at IMARET session or mission before. The second section was regarding respondents' sociodemographic data which consisted of age group, gender, race, religion, marital status, highest education level, monthly household income, employment status, number of IMARET session or mission joined and involvement in other volunteering or humanitarian aid work.

The last section consisted of 30-item measure of motivations to volunteer with Likert scale. This set of questionnaires use a functionalist approach to volunteering, examining the functional motives individuals have for choosing to volunteer. For each item, respondents are to indicate "How important or accurate

each of the 30 possible reasons for volunteering were for you in doing volunteer work.” Respondents answer each item on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all important/accurate) to 5 (extremely important/accurate). The scale is divided into six separate functional motives:

- Protective Motives – a way of protecting the ego from the difficulties of life.
- Values – a way to express ones altruistic and humanitarian values.
- Career –a way to improve career prospects.
- Social –a way to develop and strengthen social tie.
- Understanding –a way to gain knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Enhancement –a way to help the ego grow and develop.

### ***2.3 Ethical Consideration***

Ethical approval to conduct this study was obtained from Cyberjaya University College of Medical Sciences Research Ethics Review Committee (CRERC) (Reference No.: CUCMS/CRERC/AL-ER (23/2019). All the information from the questionnaire will be kept for researcher's uses and view only and the confidentiality of the respondents are well-assured.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

### ***3.1. Demographic Characteristics***

Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents according to their demographic characteristics. The age group of respondents was classified according to 18 to 24 years old (37.1%), 25 to 44 years old (59.6%) and 45 years old and older (3.4%). The age group of the respondents largely clustered within the age range of 25 to 44 years old. This was the age range when people had the necessary knowledge, skill and strength to contribute to volunteer work [4]. Next, the distribution of female respondents was higher compared to males in this study. There were about 76 (42.6%) more females calculated. It was suggested that that women appear to be more charitable than their male counterparts [5].

Besides, data of respondents' race was categorized into three groups: Malay (97.8%), Indian (0.6%) and other (1.7%). This was perhaps due to the characteristic of Malaysian society which majority are of Malay race. Respondents' religion was divided into two categories: Islam (99.4%) and Hindu (0.6%). Then, majority of the respondents were never married with 75.3% compared to married with 21.9% and divorced, separated and widowed with 2.8%. Similar study revealed that mostly the respondents were single because they had less commitment thus more time to spend on answering questionnaire [6].

This study found that majority of the respondents had bachelor's degree or higher with 76.4% followed by 12.4% get education up to secondary school and 11.2%

had diploma. The findings resonate with the literature as respondents with a high level of education were more likely to volunteer or to be potential volunteers [7]. Therefore, most of the respondents had monthly household income of RM3,000 and above (62.4%). A study has found that an increase in income by 1 per cent leads to 1.5 per cent increase in charitable giving in Malaysia [8].

Most of the respondents were full-time employed which constitutes about 45% and then followed by unemployed or students with 39.9% and the least of respondents was part-time or self-employed with 15.2%. Next, the highest percentage of respondents in this study according to number of IMARET session or mission joined was respondents who joined for the first time with 43.3%. This may be due to presence of many new people who just discover the existence of IMARET as a channel to do volunteer work. As for involvement in other volunteering or humanitarian aid mission or session, 62% respondents did involve in other volunteering or humanitarian aid mission or session besides IMARET and 38% respondents did not involve.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents.

<b>Characteristics</b>		<b>Number, n=178</b>	<b>Percentage, %</b>
Age groups	18 to 24 years old	66	37.1
	25 to 44 years old	106	59.6
	45 years old and older	6	3.4
Gender	Female	127	71.3
	Male	51	28.7
Race	Malay	174	97.8
	Indian	1	0.6
	Other	3	1.7
Religion	Islam	177	99.4
	Hindu	1	0.6
Marital Status	Married	39	21.9
	Divorced, separated or widowed	5	2.8
	Never married	134	75.3
Education	Secondary school or lower	22	12.4
	Diploma	20	11.2
	Bachelor's Degree or higher	136	76.4
Monthly Household Income	Below RM 1,000	24	13.5
	RM1,000 to RM2,999	43	24.2
	RM3,000 and above	111	62.4
Employment Status	Full-time employed	80	44.9
	Part-time or self-employed	27	15.2
	Unemployed	71	39.9
Number of IMARET Session/Mission Joined	1	77	43.3
	2 to 5	70	39.3

			6 and higher	31	17.4
Involvement	in	Other	No	68	38.2
Volunteering		or	Yes	110	61.8
Humanitarian		Aid			
Session/Mission					

