

# **THE KEY DRIVERS OF VOLUNTEERING INTENTION AMONG UNDERGRADUATE MALAYSIAN STUDENTS**

## **AN APPLICATION OF THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOR**

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### **Abstract**

*Volunteerism is as old as human civilization itself and it exists in various forms and dimensions. Volunteering intention is gaining attention among the university students. The aim of this research is to study the key drivers of volunteering intention among undergraduate students in Malaysia. Several factors such as perceived behavioural control, attitude, and subjective norm were analyzed. The number of respondents consisted of 350 which were randomly chosen from the higher learning institutions in Kedah and Perlis, Malaysia but only 307 questionnaires were obtained. The results indicated that perceived behavioural control, attitude, and subjective norm were found significantly influence volunteering intention. It was suggested that future research can be done in larger sample size which allowed for statistical analyses and models such as Religiosity or Motivation could also be included in future research.*

*Keywords: perceived behavioural control, attitude, subjective norm, and volunteering intention*

## INTRODUCTION

Volunteers are an integral human resource of most events organizations in producing successful events (Bang, Won & Kim, 2009). Nearly one billion people throughout the world volunteer through public, non-profit or for-profit organizations (Salamon et al., 2011). Volunteerism is related to the helping behaviour among people and a specific form of helping behaviour, involving a longer-term commitment (Wilson, 2008 & Wilson, 2012) According to Kemp (2002), volunteerism is a personal investment of people who spend their time freely with no rewards. These people are able to make great contributions to the economy and development. It is believed that volunteerism helps develop a more positive attitude and healthier outlook. As Petter Research Associates (2002) further suggests that volunteers are more likely to say that they feel optimistic about their future, productive, supported by friends, empowered to improve their community, and motivated to help others (Petter, 2002).

Nowadays, youth volunteerism is very crucial in developing a community (Hussin & MohdArshad, 2012) University students represent one target population with great potential to serve as volunteers. A related study by Hyde & Knowles (2013) showed that the volunteering intention among student provide strong support for the hypothesised relationships between the extended TPB predictors and intentions to volunteer. Moreover, in order of magnitude were PBC, attitude, and subjective norm had significant predictors of intention to volunteer for community service in the future.

Americans' annual volunteer service totals over 8 billion hours and is estimated to be worth more than 100 billion dollars (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013). About 62.8 million people had participated in a volunteer activity for or through an organization in the United States between September 2009 and September 2010 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011). Of the six age groups surveyed by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2011), older adults spent the most time volunteering in 2010, and nearly 40% of those older adults reported volunteering between 100 and 500 hours per year (Pruchno, et al. 2010).

The history of volunteerism in Malaysia does not differ much from other societies (SitiHawa, 2004). It began with individuals' commitment to religious as well as charitable altruism and it is also a form of response towards human tragedies due to wars, political conflicts and economic crisis (SitiHawa, 2004). The majority of people who join volunteer activities are retirees, while time and energy are the main obstacles for younger generations and professionals to be fully involved in volunteer activities (SitiHawa, 2004). The government of Malaysia is emphasizing on the issues of youth development, especially the ones regarding the issues that are related to volunteering and social engagement. The Malaysian approach to youth development calls for all development agencies to work together (Hamzah & Suandi,

1994). These agencies are given the roles of providing conducive educational climate and environment for young people to learn and participate as well as to be creative and innovative through constant interaction and guidance (Hamzah & Suandi, 1994).

For most of young adults, exposure to volunteering of various kinds begins in adolescence (Hill & den Dulk, 2013). One estimate suggests, for example, that as many as 75 percent of adolescents in the United States will participate in formal volunteering opportunities before adulthood (Hill, & den Dulk, 2013, Johnson et al. 1998). Moreover, contrary to the broad pattern of disengagement across various age cohorts, the trend line for adolescent volunteering appears to be moving up. By the mid-2000s, nearly a third of older teenagers (ages 16–19) reported some volunteering activity in a given year, a rebound of more than twice the volunteering rate for that age group in 1989 (Grimm et al. 2006). While most of these volunteers are “episodic” (contributing 99 or fewer hours a year, according to the definition in Grimm et al. 2006), one data analysis suggests that 11 percent of 12th graders volunteer on a weekly basis (Smith & Faris 1999).

