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Perceptions and motivations of Volunteers in the United Arab Emirates – Health Services' Implications

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Abstract

We studied the perceptions of a sample of volunteers in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) about the concept of volunteering and their motivations. To date, there is no published scholarly study of volunteering perceptions and motivations in the UAE. Using a structured questionnaire and a purposive sampling technique, 103 volunteers were surveyed, of which 75% were aged 18 – 35 years, and 68% were female. Approximately 52% of respondents volunteered for more than 50 hours annually. Motivations for volunteering were not significantly influenced by age or gender. Emiratis were significantly more likely to volunteer compared with non-Emiratis. Managers of volunteering organizations were aware of the need to motivate volunteers and to allocate a significant part of their workday to volunteer issues. Only about 6% of survey participants volunteer with health-sector affiliated organizations. There is ample room to promote volunteering as a pathway for community participation in health services in UAE

Keywords: Volunteering definition, UAE, Motivations, Emiratis, Non-Emiratis

Introduction

Concept of volunteering

Formal volunteering is an activity which takes place through partnerships with government or non-for-profit projects to benefit the community and volunteer. The individual freely, without coercion or [substantial] monetary reward, engages in the act of volunteering (European Youth Forum, 2012). The act of volunteering involves both personal and communitarian values (Arai, 1997). As such, volunteering serves as a vehicle for individuals or groups to address human, environmental and social needs. Volunteering respects the rights, dignity and culture of others. Volunteering promotes human rights and equality (Volunteering Australia, 2009). A more comprehensive definition of volunteerism describes the term as voluntary, ongoing, planned, helping behavior that increases the well-being of strangers, offers no monetary compensation, and typically occurs within an organizational context (Finkelstien, 2009). Central to this definition are six elements: voluntary action, little to no compensation, longevity, planfulness, non-obligation, and organizational context.

Perceptions of the meaning of volunteerism vary widely. Craan et al (1996) suggest that public perception of the term volunteer is the outcome of people's conception of the net-cost of any volunteer situation, which they defined as total cost minus total benefits to the volunteer. Accordingly, the public can view two people performing the same task that equally benefits society and designate the individual who accrues more net-costs as being more of a volunteer. They described the costs of volunteering as including time spent volunteering, effort, and the income and social pleasures foregone.

Functional theorists of volunteer motivations posit that volunteers can achieve diverse objectives – motive functions – through performing the same volunteering activity. Akintola (2011) summarized 10 motives for volunteering; Values: satisfying humanitarian obligation to help others or showing empathy for others; Community: concern for and worry about community; Career: seeking career-related benefits/connections, skills or experience; Protective: reducing negative feelings about oneself; Understanding: desire to better understand how to help others in society or exercise skills that are unused; Enhancement:

desire to feel better about oneself or be needed by others; Reciprocity: attracting good things to oneself; Recognition: needing recognition of one's skills and contribution; Reactivity: addressing own current or past issues; and Social: meeting the expectation of or getting the approval of significant others.

Apart from the 10 predominantly intrinsic motivations for volunteering mentioned above, extrinsic motivations are also noteworthy, and include opportunities to gain practical experience related to the field of study, which generally enhances job prospects following graduation. Long-term, intensive volunteer roles in civic service programs are often paid stipends, meaning volunteers receive monetary support for their time commitment that is considerably below market wages. A longitudinal study of older adult volunteers found that stipends may enhance volunteer diversity, retention and perceived benefits of volunteering while preserving altruistic motives (McBride et al, 2009). Extrinsic incentives for volunteers which are culturally acceptable, affordable and which do not adversely affect the sustainability of programs tend to improve volunteer role performance (Muula, Hofman, & Cumberland, 2004).

At the local level such as in village development committees, volunteering provides opportunities for dialogue between governments, organizations and grassroots community members and their representatives. Such contexts may also empower volunteers to shape policy development and implementation. At the national level, governments invite volunteers to work with them on issues such as increasing transparency, monitoring service provision, setting up volunteer agencies and working closely with formal volunteers. When governments have structures in place to enhance volunteer engagement, they have been able to systematically leverage the power of volunteerism. They also have opportunities to create scope for volunteers to seize the initiative in areas important to national development, including refugee health, educational opportunities for young females and global health. Using diverse strategies, volunteers can actively engage grassroots constituents, national and international fora in order to promote constructive debates on volunteering-related issues (UNDP, 2015).

