

Beyond the Global Warming issue.

Understanding students' motivations as volunteers in youth environmental community

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Abstract. *Regardless of their status as environmental activists, student volunteers tend to have more complex motivations when deciding to join an environmental community. This study aims to understand more deeply the motivation of student volunteers joining an environmental community and*

to formulate an effective voluntary system for students focusing on synergizing personal and community goals. This study involved 20 student registrars of the local community concerning Circular Economy (CE) implementation in sub-urban areas. The findings reveal that the three highest motivations for student volunteers are to gain proper organizational experience, make new friends, and use community activities for other personal benefits. The results of this study place the motivation to save the environment in fifth place out of the seven motivations measured. The findings are then analysed with relevant theories and studies to create an environmental community management concept that is expected to be able to facilitate both the personal goals of the volunteers and the common goals of the community.

1. Introduction

The participation of volunteers in the green community is one of many ways to create a green lifestyle among youth (Manik et al., 2021). Volunteering is generally associated with individuals willingly offering their time and skills to benefit society. However, there are instances where volunteer work may not be entirely voluntary. Here are a few examples of situations where volunteer work may not be entirely voluntary: (1) Mandatory Volunteerism, in some educational institutions or workplaces, volunteer work is a requirement for graduation, promotion, or other benefits. However, a study stated that although negative perceptions arise when students are forced to volunteer, after actually volunteering, most of them really like the experience and the experience of forced volunteering does not have a negative impact on voluntary intentions in the future (Henney et al., 2017). (2) Government Mandates, governments may institute mandatory community service programs, where individuals are required to engage in volunteer work as a condition of receiving certain benefits or to fulfil a legal obligation. It usually is found in the form of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs held by big corporates. In this case, CSR hard to distinguish from basic regulatory compliance and, hence, voluntarism does not necessarily lead to value creation (Dentchev et al., 2015). (3) Unpaid Internships, although not typically considered volunteer work, unpaid internships can blur the line between volunteering and mandatory work. In some cases, interns may be required to perform tasks that are essential to the organization's operations

without receiving fair compensation or educational benefits. Unpaid internship violates the principles of social representation and equality of outcomes especially in view of the fact that apprenticeships are usually undertaken in pursuit of high-status careers (Morrison, 2022).

Community empowerment can be realized in various programs (Priambodo et al., 2022), and one of them is through volunteering activities. Volunteering is a positive way to contribute to gain valuable experience (Sumihudiningsih et al., 2019). There are numerous opportunities available for students interested in environmental conservation, sustainability, and awareness campaigns. Some of them are joining an environmental community or organization online (Park & Yang, 2012) and offline (Curtis et al., 2013); engaging in tree planting initiatives (Elton et al., 2022; Moskell et al., 2011; Pike et al., 2020); assisting in wildlife conservation efforts (Scott & van Etten, 2013; Shum et al., 2023; Sujarittanonta, 2014); supporting sustainable agriculture initiatives (Niewolny et al., 2012; Sylvester et al., 2017; Tiraieyari & Krauss, 2018); educating others about environmental issues (Dlimbetova et al., 2019; Ongon et al., 2021); and volunteering with environmental advocacy groups (Cruz & Tantengco, 2017; M. F. Johnson et al., 2014).

A potential research gap in the field of student voluntary work could be focused on understanding the motivations and long-term benefits for students who engage in voluntary activities. While there is existing research on the positive effects of volunteering on individuals, there may be specific factors that influence student volunteers differently. The advance research findings of study revealed that youth volunteering only earns a psychological benefit only when it is done voluntarily regardless the fact that it does have a positive impact on educational attainment and even future earnings for both voluntary and involuntary youth service (Kim & Morgül, 2017). This sincerity issues lead us to deeper question: if it is not done voluntarily then what underlies them to do voluntary activities? Answering this question could provide a deeper understanding of student voluntary work, its benefits, and the factors that influence student participation. In terms of environmental voluntary activities, this knowledge can inform the development of effective strategies to promote and support student engagement in environmental volunteering, both within educational institutions and in the broader community.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Youth-Led organization theory*

To construct an extensive framework of positive youth development, a grand theory requires the integration of multiple theoretical orientations (Benson et al., 2006). The youth-led organization theory consists of at least three main theories which interconnected one to another, they are: human development, community organization and development, and social and community change.