In study, Hidalgo, & Moreno, (2009) found social networks, organizational support, positive task, and training are highly significant predictors of the intention to volunteering. The results obtained by this study give clear ideas to help to increase the volunteers’ intention to remain, such as creating a friendly climate and supporting the volunteer with training and supervision.

Consequently, the researchers will focus in several factors which are perceived attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioural control and study on how these factors influence volunteering intention among university students in Malaysia. This study is expected to provide useful insights to both the non- local and international organizations to better understand their prospect youth particularly in Malaysia and as a guideline to the youth before perform activities volunteering.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Volunteering Intention**

An individual's intention is the combination of three factors by Ajzen (1991): (1) (behavioral beliefs) which is referring to the individual opinion regarding the behavior (Ajzen, 1991), (2) (normative beliefs) which is mentioning that in performing the behavior the mentioned difficulty and ease and an assumption is made that it is representing previous experience (Ajzen, 1991), and (3) (control beliefs) which is referring to the behavior practicing related social pressure (Ajzen, 1991).

The intentions for behavior would vary as the behavioral beliefs were fulfilled, as suggested by Ajzen (1991), which means that the respective increase or decrease of the future intentions depends on whether the expectations about the behavior were either met or not. Ajzen found that subjective norms were typically not as good indicators of intentions as the other two factors (Kim, Trail, 2007; Bang, Won & Kim, 2009). In a survey, related to the intention nurses to making care for the Patients of SARS KO et al., (2004) found that 25.4% of nurses would volunteer to be assigned to care for SARS patients, and 42.7% of nurses expressed a positive intention to care for SARS patients.

Furthermore, there are possibly other factors influencing an individual's intention to engage in volunteering is the individual's role identity. According to Astrom & Rise (2001) and Kwon, Trail, & Anderson (2005), role identity was one of the factors predicting behaviors or behavioral intentions. Lai et al, (2013) explored an association which was considered positive among every volunteering related motivation and national identity, and the individuals with more good national recognition have more agreement for volunteering practices.

### **Intention in Quran and Sunah**

The motive, intention and objective of an individual give importance to his practices. Therefore, the often used (70 times) phrases in the verses of Qur'an are "in the way of Allah" {fi sabilillah}. And therefore it is considered a warning that their practices are not for their own carnal desires, but it must be in the way of God (Qaraati, 2011). The servitude of God is considered like a dangerous path where different sign boards have been setup, in order to avoid deviations, all of these emphasis are used as a warning. With perspective of devotional acts, this is considered true, which without having pure intentions, will lose all hopes which are related to the seeking of nearness to God (Qaraati, 2011).

The pillar of worship is intention and eventually is the foundation and essence of action. If an action has no intention or the intention is ungodly, it will be considered invalid. The mix intentions can be the reason of spoiling the most sacred acts, while the simple actions are considered valuable if the intention is purely good. The Holy Qur'an states:

لَا يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ اللَّهُ بِاللَّغْوِ فِي أَيْمَانِكُمْ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ بِمَا كَسَبْتُمْ فُلُوبُكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَفُورٌ حَلِيمٌ

Allah will not held you accountable for the thoughtless oaths, but for the intentions in your hearts; and He is Oft-forgiving, Most Forbearing (Quran 2: 225)

### **Attitude and volunteering Intention**

Attitude is one's predisposition to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner toward people, events, objects, or behaviors (Ajzen, 1991; Wang et al, 2014). Attitude is the feeling of favorableness or non favorableness toward performing the behavior, was directly measured using the semantic differential evaluative dimensions of Osgood et al. 1957)for item development as recommended by Ajzen (1988)and Conner & Sparks (1996). Attitude was defined by Ajzen & Fishbein (1980)as "a person's feelings of favorableness or non favorableness for that concept". This simple definition accounts for attitude's most crucial aspect, evaluation. To measure these feelings of favorableness or non favorableness, the semantic differential scale is effective (Osgood et al., 1957). Using the semantic differential, an evaluative scale, a single score denotes the person's favorableness or non favorableness regarding the questioned behavior.

