

The Effect of Helping Organizations' Benefits on Motivation to Volunteer

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Background

- The purpose of the current study was to examine college students' volunteer motivation in relation to the specific benefit offered by a volunteer organization.
- More specifically, the benefits being compared were social, career, and neutral benefits to students.

Past Findings

- Benefits:** Volunteer motivation is significantly increased when students are exposed to a social-focused organization compared to a career-focused organization (Van Volkom & Stapley, 2022).
- College Students:** Older students - juniors and seniors - are less willing to choose donating and volunteering-related activities compared to their first-year and sophomore counterparts (Clerkin et al., 2009).
- Individual Differences:** Potential volunteers differentiate tasks based on the volunteer motives that they satisfy and prefer ones that align with their personal motives (Houle et al., 2005).
- Gender:** Women show a higher likelihood and motivation to volunteer than men, as well as a willingness to volunteer for a longer amount of time (Clerkin et al., 2009; Van Volkom & Stapley, 2022).
- Rewards:** Volunteers' opinions regarding rewards are based heavily on what kind of reward they are presented with, and overall, volunteers strongly prefer intangible rewards over tangible ones (Cnaan & Cascio, 1999; Phillips & Phillips, 2010).

Method

Participants

- Sample Size: 41 (5 male, 36 female)
- Age Range: 18 - 22 ($M = 19.22$ years, $SD = 1.11$)
- Ethnicity: 85.4% White, 9.8% Hispanic/Latinx, 2.4% Asian, 2.4% Multicultural
- Year in school: 14 first year, 16 second year, 6 third year, 5 fourth year
- Involvement in Greek Organization at MU: 12.2% involved
- Division I Athlete Status: 9.8% athletes
- Convenience sample from SONA research participation pool

Materials

- Volunteer Attitudes Questionnaire (measuring general willingness to volunteer for the presented organization)
- Modified Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998) (measuring participants' career and social motivations related to volunteering)
- Demographics Questionnaire
- Manipulation Check
- Volunteer Organization Flyer (denoting the organization consistent with whichever experimental condition a participant was assigned to)
- Stack of Recruitment Flyers (for the behavioral measure)

Design

- Multigroup Between-Subjects Experimental Design
- Independent Variable: Organization focus presented to participants [Women Rising (career-focused), Habitat for Humanity (social-focused), or The Open Door (neutral)]
- Dependent Variable: Volunteer motivation

Procedure

- Participating in person, participants completed informed consent and then were randomly assigned to view one of the organizational flyers.
- After viewing their flyer, participants were administered the study questionnaire, which consisted of the Volunteer Attitudes Questionnaire, modified Volunteer Functions Inventory (Clary et al., 1998), and the Demographics Questionnaire.
- After taking the study questionnaire, the researchers directed the participants to a stack of flyers on the table and explained that they were for a new campus organization about volunteering. Participants were instructed to take as many flyers as they wanted for themselves and others after the study was over. Once the participant responded, the researchers began the debriefing process.

Results

Manipulation Check

The analysis revealed that 100% of the participants were aware of and able to identify the correct organization focus presented. This indicated that the manipulation was effective.

Hypothesis 1 (Overall Volunteering; not supported): The social-focused group would report more willingness than the career-focused and neutral conditions with no difference between career-focused and neutral conditions.

- A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 38) = 7.83, p = .001$. A Tukey HSD test indicated that contrary to the hypothesis, the mean for the social focus condition was significantly lower than the mean for the career focus condition ($p = .01$), the mean for the neutral condition significantly differed from the social condition ($p = .004$), and the mean for the career group did not significantly differ from the neutral group ($p = .98$). See Table 1 for means. The focus of the organization impacted the overall willingness to volunteer.

Hypothesis 2 (Volunteer Hours; not supported): The social focused group will report more volunteer hours than the career-focused and neutral conditions. There will be no difference in volunteer hours between the career-focused and neutral conditions.

- A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 38) = .67, p = .52$, thus the group means were not significantly different (see Table 1). There was no influence of the organizational focus on hours willing to volunteer each week.

Hypothesis 3 (Career Motivation; partially supported): The career focused group will have higher levels of career motivation than the social focused and neutral condition, with the social focused condition having more career motivation than the neutral condition.

- A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was a significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 38) = 4.31, p = .02$. A Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean for the career focus condition was significantly greater than the mean for the social focus condition ($p = .02$). However, counter to expectations, the mean for the neutral focus did not differ from the mean of the social condition ($p = .80$), or career group ($p = .10$). Organizational focus impacted career motivation.

Hypothesis 4 (Recruitment flyers – behavioral measure; not supported): The social focused group will take more volunteer recruitment flyers than the career focused and neutral conditions with the career focused condition taking more recruitment flyers than the neutral condition.

- A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 38) = .44, p = .65$, thus the group means were not significantly different (see Table 1). There was no influence of the organizational focus on the numbers of recruitment flyers taken.

Hypothesis 5 (Social motivation; not supported): The social focused group will have higher levels of social motivation than the career focused and neutral conditions, with the career focused condition having more social motivation than the neutral condition.

- A one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups, $F(2, 38) = .84, p = .44$, thus the group means were not significantly different (see Table 1). There was no influence of the organizational focus on social motivation.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

	Overall Volunteering	Volunteer hours	Career Motivation	Social Motivation	Flyers	N
Career focus	6.31 (.60)	4.21 (2.46)	5.99 (.77)	5.84 (.74)	1.36 (1.65)	14
Social ties focus	5.34 (1.11)	6.14 (6.61)	5.04 (1.00)	5.39 (1.30)	1.00 (.68)	14
Neutral focus	6.37 (.37)	5.46 (3.04)	5.26 (.88)	5.72 (.73)	1.08 (.28)	13

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Discussion

- The current study analyzed the relationship between volunteer benefits and willingness to volunteer.
- Although contrary to the first hypothesis, those in the career and neutral conditions had a higher overall willingness to volunteer than those in the social condition.
- Opposing to the second hypothesis, number of volunteer hours participants were willing to give was not affected by the organization presented to participants.
- In partial support of the third hypothesis, participants had higher career motivation in the career condition than those in the social condition.
- Opposing to the fourth hypothesis, the organization presented to participants had no effect on the behavioral measure of taking volunteer recruitment flyers for a fictitious on campus organization.
- Contrary to the fifth hypothesis, social motivation was not affected by any of the organizations presented.

Strengths

- According to the manipulation check, all participants paid attention and accurately identified the correct source of information.
- The study had reliable scales meaning there was internal consistency with all the items included in the scales.
- The multigroup design kept the study simple in order to replicate the study more easily.

Limitations

- A convenience sample of mostly White, female, psychology students decreases the generalizability of the findings to be applied outside of the study, or in this case, to the target population of college students.
- The study lacked the ideal number of participants (30) for each condition in the study, which decreases the generalizability to the outside population.
- The method of data collection was inconsistent as the procedure stated there would be two researchers collecting data, but, on multiple occasions, there was only one researcher in the lab during their given time for data collection.

Future Directions

- Increase the number of participants in each of the conditions to potentially increase the internal/external validity, and power of the study.
- Broaden the sample to participants of all ages to increase representativeness and to make the findings more generalizable for future research.
- Including a controlled behavior group that does not receive instructions to take any of the behavior measures flyers to see if participants take on their own, expanding research on the topic.
- Conduct the study using a remote data collection method as participants could have felt pressured by demand characteristics due to being asked about a socially desirable topic. Also, the current generation of college students are more inclined to read or complete tasks on a computer rather than on paper.

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