2.1.1. Human Development. This theory explains that how does the capacity of young people to change fosters individual well-being and social goodness; how do contextual and ecological factors contribute to these changes; and, what are principles and mechanisms that essential to maximizing the dynamic and constructive interaction of individuals and contexts. The human development model is intended to have practical significance for mobilizing communities. Humans have several assets which are collected into 20 external assets and 20 internal assets (Benson, 2002). External assets degenerate into four categories: (1) support, including: family support, positive communication within the family, relationships with other adults, good neighbours, good school climate, and parental involvement in education; (2) empowerment, including the value of the youth community, youth as a resource, community service, security, family ties, school ties, neighbourly ties; (3) boundaries and expectations, including: adult role models, positive peer influence, and high expectations; and (4) constructive use of time. Meanwhile, internal assets have four categories: (1) commitment to learning, including: achievement motivation, school involvement, homework, bond with school, willingness to read, caring, equality and social justice; (2) positive values include: integrity, honesty, responsibility, self-restraint, planning and decision-making, interpersonal competence, and cultural competence; (3) social competence, which includes survival skills, peaceful conflict resolution, and personal strength, and (4) positive identity, which includes self-esteem, goals and a positive view of personal future.

2.1.2 Community Organization and Development. Community institutions influence youth development, but their presence is underappreciated (Wynn, 1997 in Benson et al., 2006). Youth participation in community institutions is voluntary because youth have the right to choose their participation, what they will do and how their participation will be. The organization ideally provides opportunities for young people to take initiative and participate actively. Examples of organizations youth can join include arts groups and extracurricular programs, sports clubs; community service groups and youth entrepreneurship;

and community libraries, museums, and the like. Youth support can best function when the surrounding environment strengthens and connects other sectors, especially family, school, health services, and other services. The main factor that is important for the effectiveness of youth organizations is high expectations; group problem solving; concrete products and performances; prospects for progress and expanded opportunities; adults act as caregivers, catalysts, and coaches; membership; availability and continuity; respect and reciprocity; and investments made by adults.

2.1.3 Social and Community Change. The third formulation in a comprehensive theory of positive youth development focuses on processes, strategies, and tactics that can directly or indirectly change contexts and communities (Benson et al., 2006). Change is a complex endeavour. Therefore, a comprehensive theory of change is needed to guide research and efforts to create change. Benson et al (Benson et al., 2003) suggest five synergistic strategies for community change. These five strategies, when adapted to the context of building a waste-aware student community in a tertiary institution, are: (1) involving adults: adult communities build sustainable relationships and build youth assets; (2) mobilizing youth involvement: youth use their capacities by building networks of peers in activities that help improve the quality of their communities; (3) activating the sector around youth to support community activities; (4) strengthening community programs, including regular programs, weekend events, and holiday events; and (5) influencing community decisions regarding financial, leadership, media, and policy resources so that they can be mobilized to support and sustain the transformation required in points 1, 2, 3, and 4 previously mentioned.

2.2. Environmental Volunteering Motives

Volunteers play critical roles in empowering society by leading environmental protection activities to address the environmental crisis. Some studies have explored the aspects that inspire individuals to participate in various environment voluntary actions. Measham & Barnett (Measham & Barnett, 2008) proposed six factors motivating volunteers to take part of environmental activities, including (1) contributing to community; (2) social interaction; (3) personal development; (4) learning about the environment; (5) a general ethic of care for the environment; (6) an attachment to a particular place. These findings are related to a study that placed helping the environment and enhancing personal use of the environment on the first and second motivation of environmental volunteers before then listed other factor, such as: furthering career goals, engaging in social

interactions, having opportunities for learning, being involved in effective projects, and expressing values and esteem (Jacobson et al., 2012). Recently, it is stated that the two most important reasons for volunteer participation in a novel experiment in Mexico was their interest in learning and their values or sense of responsibility for the environment (Shinbrot et al., 2023).

Interestingly, environmental issues are also marginally significant in other studies. Asah & Blahna (Asah & Blahna, 2012) stated that volunteers' frequency of participation is most motivated by personal and social benefits rather than by environment-related reasons. A majority of the volunteers had previously taken part in environmental education, however, only a small number of them practice it personally (Liarakou et al., 2011).