Boezeman & Ellemers, (2009) suggested that when volunteers experience satisfaction during their volunteer work, they are more satisfied with their volunteer job and that this in turn enhances their intentions to stay as volunteer in a volunteer organization. On the same context, a study of youth volunteers of anti-drug program in Malaysia (Aisyah et al., 2013) found that most of youth participants where 56% of them aged between 19 years old and below surpass the percentage of 38% of the 20-25 years of age group and both age groups agreed that they have passion and intention in participating in this program, moreover beliefs and attitude lead to a stronger intention to volunteering (Aisyah et al, 2013).

In their attempt to examine the role of various factors in university students' acceptance intention to volunteer, Gardiner & Iarocci (2014) found a positive attitude toward students with autism spectrum disorder is likely to predict positive changes in behavior. Interestingly, a different pattern of variables emerged as significant in predicting intent to act. Females were more willing to volunteer than males, and this is consistent with previous research (Statistics Canada, 2012; Mahoney, 2008; Mark & Jones 2004)

### **Subjective norm and volunteering Intention**

The definition of subjective norm, the individual's personal judgment of whether important others view the behavior positively or negatively, represents a global judgment (Terry et al., 1993). The TPB identified subjective norms as a basic variable for making explanation of the intention to practice a particular behavior, as well as the attitude toward the behavior and perceived behavioral control (Casalò et al, 2010).

According to Bekkers (2007) volunteering behaviors are transferring to the children by the parents and the household members. Interaction between individuals' volunteering activity

and other aspects of their lives, particularly their social network affect volunteering intention and volunteer activities. For example, being a volunteer may cause an individual to be viewed favorably by others, which may reinforce the value of volunteer activity and increase motivation to persist in volunteering activities (Gasiorek, & Giles, 2013).

Hank & Erlinghagen (2009) also found that family culture impact rates of volunteering. Rates of volunteering were lower in countries with high levels of informal social contact (such as through families), and it suggesting that this activity may “crowd out” volunteering in people’s lives. This could be seen as displacement of both time and benefits: spending more time on such informal social contact and reduces the number of hours available for people to engage in other activities such as volunteering, due to the cultures, family members are more likely to take up many of the functions or services that volunteers fulfilling or providing in more individualistic cultures (Gasiorek & Giles, 2013).

Similarly, Hyde & Knowles (2013) found that sample of students undertook an individual recruited from the university of Australia who was a psychologist that the correlation of with intention of subjective norm was considered positive

### **Perceived behavioral control and volunteering Intention**

Previous literatures stated that the challenges for people to involve in voluntary work were time and financial constraints (Terry, 2005; Lee et al., 2007). Still, considering the situation, supervision style, personalities of an individual, control behavior perception, may changes with time between volunteers. In previous study, for making the explanation of the students of psychology which are a numbered to 647 for volunteering in a program which was campus based, the study of Okun and Sloane (2002) explored that for intention, perceived behavioral control is an important predictor. In another perspective, Fuller (2012) suggested that the relation of perceived behavioral control on the intention of volunteers for the leadership development is dependent on the autonomy.

In a survey of Nurses' intention and volunteering to care for Sars patients, perceived control was the strongest independent predictor of intention (Ko, *at al.*, 2004). The availability of resources representing perceived control was important variables making an independent contribution to the prediction of volunteering intention. (McCaulet *al.*, 1993; Nash *et al.*, 1993; Terry & O'Leary, 1995; Edwards *et al.*, 2001 & Ko, *at al.*, 2004) demonstrated that PBC is the strongest independent predictor of intention, and highlighted the importance of perceived control and play in determining intention.

