

To Volunteer or Not to Volunteer: The Case of Malaysian Public Service Retirees¹

SURJIT SINGH S/O UTTAM SINGH, RAHIM M. SAIL, BAHAMAN ABU SAMAH,
RAJA AHMAD TAJUDIN SHAH & LINDA A. LUMAYAG

Institute for Community and Peace Studies

Universiti Putra Malaysia

43400 UPM Serdang, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia

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ABSTRAK

Terdapat ribuan pesara peringkat atasan, pengurusan dan profesional (PMP) sektor perkhidmatan awam Malaysia, di mana, selepas persaraan mandatori pada umur 55 atau 56 tahun, dapat menyumbang kepada komuniti dengan meningkatkan indeks kelanjutan usia bagi lelaki dan wanita di Malaysia. Kertas kerja ini cuba untuk menjelaskan perbezaan antara pesara sukarelawan dan bukan sukarelawan dengan mengambil kira peranan faktor psikososial dan altruistik, dan apakah perbezaan ini dapat membantu dalam memotivasikan pesara untuk terlibat dalam kerja sukarela untuk pembangunan masyarakat Malaysia. Dimensi psikososial termasuk persekitaran, gaya hidup, personaliti dan sumber manakala altruistik pula melibatkan pemahaman yang mendalam, timbal balas dan spiritual. *Independent sample t-test* telah digunakan untuk mengenal pasti sama ada terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan bagi pemboleh ubah psikososial dan altruistik dengan sukarelawan dan bukan sukarelawan. Hasil kajian mendapati terdapat perbezaan yang signifikan antara sukarelawan dan bukan sukarelawan dengan melihat kesan psikososial dan altruistik. Ia juga mendapati sukarelawan adalah lebih altruistik dan faktor psikososialnya banyak mempengaruhi kecenderungan sukarelawan untuk memberi perkhidmatan sukarela kepada komuniti.

ABSTRACT

There are thousands of retirees from the Premier and Managerial and Professional (PMP) group of the Malaysian Public Service who, after the mandatory retirement at the age of fifty-five or fifty-six, could contribute to the community gleaned from an improved longevity index for both male and female Malaysians in the recent years. This article attempted to decipher the difference between volunteer and non-volunteer retirees as far as the role of psychosocial and altruistic factors are concerned and what this difference would imply as far as motivating other retirees to engage in the voluntary work for the development of the Malaysian society. The psychosocial dimension includes the environment, lifestyle, personality and resources while altruism includes empathy, reciprocity and spirituality. Independent sample t-test was used to determine whether there was a significant difference for the psychosocial variables and altruism between the volunteers and non-volunteers. Findings of the study revealed that there was a significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers by looking at the effects of both psychosocial and altruism further indicating that these volunteers were more altruistic and whose psychosocial factors greatly influenced the volunteers' propensity to render voluntary service to the community.

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INTRODUCTION

Retirees play a significant role in volunteerism. Various studies have been carried out on the different aspects of volunteerism among the older people and the common feature that arises is that volunteerism is an indicator of a healthy lifestyle (Hart 2002). Gillette (1998) also argues that volunteering enriches life and because life is enriched, the ageing process is more successful. The common belief is that retirement is marked by the drastic changes in lifestyle and productivity. However, studies have also shown that the elderly who maintain their activity levels similar to their middle years is called the "successful ageing" and one way to do that is to render socially useful services (Gillette 1998). In fact, Gillette adds that volunteers are motivated to render useful services because of the empowerment and personal affirmation that people receive. It is believed that volunteerism helps develop a more positive attitude and healthier outlook. As Hart Research Associates (2002) further suggests:

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 (Hart 2002).