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Study context

This study employed a case-oriented understanding methodology with the objective of comprehending a phenomenon through the participant's perspective. The case-oriented understanding approach aligns with an interpretive research philosophy, eschewing the identification of causes and instead offering an alternative means of elucidating social phenomena (Pratama & Mukhlis, 2023). The current study was conducted in Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNES), Central Java, Indonesia, which is a state university with conservatory vision. We established a community named Komunals which stands for "Komunitas Nol Sampah" (Zero-Waste Community) to promote a zero-waste life style using Circular Economy (CE) concept among students in UNNES. After two months of online campaign, we invited youth in Semarang City to contribute in our activities through voluntary programs. The open recruitment for volunteers was open during 1st -17th May 2023 and as many as 20 people were registered in our program, including UNNES students, UNNES alumni, and youth who living around UNNES who have been working in different workplaces within Semarang City.

3.2. Study design

Using online questionnaire, we surveyed 20 people registered in Komunals voluntary program. The instrument to measure volunteers' motivation was adopted from Bruyere & Rappe (Bruyere & Rappe, 2007) who developed a total of seven factors influencing volunteer motivation, including: help the environment; career; user; learning; social; project organization; and values and

esteem. Respondents were asked to choose 37 motivational statements for volunteers, such as ‘concern for the environment’ or ‘make contacts that might help career’. Additional survey items addressed demographic information (age, education level, etc.) and frequency of volunteering. The paper uses conceptual content analysis to examine the occurrence of each motivation indicator in the data set, measure validity and reliability, and identify means of each motivation indicator to justify the order of volunteers’ motivations registered the Komunals voluntary program.

4. Results

Registrars consist of 8 males and 12 females and mostly in the range of age 19-25 years old (80.0%) and are studying as undergraduate program students in UNNES (75.0%). The detail of respondent’s demographic characteristics can be seen in Table 1.

Gender	%	Age	%	Education	%	Info	%	Team	%	Skills	%
Male	40	19-20	30	Undergraduate	75	IG	35	Waste	35	Waste Sorting	40
Female	60	21-22	25	Postgraduate	35	Friend	40	BSF larvae	30	BSF farming	0
		23-24	25	Professional	15	Lecturer	25	Social Media	35	Organizing	90
		>25	20							Writing	30
										Photographing	30
										Graphic design	15
										Arts	5
										Act	5
										Video graphing	2
										Social media adm	2
										Other	5

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

On the basis of Table 1, almost all registrars have experienced to be a member some organization (90%) and have knowledge about how to sort waste (40%). Some of them also have skills in writing (30%) and photography (30%), and

graphic design (15%) which will significantly support the community programs. Other skills including arts, act, social media administrator can also become great resources for the community, even though no one have been experiencing Black Soldier Fly (BSF) larvae farming to transform organic waste into BSF larvae as animal feed which is the main project of Komunals. The community offer three main projects for volunteers, they are: (1) waste inspection squad (waste); (2) farming squad (BSF larvae); and (3) administrator squad (social media). The distribution of volunteer interest in the tasks offered by the community is quite even. The postgraduate students and professionals tend to choose a remote job, such as social media administrator, while undergraduate students like to involve directly as the waste inspection squad and farming squad.

Table 2 provides information about factors influencing volunteer in registering as Komunals volunteers. As was stated before, there were 37 statements that can be chosen as the motivation of volunteers joining this community, which are sorted into seven main motives, including help the environment, career, user, learning, social, project organization, values and esteem. Registrars were instructed that it is possible to choose more than one statement as long as their choices can be best reflected their true motivations in joining Komunals.

5. Discussion

The finding of current study reveals that interestingly, ‘help the environment’ is not the first motivation of youth to register themselves as Komunals volunteers. The highest score of motivation is gained by ‘project organization’ motive (12.000), with the highest statement chosen by the respondents is respectively: be part of a well-organized project (90%); work with a good leader (50%); and know what is expected of me (40%). Some studies support that being part of a well-organized project can indeed be a motivating factor for students to volunteer since this kind of project has clear objectives (De Clerck et al., 2021), effective structure and planning (Joseph & Carolissen, 2022), professional development opportunities and develop wide collaboration and networking (J. E. Johnson et al., 2017). Meanwhile, being a volunteer under a great leader can be motivating for students due to the inspiration and guidance they provide (Dwyer et al., 2013), including the opportunity to learn from their experience, positive role modelling, building confidence and self-belief. The expectation towards leaders may vary personally. Therefore, it is recommended to communicate openly with the project leader to get a clear understanding of volunteers’ expectations. Effective communication plays a pivotal role within the group dynamic, influencing decision-making processes, shaping attitudes, and