### 3.2. Humanitarian Aid Involvement Factors

Table 2 shows that respondents indicated that understanding factor was the strongest factors in driving them to participate in voluntary activities. This factor received a mean score of 22.69. The other factors, in order of influence from strong to weak, were values (M=22.15), enhancement (M=21.05), protective (M=19.41), social (M=19.32) and career (M=18.85). This finding implied that the overall level of motivation of the respondents to participate in voluntary activities spurred on by these six elements of motivation was high. Most typically, respondents report that values, understanding, and enhancement are the most important functions, and that career, social, and protective are less important functions but the ordering and absolute importance, however, does vary across groups [9].

**Table 2.** Mean of Motivation Factors to volunteer

<b>Motivation Factors</b>	<b>Mean (SD)</b>
Understanding	22.69 (3.268)
Value	22.15 (2.752)
Enhancement	21.05 (3.268)
Protective	19.41 (4.426)
Social	19.32 (3.883)
Career	18.85 (4.449)

#### 3.2.1 Understanding Factor

Table 3 shows the frequency result of understanding factor. In this study about 95.5% volunteers responded extremely accurate or accurate with statement “volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things”. Understanding factor is the desire to acquire knowledge, to practise unused skills and to utilise capabilities.

**Table 3.** Questions that were used to test understanding factor

Items on questionnaire	Frequency (%) n=178					
Questions	Not	at	Not	Neutral	Accurat	Extreme

	<b>all accurate (1)</b>	<b>accurate (2)</b>	<b>(3)</b>	<b>e (4)</b>	<b>ly accurate (5)</b>
1) I can learn more about the cause for which I am working.	2 (1.1)	4 (2.2)	14 (7.9)	53 (29.8)	105 (59.0)
2) Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things.	2 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	4 (2.2)	45 (25.3)	125 (70.2)
3) Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience.	2 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	5 (2.8)	50 (28.1)	119 (66.9)
4) I can learn how to deal with a variety of people.	2 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	4 (2.2)	59 (33.1)	111 (62.4)
5) I can explore my own strengths.	4 (2.2)	2 (1.1)	6 (3.4)	55 (30.9)	111 (62.4)

### 3.2.2 Values Factor

Table 4 portrays that the fourth statement, "I feel it is important to help others" has 93.8% respondents felt that it was extremely accurate or accurate. Values factor means that volunteerism provides for individuals to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others.

**Table 4.** Questions that were used to test protective factor

<b>Items questionnaire</b>	<b>on</b>	<b>Frequency (%) n=178</b>				
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Not all accurate (1)</b>	<b>at Not accurate (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Accurate (4)</b>	<b>Extremely accurate (5)</b>
1) I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself.		-	1 (0.6)	14 (7.9)	64 (36.0)	99 (55.6)
2) I am genuinely concerned about the particular group I am serving.		2 (1.1)	2 (1.1)	23 (12.9)	71 (39.9)	80 (44.9)
3) I feel compassion toward people in need.		-	1 (0.6)	13 (7.3)	54 (30.3)	110 (61.8)
4) I feel it is important to help others.		1 (0.6)	-	10 (5.6)	38 (21.30)	129 (72.5)

5) I can do something for a cause that is important to me.	3 (1.7)	3 (1.7)	24 (13.5)	67 (37.6)	81 (45.5)
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### 3.2.3 Enhancement Factor

Table 5 shows that items on enhancement factor was “volunteering makes me feel needed” with 9% respondents agreed that it was not accurate or not at all accurate. Meanwhile, 93.2% volunteers felt that “volunteering is a way to make new friends” are accurate or extremely accurate. Enhancement factor is the desire to increase in personal growth and positive self-development. This factor derives from indications that there may be more to the ego. In the case of positive mood, people use volunteering as a means of maintaining or enhancing positive affect.