Volunteerism is as old as human civilization itself and it exists in various forms and dimensions. As observed in other countries, it seems that the level of volunteerism is viewed in relation to which a certain society achieves a higher sense of civic consciousness. As studies would have shown, volunteerism is a socially defined action that bears the society's basic sense of value towards other human beings, as most motivation for volunteering points to a strong "desire to help others" and it can be formal, informal or ad hoc. Formal volunteering comes in the form of formal "enlistment" to an organized group or institution with a well-defined social structure, role and function. In contrast, informal volunteering is engaging in voluntary action outside the domain of organized group or charitable organizations. This includes

extending help to an extended family or neighbourhood such as child-care, care to a dependent member of the family, etc. Fischer *et al.* (1991), as cited in Michel (2003), provide a tripartite conceptualisation, suggesting that volunteering includes unpaid work for organizations (formal volunteering), unpaid assistance in one's neighbourhood (informal volunteering) and helping kin (personal volunteering). Models of the characteristic and determinants for volunteerism among the volunteers and non-volunteers have been developed by researchers such as Chambre' (1987) and Herzog and Morgan (1993).

In this particular study, a limited definition of volunteerism is adopted, as follows:

Volunteerism is an act of providing unpaid service or help regularly or occasionally in the form of time, service or skill to a non-government, non-profit formal organization (e.g. societies, community, welfare, educational, political party, service clubs) by retirees from the public service who may or may not be engaged in paid jobs for other organizations, during their retirement life. The term does not include informal voluntary work of care-giving or helping of individuals on the one-to-one basis, in the form of service or charity, among friends and relatives on a long term or temporary period of time.

In this article, the involvement of volunteers is measured in terms of time contributed, the responsibility held and the number of organization served for voluntary service rendered by the volunteers. A lot of people view voluntary work as a source of both satisfaction and benefits, just as in any work organization. People volunteer because of the psychological benefits, the attainment of self-esteem, higher energy, and healthier attitudes to ageing and lower levels of depression. Fischer and Schaffer (1993) revealed that pertinent reasons for volunteering included the gesture of helping others, contribution to community, feeling useful, a worthwhile course, religious concern, self-development, using free time, meaningful work and good feeling. The 1991 Commonwealth Fund survey

also provided some cues to the potential for activating volunteerism by identifying some major barriers such as employment and family obligations, health and lack of knowledge of good volunteer opportunities while, personal expenses incurred, lack of skills, lack of transportation and the belief that people should be paid for their work were considered minor barriers. These factors are supported in studies by Chambre' (1987), Okun (1993), Smith (1994), and Hergoz and Morgan (1993).

PSYCHOSOCIAL ATTRIBUTES AND ALTRUISM

Studies have shown that personal attributes in the form of beliefs and attitudes, needs and motives, and personality characteristics are consistent and relatively strong predictors of volunteering and related behaviours (such as organizational citizenship behaviour-voluntary prosocial behaviour performed by employees or large businesses and organizations (see Borman and Penner 2001).

Altruism has been a bone of contention among many researchers and continues to be to this day. Altruism has been variously conceptualised overtime as hard-core altruism, helping behaviour, emphatic concern, reciprocity or exchange behaviour, extrinsic reward expectation, or intrinsic desire (Batson 1991). This is supported by the above findings that the attributes can fall into three different components or nuances of altruism. This multi-dimensional concept has been contradicted by Cnaan *et al.* (1991) whose research directed towards a uni-dimensional model. Sorokin (1948) suggests that the intensity of altruism ranges from a minor act of sympathy, perhaps motivated by the "expectation of pleasure or profit, to the boundless, all-giving, and all-forgiving love formulated in the Sermon of the Mount. Between these poles, specific forms of intensity show friendliness, kindness, benevolence, compassion, loyalty, devotion, respect, admiration, reverence, adoration and infatuation (p. 61). At the top of the intensity scale of altruists are the persons the scope of

whose love is widest, being coterminous with the whole universe and God; the intensity of whose love is highest; whose love is wisest and most creative, and whose acts are motivated only by love itself, continuous and durable (p. 61). In a U.S. study on the predictors of volunteerism among older persons (Peters-Davis *et al.* 2001 as cited in Lewis 2000), it indicated that personality traits alone could not determine their propensity to volunteering work; it proposed that a rather relevant factor could be the role of altruism in studying volunteerism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Sample

The sample consisted of 261 Malaysian retirees who had retired between 1989 and 2000 and represented the various states in the country. The study was restricted to the experienced and educated members of the Public Service of Malaysia, and this particular group would have been involved in the implementation of the Five-Year Malaysia Development Plans during their working life in the establishment. With their broad view of the socio-economic development, they would have great potential for volunteerism during the retirement years.