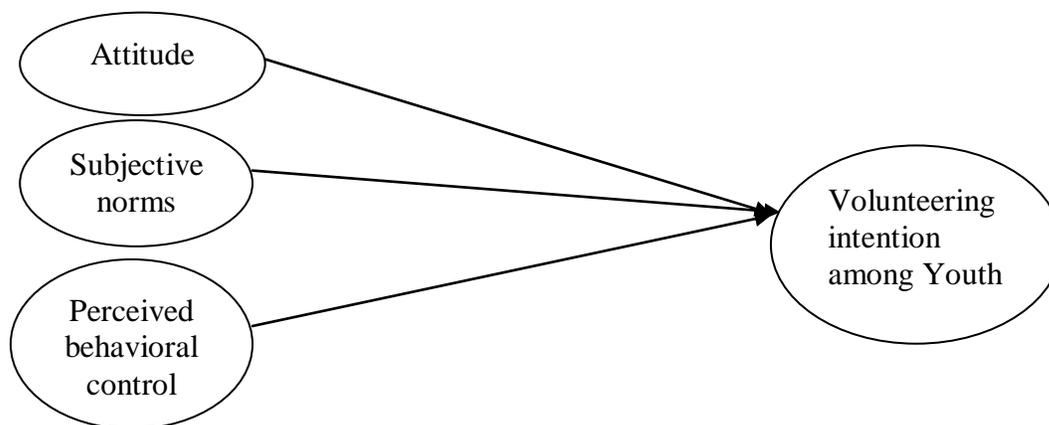
## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The proposed research method involved a survey of undergraduate students in Malaysia to investigate how attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control influence volunteering intention. Quantitative research by distributed questionnaires is conducted by asking the respondents how the factors influence on their volunteering intention.

The close-ended questionnaires were randomly distributed to selected undergraduate students on different colleges from two Universities that were University Malaysia Perlis (UNiMAP) and Utara University Malaysia (UUM) to collect the information needed in the study. According to Charles & Fen (2007) convenience sampling is used because it involved drawing samples that are easily accessible and willing to participate in a study.

The number of the sample taken from the undergraduate students is consisted of 200 respondents which were randomly chosen. 200 sets of questionnaires were distributed, 180 sets were successfully collected back. The research used five-point Likert scale where the respondents were presented with a continuous scale, whereby 1 was strongly disagree to 5 was strongly agree in stating their responses.

Figure 1: Theoretical Framework



## EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

A total of 350 questionnaires were distributed and 307 questionnaires were received yielding 91 percents of response rates. Among the respondents, there were 107 (34.5%) of male respondents and 200 (64.5%) of female respondents, race group which presented 216 (69.7%) of Malay, 74 (23.9%) of Chinese, 6 (1.9%) of Indian and 11 (3.5%) of others including Siamese.

Table 1: Demographic profile

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	107	34.5
	Female	200	64.5
Race	Malay	216	69.7
	Chinese	74	23.9
	Indian	6	1.9
	Others	11	3.5
Year of Study	First	86	27.7
	Second	85	27.4
	Third	89	28.7
	Forth	42	13.5
Do you ever volunteer in any charitable activities?	Yes	220	71.0
	No	86	27.7
Are you a member of any Non-governmental organization?	Yes	73	23.5
	No	232	74.8

The results showed that respondents were consists of 86 (27.7%) first year students, 85 (27.4%) second year students, 89(28.7%) third year students and 42(13.5%) forth year students. Furthermore, a sizeable number 220 (71.0%) of the respondents are involved in the volunteering in any charitable activities while the other 86 (27.7%) of the respondents never volunteer in any charitable activities. Finally, the results showed that respondents were member of any Non-governmental organization 73 (23.5%) and 232 (74.8%) did not join with of any Non-governmental organization.

### Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 shows the mean for all variables which ranged between 3.7047 and 4.3901. Mean for volunteering intention is 3.9568, attitude is 4.3901, subjective norm is 3.7047, and perceived behavioural control is 4.0212 indicates the respondents average agreed with the questions in general. The standard deviation value for volunteering intention is 0.69719, which is large from mean value and this indicates standard deviation for volunteering intention is less concentrate. Meanwhile, standard deviation attitude is 0.64449, subjective norm is 0.63772, and perceived behavioural control is 0.63157.

