

# Volunteerism Declined Among University Students: Why Do They Not Volunteer?

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**Abstract:** In this emerging economy, volunteerism has being part of important activities in many countries. It is also contributed towards the national development in producing proactive people to contribute volunteering towards community. It is one of the fundamental social activities which could be able to make our society and living condition in harmony, peace, and enjoyment. Volunteerism as an activity, is not money-oriented, but it benefitted to individual or group receiver in community and volunteers themselves. It is an altruistic activity. Globally, volunteerism has been considered a substantial development of the state, as it almost all the times enhance the social welfare system and provides help for the needed people in society. Even though it has been highly recognised as one of the influential factors for social development in many countries, unfortunately, the involvement of people in volunteerism is lately reported declined, particularly among university students. The declining participation of university students in volunteerism activity is mainly as a result of a hectic schedule, financial problem and the distance of the activity that is too far away from campus. Other factors mentioned are mobility-related problems, have no suitable time, health problems, have no required skill, and focusing only on academic achievement.

**Keywords:** Volunteerism, university students, involvement, deterioration, involvement.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Volunteerism is a trait or character that exist in most individuals for the reason that the existence of human civilisation and community development [1];[2]. It is one of the fundamental social activities which be able to make our society and living condition in harmony, peace, and enjoyment [3];[4]. Volunteerism activity is not a money-oriented, but it benefitted to individual or group receiver in society and volunteers themselves [5];[6]. It is an altruistic activity [7]. Globally, volunteerism has been considered a substantial development of the state, as it almost all the times enhances the social welfare system and provides help for the needed people in society [8].

Even though it has been highly recognised as one of the influential factors for social development in many countries, unfortunately, the involvement of people in volunteerism is lately reported declined, particularly among university students [9];[10]. In Malaysia, university student's participation in volunteering activities is considered low compared to other social activities [11]. They were found not really interested in joining in volunteerism activities and also given a negative response towards volunteerism programme held by the universities [12]. According to [13], students are

preferred to spend their time doing indoor activities rather than doing some beneficial social activities such as volunteerism.

According to [14], the decline in student involvement in volunteer activities should not occur as the university has introduced various approaches to encourage student involvement in volunteer activities. Furthermore, the university environment tends to expose students to a variety of social activities, including volunteer activities [9].

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The issue of declining student involvement in volunteer activities is an issue of concern to various parties [15];[16]. The participation of student volunteers in volunteer activities are still low and are at a the satisfactory level only which causes this volunteer the sector to be dominated by the elderly and retirees [17];[9];[18]. Reports from [19] show a decline in youth involvement in volunteer activities which recorded 67.4 per cent (2008) and decreased to 65.4 per cent (2011) and 60.6 per cent (2015). The percentage indicates that the level of youth involvement in volunteer activities are at a moderately satisfactory level only. Although the IPPBM report shows statistics on the decline in youth involvement, students, are also included in that age category because the age of the youth is between 15 to 40 years [20]. The 2012 World Giving Index study by the Charities Aid Foundation states that various efforts need to be made to make ranked 76th compared to 160 countries studied in terms of willingness to spend time to engage in volunteer activities [21].

The problem of declining student volunteer involvement in volunteer activities is a global the phenomenon that not only occurs in Malaysia but also occurs in other developed and developing countries. In Sweden, about 10% of volunteer among university students were reported to drop out from volunteering activities, and 15% were in the inactive status of volunteerism compared to 10 years ago [16]. In the United States (U.S.), there is a decline in the involvement of volunteers aged 16 to 24 years. Reports from [22] in 2012, a total of 8,776 young people were involved in volunteering but declined to 8,466 in 2013, 8,469 in 2014 and 8,415 in 2015. In the United Kingdom, university student's involvement in volunteerism activities are also considered low [10]; [7];[16]. Participation levels among 16-24 year olds declined from the previous year (2017/2018) from 39% to 35% for volunteering

at least once a year and from 24% to 21% for regular volunteering [23].