Data Collection

As the study was spread throughout the country, the mailed survey approach was used for collecting data. A 215 item-instrument was developed and pre-tested before it was mailed to 576 subjects with 261 (45.3%) completed questionnaires returned. The variables for the research were selected from the literature review and from the preliminary interview conducted in the earlier part of the research process. A Cronbach Alpha test was carried out to test the reliability of the instrument.

Data Analysis

The data analyses were carried out using descriptive and inferential statistics. Independent sample t-test was also used to determine whether there was a significant difference between the volunteers and non-

volunteers for both psychosocial and altruism dimensions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings were based on the analysis of a nation-wide mail survey of the retirees from the Malaysian Public Service. It should be noted that due to the paucity of the local research studies done on retirees and volunteerism, most of the comparison will reflect those situation in advanced countries like the United States, Australia and Canada. The comparative literature was selected mostly from the sources outside the country where the profile of retirees was generally different in age, culture, context and environment from that of the Malaysian retirees. The discussion would therefore be substantiated wherever possible with the findings from the exploratory interviews held with some local retirees selected from the sample frame; newspaper articles and comments shared by the respondents in the survey questionnaires. Pertinent aspects of the findings are discussed with reference to relevant data.

Socio-demographic Profile of Volunteer and Non-Volunteer Retirees

The findings provided a snapshot of the characteristic profile of the population under study. From the 261 respondents 52.1% (136) were found to be involved in voluntary work during 2003; with the remaining 47.9% (125) were non-volunteers as shown in Table 1.

The non-volunteer female retirees only accounted for 8.8% across the races. The distribution of the respondents based on their gender indicated a highly disproportionate number of the male professional and managerial civil servants in Malaysia alluding to the observation that women occupied a negligible or insignificant number in Malaysian public service thereby reinforcing the fact that only a few women could advance their career and professional interests brought about by institutionalised constraints (see for example, Jamilah 1996; Maimunah 2003; Aminah 2003) to their professional growth. It reflects the legitimisation of social processes

TABLE 1
Socio-demographic characteristics of the retirees

Characteristics	Volunteer (n=136) %	Non-Volunteer (n=125) %
Gender		
Male	82.4	91.2
Female	17.6	8.8
Race		
Malay	66.8	50.4
Chinese	17.8	35.2
Indian	8.8	11.2
Kadazan	1.5	.8
Iban	.7	.8
Others	4.4	1.6
Educational Qualification		
HSC/Diploma	12.5	20.2
Bachelor's Degree	55.9	49.2
Master's Degree	16.1	16.1
Doctorate or equiv.	3.7	.8
Professional/Technical	5.9	3.2
Others	5.9	10.5
Residence/Location		
Peninsular M'sia	70.6	68.8
Sabah	5.9	7.2
Sarawak	6.6	6.4
Federal Territories	16.9	17.6
Marital Status		
Married (with children)	89.0	91.2
Married (no children)	2.2	3.2
Single (widowed, Divorced, separated)	4.4	3.2
Never married	4.4	1.6
Religion		
Islam	68.4	50.4
Buddhism	8.1	15.2
Christianity	15.4	13.6
Hinduism	5.2	8.0
Non-believer	.7	6.4
Other	2.2	6.4

that women may not have to occupy higher positions in the organization as they primarily perform feminine roles in the society. The predominance of the Malay retirees is explained by the fact that a greater majority of the past and present civil service are Malays. A majority of the retirees, both volunteers and non-volunteers, had finished their bachelor's