Statements	Rf(N)	Rf (%)	Mean	SD
Help the Environment			9.857	3.024
Concern for the environment	15	75		
Protecting natural areas from disappearing	6	30		
Do something for a cause that is important to m	7	35		
See improvements to the environment	9	45		
Ensure future of natural areas for my enjoyment	10	50		
Help restore natural areas	12	60		
Help preserve natural areas for future generation	10	50		
Career			8.800	4.919
Get a foot in the door at a place where I would like to work	4	20		
Make contacts that might help career	17	85		
Explore possible career options	7	35		
Experience will look good on resume	9	45		
Help me succeed in chosen profession	7	35		
User			10.333	6.506
Allow me to work on an area where I visit	4	20		
Enrich my future recreation experiences	17	85		
Enhance the activities I enjoy doing	10	50		
Learning			9.500	6.137
Learn about specific animals	5	25		
Learn about specific plants	4	20		
Learn about environment	17	85		
Observe Nature	12	60		
Social			10.750	4.924
Meet new people	17	85		
Work with friends	11	55		
See familiar faces	5	25		
Have fun	10	50		
Project Organization			12.000	5.291
Work with a good leader	10	50		
Know what is expected of me	8	40		
Be part of a well-organized project	18	90		
Values and Esteem			10.000	4.243
Feel better about myself	15	75		
To express my values through my work	7	35		
Feel needed	6	30		
To live closely to my values	12	60		

Table 2. Factors Influencing Volunteers' Motivation

contributing to human behaviour in the formulation of decisions (Thamrin Tahir et al., 2020).

Acknowledging the extensive history of engaging volunteers in environmental management is crucial, as changes in their motivations are significantly shaped by various factors such as structural factors and cultural values (Grönlund et al.,

2011). Structural factors include the political system, democratic history, the presence of a welfare state, economic development level, income distribution, and the age and ethnic composition of the population. Cultural aspects encompass values such as individualism, religiosity, and trust prevalent within a country.

In terms of political system and democratic history, engaging in formal volunteer activities for organizations or associations has a longer history in Western Europe. However, in Central and Eastern Europe, it emerged as a new phenomenon in the late 1980s and early 1990s following the collapse of the communist regime. Under communist rule, volunteering was mandatory for both children and adults, contributing to a less developed culture of volunteerism in the region compared to Western Europe (Sillo, 2016). Currently, the state of volunteerism in Central and Eastern Europe is evolving, with efforts to establish and promote a more robust volunteer culture, catching up with the longstanding tradition observed in Western European countries. Countries with a more extended history of democratic governance, such as Belgium, Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, the UK, and the US, tend to have a more robust voluntary sector. In contrast, transitional democracies like Croatia and Korea, along with communist countries like China and Croatia, generally exhibit a comparatively weaker presence in the voluntary sector.

Concerning the existence of a welfare state, in the early 21st century, faced with significant constraints, particularly in terms of funding and advanced technology tools, for cataloguing their natural resources, the government and scientists witnessed a surge in popularity of the environmental volunteer movement. The government in Australia, UK, USA, and Canada actively endorsed and supported this movement as a means to overcome limitations in resource allocation for comprehensive natural wealth inventories (Measham & Barnett, 2008). Volunteers played roles such as collecting botanical specimens and engaging in monitoring initiatives like bird-banding programs.

It's important to note that volunteer rates are cyclical and contingent on social and cultural changes. Events that serve as national traumas, such as wars, natural disasters, and the 9/11 attacks, can significantly impact volunteerism trends (Chambré, 2020). These occurrences often spark heightened civic engagement, leading to fluctuations in volunteer rates as societies respond to changing circumstances and priorities. In terms of culture, the variation in volunteering across different cultures could be attributed to communication anxiety (Stojcic et al., 2016). Individuals with a genotype linked to increased social anxiety may choose a less risky course of action when faced with uncertainty if they perceive

prosocial behaviour, such as providing assistance, as uncertain or potentially risky (Stoltenberg et al., 2011). In a parallel context, religious involvement consistently showed a significant association with heightened volunteering across diverse types and domains. The extent of this effect varied based on the specific types and domains considered, and even after accounting for various socio-demographic and denominational factors, indicating that the impact of background characteristics on volunteering is more intricate than previously recognized (Yeung, 2017).