Low involvement is due to the lack of systematic and consistent volunteer sector, which causes students to lack awareness and exposure to engage in volunteer activities [7];[3];[24]. There are many factors related to this issue such as time, financial, commitment, accessibility, health, interest, skills, mobility, exposure, awareness and negative experience while participating in volunteering [25];[26];[27]. Many university students were said they do not want to join in volunteering activities because of their hectic schedules and commitment towards academic achievement [28];[29];[30]. The existence of these barriers have led to a decline in student involvement in volunteer activities.

Besides, the decline in student involvement in volunteer activities can also be attributed to the element of motivation. According to [31] a large number of students are not actively involved in volunteer activities because the volunteer programs offered do not meet the needs of students and in turn affect their motivation to engage in such activities. According to [4] nowadays, student involvement in volunteer activities are more selective involving various aspects such as the benefits to be obtained, the type of activities offered as well as commitment either in the short or long term. Accordingly, the appreciation in volunteerism fades when student volunteers no longer understand the concept or philosophy of volunteering itself. Failure to appreciate the work of volunteerism causes student volunteers to use the activity as a channel to have fun or get rid of boredom alone without getting the optimal benefits from such involvement [32].

Dissatisfaction factors in volunteerism also influence the decline in student involvement in volunteer activities. According to [33] and [34], the satisfaction factor plays an essential role in retaining student volunteers in volunteer activities for an extended time. Achieving a high level of satisfaction is expressed through the activity of student volunteers in the activity that leads to student volunteers being more often or actively involved in volunteer activities if they are satisfied with the results or benefits obtained through participation in such activities [33]. According to [35], the problem of declining student volunteer involvement shows that they do not actually achieve the level of satisfaction from the volunteer activities involved. As a result, they will stop participating in the activity or will not participate in the activity in the future.

Undeniably environmental factors also play an essential role in influencing the decline in student involvement in volunteer activities [36];[37]. Adverse environments, such as the absence of encouragement from family and friends, can influence student involvement in volunteer activities [9]. This condition causes them to fall into unhealthy activities easily. Participation in these unhealthy activities is also associated with a lack of interest and enthusiasm to engage in volunteer activities. According to [38], the attitude of parents who do

not set a good example is also a reason for students not to engage in volunteer activities. Most parents nowadays have busy life routines and do not have time to engage in volunteer activities. The busyness of parents with career commitment is a reflection of the capitalist economic system that sees profit as an indicator of success in life. There are even negative-minded parents who do not encourage their children to engage in volunteer activities because they are worried that it will affect their academic achievement [38].

### III. METHODOLOGY

The objectives of the research are to examine the percentage of the university student in Malaysia involved volunteerism and to identify factors of why they do not include in volunteering. This quantitative study uses a set of questionnaire for data collection. It involves 500 university students as respondents from three universities in Klang Valley, i.e. University of Malaya (U.M.), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The data collected was analysed by using SPSS. Then, the results were investigated based on min value and percentage.

### IV. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the barriers that lead to a decline in student involvement in volunteer activities. The results of the analysis show that three main constraints cause students not to participate in volunteer activities and are at a high level, namely financial problems that recorded a mean value of 5.27, followed by remote volunteer activity locations with a mean value of 5.17 and busy with various commitments recorded a mean value of 5.14. Next for the moderate level shows that students have a mobilisation problem with a mean value of 4.96, followed by time appropriateness problem (4.92), activity suitability problem (4.45), family members not involved in volunteer activities (4.23), close friends not involved in activities volunteerism (4.16), lack of encouragement and support to get involved (4.00), no guarantee for career opportunities (3.82), no skills required (3.52), having health problems (3.43), disrupting academic learning (3.31) and having negative experiences (3.27) as well as having a negative perception of volunteerism (3.04). However, most students disagree that their involvement in volunteer activities is an act that is not beneficial and a waste of time by recording a low level and recording a mean value of 2.85 (Table 1).