TABLE 2
Percentage distribution of respondents according to year of retirement

Year of Retirement	Volunteer (n=136)	Non-volunteer (n=125)	Overall (n=261)
Earlier Retirees	(n=44)	(n=39)	
1989	3.7	3.2	2.7
1990	5.1	.8	2.3
1991	2.9	10.4	6.5
1992	5.1	2.4	3.8
1993	7.4	4.0	5.7
1994	8.1	10.4	10.0
Total	32.3	31.2	31.0
Later Retirees	(n=92)	(n=86)	
1995	8.1	8.0	8.8
1996	2.9	8.8	5.7
1997	6.6	8.8	7.7
1998	10.3	8.8	9.6
1999	13.2	17.6	15.3
2000	26.4	16.8	21.8
Total	67.5	68.8	69.0

degree (55.9% and 49.2%, respectively) with a few volunteers finished their doctorate studies. On the average, 90% of the retirees are married with children with the non-volunteers have more number of married retirees (91.2%).

In terms of the number of dependent children, the volunteer-retirees have more dependent children (50.7%) compared to the non-volunteer-retirees (39.2%). In relation to having dependent parents, these volunteer-retirees have to combine parenthood with taking care of dependent parents (27.2%) while the non-volunteers account for about 21.6%.

It is noted that both the volunteer and non-volunteer retirees did not consider finance as a problem as reflected in the way they viewed their own financial standing during their retirement. More than one-half of the respondents have satisfactory financial status, 56.6% and 69.9% for volunteers and non-volunteers, respectively. This can be explained by the fact that more than one-half of the respondents are also engaged in either full-time, part-time or self-employment. It is also interesting to note that in as much as half of the retirees are working to generate income,

another half is also spending their time freely. When this is analysed in relation to the financial status of the two groups of respondents, it can be inferred that both have particularly prepared their retirement life considering the resources they have at their disposal i.e. time and money, which is also contrary to what the mainstream media have suggested that retirees are facing some financial and health problems during their retirement, although this contention needs to be supported by hard facts on the status of other retirees from the rank-and-file of the Malaysian public service. The health status of volunteer and non-volunteer respondents was also commendable considering that more than 90% have either excellent, good or satisfactory health condition with as low as 5% claiming that their health was not satisfactory with the onset of age-related diseases like arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, etc. In Foner's opinion the "most important correlates of satisfaction with retirement are health and money" (1983:74).

Still within the domain of socio-demographic characteristics of the retirees, Table 2 shows the distribution of these retirees over a twelve-year period classified into "earlier

retirees" i.e. before 1995 and "later retirees" i.e. after 1995. It was found that among the volunteer group there were 32.3% 'earlier retirees' and 67.5% 'later retirees'. As for the non-volunteers the ratio was 31.2% and 68.8% respectively. Overall, there were 31.0% (82) 'earlier retirees' and 69.0% (179) 'later retirees' within the two groups.

It is noted that in America, every second adult serves as a volunteer (The Independent Sector 2001) but that does not seem to be the situation in Malaysia. It is observed that the participation among the seniors is 32.3% half of that seen among the later retirees. This can be related to the increase in the number of Premier and Managerial and Professional (PMP) retirees over the period (i.e. 1989-2000) with 1004 in 1989 to 2122 in 2000 and also the decrease in mortality rate in the later period (4.6/1000 in 1995 and 4.4/100 in 2000). This trend can be associated with disengagement theory of successful adjustment and gradual withdrawal from the active life in society with the advancement in age. It operates on the basis of the functional premise that the individual and society seek to maintain equilibrium (Cumming and Henry 1961 as cited in Lo and Brown 1999).

DIFFERENCES IN THE MEANS OF TWO GROUPS (VOLUNTEERS AND NON-VOLUNTEERS)

Psychosocial Variables

Independent sample t-test was carried out to determine the significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for the four major components of psychosocial dimension, namely, environment, life style, personality and resources. The results are shown in Table 3 where there were significant differences between the volunteers and non-volunteers for lifestyle ($t = 1.964, p \leq 0.05$) and resources ($t = 5.532, p \leq 0.05$). When we look at the individual items of lifestyle, only one item i.e. contact with friends ($t = 2.768, p \leq 0.05$) was found to differ significantly for volunteers and non-volunteers. In the case of resources, there was a significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for generative concern ($t =$

4.154, $p \leq 0.05$), spirituality ($t = 4.293, p \leq 0.05$), family upbringing ($t = 3.666, p \leq 0.05$) and psychological well being ($t = 4.054, p \leq 0.05$). The ETA square (η^2) was calculated and interpreted, as recommended by Cohen (1998), to describe the effect size of the selected variables and its components.