Meanwhile, age matters significantly in understanding volunteer motivations, as younger individuals are primarily driven by the desire to foster interpersonal relationships and achieve relational outcomes, while older volunteers are more significantly motivated by a sense of service and community obligation (Omoto et al., 2000). Young volunteers may be more interested in the organization of a project rather than the specific goal of the community itself. It happens because young volunteers may see project organizations as platforms for personal development and growth (Han et al., 2019; Magrizos et al., 2021). Engaging in well-organized projects exposes them to new challenges, leadership roles, and opportunities to develop important skills such as problem-solving, communication, and teamwork. The structure and organization of a project can provide a supportive environment for their personal growth. However, it is important to note that while the project organization may initially attract young volunteers, the specific goal of the community and the impact of their work should still be meaningful to them (Measham & Barnett, 2008). The organization's effectiveness in communicating the importance of the community's goal and the impact of their volunteer work can further engage and motivate young volunteers to contribute to the specific cause. It is in line with the concept of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) that emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Sheldon et al., 2022). By designing volunteer roles and activities that align with volunteers' interests, provide opportunities for skill development and growth, and foster a sense of connection with others in the community, you can enhance their motivation and engagement.

The second highest motive of volunteers registered in Komunals is social motive (10.750), which said that volunteers want to join the community because they want to meet new people, work with friends, see familiar faces, and have fun. Volunteering in a community setting provides opportunities to meet new people and expand social networks. It allows volunteers to connect with individuals who

share similar interests, values, and passions. This phenomenon can be explained by social exchange theory which highlights the importance of reciprocity and mutual benefits in social relationships (Lai et al., 2020). In the context of volunteer management, creating a supportive and inclusive environment where volunteers feel valued, acknowledged, and rewarded for their contributions can strengthen their commitment to the community's goals. Building connections and forming friendships within the community can create a sense of belonging and fulfilment (Allen, 2020). Volunteering with friends can be a fun and rewarding experience. It allows volunteers to strengthen their existing friendships while also working together towards a common goal. Having familiar faces around can create a supportive and comfortable environment, enhancing the overall volunteering experience. It is important for volunteer organizations to recognize the significance of these social aspects and create opportunities for volunteers to connect, collaborate, and have fun while contributing to the community's goals. By fostering a supportive and inclusive environment that values social connections and enjoyment, volunteer organizations can attract and retain enthusiastic volunteers (Worker et al., 2020).

Creating an environmental community management concept that effectively balances the personal goals of volunteers with the common goals of the community requires a thoughtful approach. There may not be a specific theory or study that provides a comprehensive framework for this concept. However, further discussion could get insights from various theories and research related to community engagement, motivation, and goal alignment, such as: (1) transformational leadership which focuses on inspiring and empowering others to achieve their potential by providing a clear vision, fostering a sense of trust and respect, and offering mentorship and guidance (Wilson, 2013); (2) participatory decision-making concept that encourages to involve volunteers in decision-making processes related to the environmental community in order to enhance their sense of ownership and commitment (Jerome et al., 2017); and (3) positive psychology which focuses on promoting positive emotions, strengths, and virtues (Mills et al., 2017). Applying positive psychology principles in environmental community management involves creating opportunities for volunteers to experience positive emotions, such as joy and gratitude, while engaging in meaningful activities.

6. Conclusion

Understanding students' motivations as volunteers in youth environmental communities is crucial for fostering active participation and creating sustainable change. The current study reveals that saving the environment is not always the primary motivation for volunteers in environmental projects. While the overarching goal of environmental conservation is crucial, volunteers often have a diverse range of motivations that drive their engagement. The motivation of registrars to join as environmental community members in this study based on the order from highest to lowest is as follows: project organization, social, user, values and esteems, help the environment, learning, and career. Theories and concepts discussed provide valuable insights, it is essential to adapt and tailor them to the specific context of managing an environmental community.

This study is subject to certain limitations inherent in its methodology. Primarily, the reliance on reviewing existing literature and research may restrict the depth of original data collection. Additionally, the use of a small sample size and the examination of only one geographical area limit the generalizability of the findings. Despite the limitations, it is crucial to emphasize that the findings in this research offer valuable insights. While the study may be considered an initial phase with a small sample size and limited geographical scope, the promising results obtained provide a foundation for future exploration. These insights, though preliminary, adds meaningful value to the existing body of knowledge and represents a valuable starting point for continued investigation and advancement in the field. Future research should explore cross-cultural variations in students' motivations for environmental volunteerism, conduct longitudinal studies on volunteer retention, and incorporate qualitative methods for a deeper understanding. Additionally, investigations into emerging trends, intervention studies for motivational enhancement, and expanding the geographical scope with diverse samples will further contribute to refining strategies for sustainable youth-driven environmental initiatives.

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