**Table 5.** Questions that were used to test enhancement factor

Items on questionnaire Questions	Frequency (%) n=178				
	Not at all accurate (1)	Not accurate (2)	Neutral (3)	Accurate (4)	Extremely accurate (5)
1) Volunteering makes me feel important.	6 (3.4)	9 (5.1)	30 (16.9)	63 (35.4)	70 (39.3)
2) Volunteering increases my self-esteem.	1 (0.6)	-	13 (7.3)	60 (33.7)	104 (58.4)
3) Volunteering makes me feel needed.	7 (3.9)	9 (5.1)	33 (18.5)	71 (39.9)	58 (32.6)
4) Volunteering makes me feel better about myself.	4 (2.2)	8 (4.5)	31 (17.4)	64 (36.0)	71 (39.9)
5) Volunteering is a way to make new friends.	-	-	12 (6.7)	57 (32.0)	109 (61.2)

### 3.2.4 Protective Factor

Table 6 portrays that the first statement “no matter how bad I have been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it” has 84.2% respondents agreed that it was accurate or extremely accurate. Meanwhile 53.9% respondents felt that “volunteering is an escape from my own troubles” was accurate and extremely accurate. This protective function offers an interpretation of Frisch and Gerard's finding that some Red Cross volunteers reported that they volunteer to escape from negative feelings [10]. For some individuals, volunteering may serve to combat negative feelings. They may volunteer as a way to reduce feelings of guilt, or they may volunteer now in the hopes that this will cause them to deserve good things in the future.

**Table 6.** Questions that were used to test protective factor

<b>Items on questionnaire</b>		<b>Frequency (%) n=178</b>				
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Not all accurate (1)</b>	<b>at Not accurate (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Accurate (4)</b>	<b>Extremely accurate (5)</b>
1) No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it.		6 (3.4)	5 (2.8)	17 (9.6)	59 (33.1)	91 (51.1)
2) By volunteering I feel less lonely.		10 (5.6)	9 (5.1)	29 (16.3)	64 (36.0)	66 (37.1)
3) Doing volunteer work relieves me of some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.		7 (3.9)	10 (5.6)	42 (23.6)	59 (33.1)	60 (33.7)
4) Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems.		10 (5.6)	16 (9.0)	29 (16.3)	60 (33.7)	63 (35.4)
5) Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles.		17 (9.6)	26 (14.6)	39 (21.9)	44 (24.7)	52 (29.2)

### 3.2.5 Social Factor

Table 7 conveys that statement four “people I know share an interest in community service” had 83.7% agreed that statement four was accurate or extremely accurate. Third statement “others with whom I am close place a high value on community service” had 74.7% agreed that it was accurate or extremely accurate. Social factor that may be served by volunteering reflects motivations concerning relationships with others. Volunteering may offer opportunities to be with one's friends or to engage in an activity viewed favourably by important others [11].



**Table 7.** Questions that were used to test social factor

<b>Items on questionnaire</b>		<b>Frequency (%) n=178</b>				
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Not all accurate (1)</b>	<b>at Not accurate (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Accurate (4)</b>	<b>Extremely accurate (5)</b>
1) My friends volunteer.		6 (3.4)	15 (8.4)	28 (15.7)	68 (38.2)	61 (34.3)
2) People I'm close to want me to volunteer.		21 (11.8)	35 (19.7)	42 (23.6)	43 (24.2)	37 (20.8)
3) Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service.		2 (1.1)	4 (2.2)	39 (21.9)	65 (36.5)	68 (38.2)
4) People I know share an interest in community service.		4 (2.2)	5 (2.8)	20 (11.2)	69 (38.8)	80 (44.9)
5) Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best.		7 (3.9)	12 (6.7)	36 (20.2)	64 (36.0)	59 (33.1)

### 3.2.6 Career Factor

Table 8 portrays that the statement “I can make new contacts that might help my business or career” has 16.5% respondents agreed that it was not accurate or not at all accurate. There were 14% respondents agreeing that statement “volunteering experience will look good on my resume” was not accurate or not at all accurate. Career factor that may be served by volunteering is concerned with career-related benefits that may be obtained from participation in volunteer work. This is exemplified by the literature that showed that 15% Junior League volunteers perceived volunteering to be a means of preparing for a new career or of maintaining career-relevant skills [12].

**Table 8.** Questions that were used to test career factor

<b>Items on questionnaire</b>		<b>Frequency (%) n=178</b>				
<b>Questions</b>		<b>Not all accurate (1)</b>	<b>at Not accurate (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Accurate (4)</b>	<b>Extremely accurate (5)</b>

1) Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work.	9 (5.1)	14 (7.9)	41 (23.0)	60 (33.7)	54 (30.3)
2) I can make new contacts that might help my business or career.	17 (8.6)	14 (7.9)	39 (21.9)	55 (30.9)	53 (29.8)
3) Volunteering allows me to explore different career options.	10 (5.6)	8 (4.5)	42 (23.6)	53 (29.8)	65 (36.5)
4) Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession.	9 (5.1)	7 (3.9)	34 (19.1)	73 (41.0)	55 (30.9)
5) Volunteering experience will look good on my resume	15 (8.4)	10 (5.6)	39 (21.9)	64 (36.0)	50 (28.1)

### **3.3 Association between Respondents' Demographic Data and Motivation Factors**

Table 9 below shows that there were 43 respondents from the age group of 18 to 24 years old that voted a mean of 4.00 for the total motivation factors while 4 respondents aged 45 years old and above voted a mean of 3.00. Besides, 18 respondents earning below RM1,000 voted a mean of 4.00 for the total motivation factors while 44 respondents earning above RM3,000 voted a mean of 3.00.