Among the variables, 'resources' has a moderate effect size ($\eta^2 = .10$). Generative concern explained 8%, followed by psychological well-being (5.6%) and spirituality (5.4%). The rest of the variables have small contribution towards the variance. There is a glaring difference between the variables 'resources' and the other three variables in their effects on volunteerism on volunteers and non-volunteers. This could be attributed to the personal experiences of the volunteers as manifested by the high scores for all the components. It could also indicate lesser concern for the components of resources by the non-volunteer retirees.

ALTRUISTIC CHARACTERISTICS AMONG THE RETIREES

Seventeen items describing the attributes of altruistic persons were selected to describe the dimension of altruism as shown in Table 6. Both the volunteer and non-volunteer retirees were asked to assess the accuracy of each attribute/characteristic as it applied to them. The volunteer and the non-volunteer retirees were agreeable on the first five of the same attributes as shown below, the sixth (f) and seventh (g) are for volunteers and non-volunteers, respectively:

- a. To you helping act is a sense of social responsibility.
- b. You believe that helping is serving God
- c. You have an internal desire to help without expectations of any reward or reciprocity.
- d. You feel that you have a moral obligation to render help to those in difficulty or need.
- e. You have concern for welfare of others.
- f. You are spiritually motivated to help other humans.
- g. You are inclined to feel the events of happiness or pain experienced by another person.

TABLE 3
Mean difference between volunteer and non-volunteer respondents towards psychosocial variables and their components

Variables	Mean		t	p	η^2
	Volunteer (n=136)	Non-Volunteer (n=125)			
Environment					
Community integration	4.07	4.11	-.622	.535	.001
Neighbourhood affiliation	3.75	3.69	.944	.346	.003
Neighbourhood quality	4.08	3.96	1.681	.094	.011
Overall	3.97	3.92	.897	.371	.003
Lifestyle					
Contact with family	3.84	3.78	.736	.462	.002
Contact with friends	3.04	2.85	2.768	.006	.029
Overall	3.44	3.31	1.964	.051	.015
Personality					
Agreeableness	3.69	3.68	.276	.782	.000
Conscientiousness	3.91	3.88	.351	.726	.001
Neuroticism/emotion	3.70	3.64	1.070	.286	.004
Extraversion	3.74	3.57	2.489	.013	.026
Openness to experience	3.57	3.54	.496	.620	.001
Overall	3.72	3.67	1.134	.258	.007
Resources					
Generative concern	3.80	3.50	4.514	.000	.080
Spirituality	4.27	3.91	4.239	.000	.054
Family upbringing	4.28	4.03	3.666	.000	.042
Psychological well-being	4.00	3.74	4.054	.000	.056
Overall	4.07	3.77	5.532	.000	.107

It was also observed that all the percentage scores for the volunteers were higher than those for non-volunteers. The attributes considered 'not at all accurate' to the volunteers and non-volunteers were the same as shown below:

- To giving is receiving (33.1% and 29.6%)
- Helping others enhances you self-esteem (30.9% and 24.0%)
- You would help if the value of outcome of the consequence of the service rendered will be positive (35.3% and 33.6%).
- Helping others makes you look good in the eyes of others (44.9% and 39.2%).
- To you doing good is an investment for return of good from others (50.0% and 48.0%).
- Your priority to help depends on the closeness of the relationship or

acquaintance of the person needing your service (50.0% and 36.0%).

The percentage scores indicated that these attributes would be less applicable to the PMP group of Malaysian retirees. It meant that the retirees were not motivated by expectation of rewards, increasing self-esteem or reciprocity for service given. From the comparison of the high scores and low scores, the third category of the characteristics is observed with moderate scores. This category ranges from 41.9% to 77.2% for volunteers and 37.6 to 65.6% for non-volunteers. In this study, these three categories make up the three components of the continuum of altruism related to empathy, reciprocity and spirituality.