Table 2: Descriptive Analysis

Factors	Mean	Standard Deviation
Volunteering Intention	3.9568	0.69719
Attitude	4.3901	0.64449
Subjective norm	3.7047	0.63772
Perceived behavioural control	4.0212	0.63157

## Reliability Analysis

The number items of each variables and the Cronbach Alpha were showing in Table 3. In this study, any item that was not significant will be deleted in order to obtain the highest reliability of the measurement. The reliability coefficient is suggested to be 0.70 or higher (Wells & Wollack, 2003; Lehman, 2005). Thus, all variables were accepted according to Table 3 which ranging from 0.884 to 0.913 which the dependent variable (Volunteering intention) obtained the highest reliability.

Table 3: Results of Reliability Analysis

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Volunteering Intention	4	.884
Attitude	4	.910
Subjective norm	6	.858
Perceived behavioural control	6	.913

## Regression Analysis

As shown in Table 4, the standardized coefficient is 0.362 for attitude, Subjective norm is 0.095, and perceived behavioural control is 0.419. The value of R-Square indicates that 59% of the variance in volunteering intention can be predicted from the variables of attitude, Subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control. The significant F value of 0.000 which is significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ . From table 4, attitude  $t = 7.227$ ,  $p = 0.000$  is significant, subjective norm  $t = 2.183$ ,  $p < 0.05$  is significant, and perceived behavioural control  $t = 7.834$ ,  $p = 0.000$  is significant. As the conclusion, for attitude, Subjective norm and perceived behavioural control have significant influence on volunteering intention.

Table 4: Result of Regression Analysis (Dependent variable: Volunteering Intention)

Variables	Beta	t-Ratio	Sig.t
Attitude	0.362	7.227	0.000
Subjective norm	0.095	2.183	0.030
Perceived behavioural control	0.419	7.834	0.000
R Square = 0.593			
Durbin-Watson = 1.940			
F = 146.876			
Sig.F = 0.000			

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings show a direct positive and significant effect of attitude on volunteering intention. This means that youth will be intend with the volunteering if the attitude is of high. On the other hand, youth will be unconvinced if the attitudes is of weakness. The finding of the present study is similar to previous studies (e.g. Aisyahet *al.*, 2013; Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009; Gardiner & Iacocca, 2014; Janoski, Musick, & Wilson,1998; Ko, *et al.*, 2004; Mahoney, 2008)

Another result indicated that subjective norm has positively effect to volunteering intention and the result was supported that subjective norm was an important determinant of volunteering intention since it indicated high and positive value ( $\beta = 0.095$ ). Subjective Norm was found to be the lowest predictor of volunteering intention among other variables. This finding was similar with the previous findings that subjective norm was the most consistent predictor of volunteering intentions in all cases and contributed to be essential for inducing volunteering (Bekkers, 2007;Gasiorek& Giles, 2013; Hyde & Knowles, 2013).

Perceived behavioural control reported a fairly high expectation on others variables in the planned behaviour theory. These findings provide proof to support the earlier studies (Edwards et al 2001; Ko, *at al.*, 2004; McCaulet *al.*, 1993; Nash *et al.*, 1993; Terry & O'Leary, 1995). This variable is also rated one of the most important variable in the planned behaviour theory.

Table 5: Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypothesis	Statement of Hypothesis	Results
H1	Attitude has a significant influence to volunteering intention among undergraduate students.	Accepted
H2	Subjective norm has a significant influence to volunteering intention among undergraduate students.	Accepted
H3	Perceived behavioural control has a significant influence to volunteering intention among undergraduate students.	Accepted

There are some limitations, this study focused on limited sample for data collection and the sampling of the study that involved the undergraduate students of the public universities. Because of this reason, the findings may be applicable only to the universities students with different higher knowledge and education background with others responders that do not have knowledge. Thus, the study only managed to evaluate youth' intention and volunteer behavioural from the public universities students' point of view only. Thus, it limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, it is suggested that future research can be done in

larger sample size that allows higher response rate for more robust statistical analyses including structural equation modelling.

Furthermore, attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioural control that influence volunteering intention are difficult to be fully explained in just one research. Thus, there is a wide range of research in these variables and there were still a number of other variables that may affect volunteering intention such as religiosity, motivations, ethic, altruism and national and may affect volunteering behaviour. These variables were not included in this research model.

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