There were no significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) between total motivation factors and demographic data which consisted of age group, gender, race, religion, marital status, highest education level, monthly household income, employment status, number of IMARET session or mission joined and involvement in other volunteering or humanitarian aid mission or session. All individuals had the same chance to participate in volunteering activity regardless of their age groups because it did not associate with their motivation factors. The respondents wanted to learn things through direct, hands-on experience through volunteering and this was not associated with their ages.

The gender also played no significant association with motivation factors proving that female and male can participate in humanitarian work at the same probability. The literature did not observe any difference in volunteering activity between males and females [13]. Races also does not have a significant effect on predicting whether somebody is a donor nor how much that person gives [14]. Thus, marital status aside, giving volunteers more opportunities to directly help

the less fortunate and to learn new skills may possibly contribute to retain their involvement in volunteering [15]. Highest education level was not associated with motivation factors. In the psychological literature, volunteering is defined as “a form of sustained helping in which people actively seek out opportunities to assist others in need without any bonds of prior obligation” [16]. Framed in this term, volunteer work was not bounded with any education level.

There was also no association between monthly household income and motivation factors. This was explained by quality of life cannot be defined solely in economic terms [17]. Next, employment status had no association with motivation factors. This result was aligned with the literature as volunteering is sometimes seen to enable the volunteer to develop skills which may be useful in a future career or help to obtain employment, gain academic credits, or even aid career advancement thus being employed or unemployed had no association with joining volunteering work [18].

**Table 9.** Association between respondents’ demographic data and motivation factors.

Demographic Data		Mean of Motivation Factors				p value <sup>a</sup>
		2.0 0	3.0 0	4.0 0	5.0 0	
Age Group	18 to 24 years old	2	20	43	1	0.603
	25 to 44 years old	2	37	65	2	
	Older than 45 years old	0	4	2	0	
Gender	Female	0	46	80	1	0.060
	Male	4	15	30	2	
Race	Malay	4	61	10 6	3	0.756
	Indian	0	0	1	0	
	Other	0	0	3	0	
Religion	Islam	4	61	10 9	3	1.000
	Hindu	0	0	1	0	
Marital Status	Married	0	17	20	2	0.056
	Divorced, separated or widowed	1	2	2	0	
	Never married	3	42	88	1	
Highest Education Level	Secondary school or lower	2	8	10	2	0.214
	Diploma	1	5	14	0	
	Bachelor’s Degree or higher	1	48	86	1	
Monthly Household Income	Below RM1,000	2	3	18	1	0.073
	RM1,000 to RM2,999	1	14	26	2	
	RM3,000 and above	1	44	66	0	
Employment Status	Full-time employed	1	31	48	0	0.348
	Part-time employed or	1	8	15	3	

			Self-employed					
			Unemployed	2	22	47	0	
Number of IMARET Session or Mission Joined			1	3	26	48	0	0.225
			2 to 5	0	25	44	1	
			6 and higher	1	10	18	2	
Involvement in Other Volunteering or Humanitarian Mission/Session	in	Other or Aid	No	3	28	37	0	0.087
			Yes	1	33	73	3	

<sup>a</sup> Fisher's Exact Test

## Conclusions

From the study, it was found out that understanding factor which means the motivation to learn, explore their strengths, exercise their skills and expand their understanding of how to give aid was the strongest motivation factor of respondents to volunteer. Majority of the respondents came from age group of 25 to 34 years old, female, Malay, Islam, never married, had bachelor's degree, had monthly household income of RM 3,000 to RM 5,999, fully employed, joining IMARET mission or session for the first time and also joining other volunteering or humanitarian aid work. This study revealed that there was no association between motivation factors and demographic data being studied. It may be suggested that when recruiting volunteers, the target should appeal to motivation factors despite of sociodemographic differences. The findings showed that these respondents were more likely to participate in voluntary activities when the activities could provide understanding such as the opportunity to acquire knowledge, make improvements to existing skill and knowledge and to exercise existing skills.

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