The scores on the level of altruism in Table 5 suggest that among the three components, empathy has the highest mean of 3.93 with

TABLE 4
Percentage distribution by dimensions of altruism items

Altruism Items	Volunteer			Non-Volunteer		
	NA %	SA %	VA %	NA %	SA %	VA %
Empathy						
You have concern for welfare of others	0	18.4	81.6	0	31.2	68.8
You have an internal desire to help without expectations of any reward or reciprocity.	0	13.2	86.7	.8	27.2	72.0
You are inclined to feel the events of happiness or pain experienced by another person.	0.7	22.1	77.2	1.6	32.8	65.6
You have the capacity to empathize the emotions of suffering experienced by another person.	0.7	27.9	71.3	2.4	40.0	57.6
You have a yearning to contribute to the community.	2.2	25.7	72.1	6.4	40.0	53.6
To you the helping act is a sense of social responsibility.	0	8.8	91.1	2.4	25.6	72.0
You feel that you have the moral obligation to render help to those in difficulty or need.	2.2	13.2	84.5	4.0	28.0	68.0
Reciprocity						
Helping others makes you look good in the eyes of others.	44.9	28.7	26.5	39.2	40.0	20.8
To you doing good is an investment for return of good from others.	50.0	27.2	22.8	48.0	32.8	19.2
Helping others enhances your self-esteem.	30.9	29.4	39.8	24.0	43.2	32.8
The act of helping others will depend on the situation.	19.1	39.0	41.9	13.6	48.8	37.6
You would help if the value or outcome of the consequence of the service rendered will be positive.	35.3	33.8	30.8	33.6	42.4	24.0
Your priority to help depend on the closeness of the relationship or acquaintance of the person needing your service.	50.0	34.6	15.4	36.0	38.4	25.6
Spirituality						
You believe that helping is serving God.	3.0	7.4	89.7	12.8	18.4	68.8
You are spiritually motivated to help other humans.	1.4	16.2	82.3	10.4	29.6	60.0
To you service is a preparation for the hereafter.	8.1	23.5	68.4	6.4	40.0	53.6
To you 'giving is receiving'.	33.1	25.0	41.9	29.6	33.6	36.8

NA=Not at all accurate SA=Some what accurate VA=Very accurate

spirituality as a second highest 3.72. Reciprocity has the lowest mean score of 2.88. Empathy also had the highest rate (72.8%) of the respondents at the high-level followed by spirituality. Reciprocity had the highest rate (62.1%) of respondents at the moderate-level. Overall rating suggested a mean of 3.51 and a higher moderate-level response 64.8%. The findings suggest that empathy and spirituality were more favoured by the PMP group of retirees. They had high regard for these values than reciprocity. This is consistent with Merriam and Mazanah's (2000) qualitative

study of the older adults in Malaysia who emphasized spirituality as an important component.

The findings seem to agree with the postulate that there is no absolute altruism (Horton-Smith 1981; Pinker 1981; Titmus 1971). This is more aligned to Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen's uni-dimensional theory as the respondents seem to be motivated not by any single aspect of motivation but by a meaningful whole that comprise all the three components of altruism or any one or two of them

TABLE 5
Percentage distribution of respondents by level of altruism

Level	Freq.	%	Mean	SD
Empathy			3.93	.53
Low				
Moderate	71	27.2		
High	190	72.8		
Reciprocity			2.88	.76
Low	68	26.1		
Moderate	162	62.1		
High	31	11.9		
Spirituality			3.72	.73
Low	12	4.6		
Moderate	91	34.9		
High	158	60.5		
Overall Altruism			3.51	.48
Low	2	.8		
Moderate	169	64.8		
High	90	4.5		

TABLE 6
Mean differences between volunteer and non-volunteer respondents towards components of altruism

Variables	Mean		t	p	η^2
	Volunteer (n=136)	Non-Volunteer (n=125)			
Altruism					
Empathy	4.05	3.79	4.141	.000	.061
Reciprocity	2.87	2.89	-.274	.785	.000
Spirituality	3.90	3.53	4.193	.000	.063
Overall	3.60	3.41	3.166	.002	.032

commensurate to their 'rewarding experience'.