Table 1: Mean Value of Barriers in Volunteering

Barriers	Item component		
	Mean	SP	Level
Limited financial resources	5.27	1.3	Higher
Remote location	5.17	1.3	Higher
Busy with various commitments	5.14	1.3	Higher
Mobilization	4.96	1.4	Moderate
Timeliness	4.92	1.3	Moderate

Unattractive activity	4.45	1.6	Moderate
Family members are not volunteers	4.23	1.7	Moderate
Close friends are not volunteers	4.16	1.7	Moderate
There is no encouragement to volunteer	4.00	1.7	Moderate
There is no guarantee of career opportunities	3.82	1.8	Moderate
No skills	3.53	1.7	Moderate
Health problem	3.43	1.8	Moderate
Disrupts academic learning	3.31	1.6	Moderate
Have a negative experience	3.27	1.6	Moderate
Negative perception	3.04	1.9	Moderate
Wasting time	2.85	1.8	Low

Next, the discussion of the results of the study is on the influence of barriers to the decline of student involvement in volunteer activities. Many studies have shown a significant impact between obstacles and the decline of student involvement in volunteer activities [15]; [39]; [27]. Through Table 2, the significant value of barrier regression coefficient ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the barrier has a significant influence on the involvement of student volunteers in volunteer activities. This suggests that the decline in student volunteer involvement in volunteer activities is influenced by the existence of certain obstacles, thereby preventing students from being actively involved in volunteer activities.

Table 2: Coefficient of Influence on Barrier Involvement of Student Volunteers in Volunteer Activities

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	sig
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Barrier	.074	.021	.141	3.491	.001

a. Dependence variable: Involvement

## V. DISCUSSION

The decline in student volunteer involvement and inactivity in volunteer activities can be attributed to the existence of specific barriers either due to individuals or their environment [40]; [39]; [16]. Based on the Leisure Constraints Model introduced by [41] barriers can be divided into three forms, namely intrapersonal barriers, interpersonal barriers and structural barriers. Intrapersonal barriers refer to obstacles related to the psychology and attitudes inherent in the individual. Interpersonal barriers can also be associated with the problem of interaction with people in a unique environment. In contrast, structural barriers refer to external obstacles that are inevitable because the obstacles do not stem from themselves.

The results show that the main obstacle that prevents students from actively participating in volunteer activities are due to structural barriers. Studies from [1]; [7] [10] also show that structural barriers are a significant barrier that restricts student involvement in volunteer activities compared to another barrier categories. This is because structural barriers are a form of barrier that the students themselves cannot control, and they are unable to prevent it from happening. Among the structural obstacles that interfere with student involvement in volunteer activities are tied to various commitments [30], lack of time [27], financial problems [42]; [43] as well as lack of transportation [26].

In addition, the results of the study also show that interpersonal barriers also influence student involvement in volunteer activities. This means that student involvement in volunteer activities depends on the environment around them. Individuals greatly influence student involvement in volunteering in an environment such as family members, peers, schools and neighbourhoods [36]; [44]; [37]. The process of socialisation plays a vital role in shaping students' behaviour and beliefs about something. Reinforcement of positive values from the environment towards volunteer activities increases students' motivation to engage in volunteer activities [45]. However, if a the student is in a negative environment where parents or friends do not set a good example and do not encourage to engage in volunteer activities, then students do not show interest in engaging in volunteer activities [46].

These findings indicate that there is a positive and mutually influential relationship between barriers and student involvement in volunteer activities. The results of this study also support the Leisure Constraints Model where existing barriers (structural, interpersonal and intrapersonal) limit student involvement in volunteer activities. According to [47], barriers were initially seen as something difficult to overcome to enable students to engage in volunteer activities. However, contemporary studies have found positive changes where students try to find solutions to overcome the obstacles faced to engage in volunteer activities. Accordingly, [41] and [47] argue that barriers in volunteering are something that can be overcome. To address the obstacles faced, the elements of motivation must be examined together. This means that if student motivation exceeds obstacles, then students will choose to engage in volunteer activities. However, if the barriers exceed the motivation, then the students will decide not to engage in such activities. In other words, involvement in volunteer activities depends on students' ability to balance barriers and motivation [47].

## VI. CONCLUSION

The empowerment of students is vital to the national development plan because they are the leaders of the future who determine the direction of the country. Accordingly, a balanced development between academic excellence and exemplary character formation needs to go hand in hand to

produce first-class students. One of the ways to empower students is through involvement in volunteer activities. However, the decline in student involvement in volunteer activities are one of the critical issues in the volunteer sector. Therefore, cooperation from all parties is necessary to ensure that the obstacles faced by students can be reduced. This is important to encourage involvement in volunteer activities and further cultivate volunteerism among students.

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