Independent Sample t-test was carried out to determine whether there was a significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for the three components of altruism i.e. empathy, reciprocity and spirituality as well as the overall altruism. The result of this analysis is presented in Table 6.

From the results, it can be seen that there is a significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for altruism as a composite index ($t = 3.166$, $p \leq 0.05$). When

we look at the individual component of altruism, we find that there is a significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for empathy ($t = 4.141$, $p \leq 0.05$). However, there is no spirituality ($t = 4.193$, $p \leq 0.05$). There was no significant difference between the volunteers and non-volunteers for reciprocity ($t = -.274$, $p \geq 0.05$). This suggests that both the volunteer and non-volunteers did not differ in their expectations from the services rendered.

A study of the effects size of the variables shows that spirituality has a moderate effect size ($\eta^2 = .0634$) which is able to explain 6.3%

of the variance in the difference in means. Empathy also shows moderate effects size ($\eta^2 = .061$), and is able to explain 6.1% of the variance in the difference in means.

CONCLUSION

Definitely, there is a lot more to be done as far as creating an environment where volunteerism among the retirees comes to the forefront in the societal development without much coaxing from the government. For this to happen, it is not just a matter of creating a program for the retirees and the elderly population in the country. It is more of instilling a value on the primary importance of humanity such that people and individuals are the overriding concern of everyone in the society, and not just the promotion of economic development to make up the development of the nation. When national development ushers in a people-centred development – referring to the vitality of man's contribution to the onward development of the nation – surely, other national issues will revolve around the people's interests, and, not otherwise. For this to happen what circumstances do we need to shape and what enabling factors do we have to create and need to have access to?

From the sociological point of view and as a prefaced in this paper, volunteerism is a socially defined action and, as such, it requires a community "ritual" to sustain it. The psychosocial dimension is but a reflection of the community's extent upon which volunteerism is well-embedded in its local structure. Both the psychosocial dimension and the embeddedness of the spirit of volunteerism in the local community are not mutually exclusive, which means that for the people to participate in any voluntary work, their psychosocial components as well as the extent to which volunteerism is a common ritual in the social and cultural landscape form part of the community life.

The same goes with altruism - expressed in people's empathy, reciprocity and spirituality. When people are the centre of the development process, thus, creating the space to helping others, volunteerism comes

naturally. This is based on the assumption that when pro-people policies take the centre stage in the development agenda, the likelihood that the social consciousness is geared towards helping others would be real.

Slightly more than half of the total retirees were engaged in voluntary work and they could be said to be productive contrary to the popular myth that retirees spent their time as 'rocking chair relics'. There are about 48% of retirees spending their time 'free and easy'. Now, if this group could be tapped not just for the economic productive function but also for the non-economic type of service. They could be a suitable target group to be attracted into volunteerism. There is an opportunity to attract them to provide their expertise by devising a systematic strategy for attracting, recruiting and retaining volunteers.

There were four psychosocial variables namely, environment, life style, personality and resources. Out of the four variables, lifestyle and resources influenced whether or not retirees would become volunteers. In general, altruism (empathy, reciprocity and spirituality) is more prevalent among the volunteers than non-volunteers.

Empathy and spirituality of the altruism component have more influence on the retirees' willingness to do voluntary work while reciprocity has the least influence. At their advancing ages, these retiree volunteers are not expecting rewards for their effort and that explains why reciprocity has the least influence on the retirees' propensity to volunteer.

Volunteers are more likely than non-volunteers to be members of an organized religious group and they hold stronger religious beliefs. These differences remained even when we excluded those people who volunteered at a religious organization (Penner 2002). This may seem true in this present study where the volunteer retirees are more attuned to the altruistic attitude especially those who have higher spiritual and empathic tendencies.

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