The United States has a long history of volunteerism with reliable documentation of its impacts. For instance, in 2015, 62.6 million volunteers provided 7.8 billion hours of volunteer services, valued at 184 billion dollars - \$23.56 per hour (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2016). Motivations for youth volunteers in the United States include: Values (altruism, humanitarian concern for others, doing something meaningful); Understanding (opportunity to exercise knowledge and skills, sense of being important to organization); Social networking (being with or making friends); Career (career-related benefits or skills, challenging work, responsibility); Protective (volunteering to reduce negative feelings, shifting focus from personal problems, reducing guilt over personal privilege); and Enhancement -satisfaction from personal growth and self-esteem, creates positive mood (Clary, & Snyder, 1999; Walford, Cox, & Culp, 2001).

By comparison, in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, there is little evidence of youth volunteering being motivated by a desire to acquire work-related skills to facilitate transitioning to the formal work sector. Growth of formal volunteerism in the MENA region

is hindered by weak institutional framework, high youth unemployment, and sparse youth role models for volunteering, conflict and insecurity. Other encumbrances are cultural norms which inadvertently exclude female youth in volunteering activities, as well as negative perceptions and weak capacity of civil society organizations (Amnesty International, 2016). There is sparsity of publicly available data on volunteering activity by sectors among youth in the MENA region. A 2012 report indicated that although 25% of males and 15% of females' self-report membership of a civil society group, most of these groups have predominantly political motivations rather than social services objectives. Furthermore, the average population engagement rates with civil society groups in the MENA conceals very low civic engagement in countries such as Egypt and Jordan (Mercy Corps, 2012). Tunisia is currently the only country in the MENA region with volunteerism legislation, but the UAE government has signaled its intention to implement a volunteerism legislation in 2017. So far, opportunities provided by volunteerism in socio-economic development and participatory governance have been largely missed in the MENA region (UNESCO Regional Bureau, Beirut, 2004). While motivations to volunteer varies widely, when the volunteers' skills match the roles and their motivations to engage in a volunteer activity, recruitment, retention and volunteers' role performance tend to improve.

In the United States, religious organizations are the most popular organizations through which volunteers serve, and account for over a third of all volunteers nationwide. Seventy percent of volunteers who serve primarily through faith-based organizations continue contributing as volunteers for extended periods, the highest retention rate of any type of organization through which volunteers serve (Hugen, Wolfer, & Renkema, 2006). Similarly, in the MENA region, volunteering is often associated with religious faith and the concept of charity. In Islam, volunteerism is a very broad concept that encompasses whatever one does for the benefit of others for the sake of Allah. The Arabic concept for volunteerism is *al-Tatawwu'*, which etymologically is derived from *tawa'a*, an Arabic verb that conveys the meaning of performing an action willingly. The volunteers are called *al-Mutawwi'ah* (Quran 9:79). Volunteerism is a beautiful loan to Allah to which He promises a big reward (Quran 73:20). The two pillars of Islam; namely, establishment of *salat* (regular Prayer) and giving *zakat* (regular Charity), are a prerequisite for one to spend time and money (other than *zakat*) to help others. The ultimate motive of a Muslim volunteer is not to earn fame, respect or reward from people but to receive Allah's *Rahmah* (mercy). A core principle of volunteerism in Islam is that a volunteer is required to avoid discrimination while rendering voluntary services (Sulaiman, 2011).

The meaning of the term volunteerism also varies across countries in the MENA region. In Egypt, volunteerism is commonly viewed as synonym for voluntary military service or charity donations. In Morocco, volunteering is commonly linked to the French *benevolat*, which refers to ancestral forms of solidarity and communitarianism. In UAE, volunteering is often used synonymously with charity. However, with charity one gives in cash or in material assets, whereas volunteers usually give their time as they devote themselves to specified non-remunerative

activities. In Australian and many European nations, volunteerism is currently being entangled with other kinds of engagement such as work experience and educational placements, as well as mandatory work schemes which are conditional for receipt of welfare benefits – “work for the dole” (Bessant, 2000). Compelling some job seekers to take on volunteer roles to maintain their dole payments entails overt coercion, which is inconsistent with the definition and spirit of volunteering:

“Any kind of forced relationship that is labelled as volunteering undermines the very essence of what volunteering means to the individual. And it distorts the public's perception of donating time. Perhaps even more significantly, it also undermines the work of managers of volunteers tasked with leading and motivating people to get involved, and the potential impact that such involvement can make within communities.” (Jones, 2013).

Volunteering in UAE

Volunteering is integral to the National values and culture of UAE. Inspired by the vision of United Arab Emirates' (UAE) first President, the late Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, *Fazaa* values is the initiative of providing help and assistance to others. Emirati people have always striven to offer help to others in times of difficulty and prosperity to strengthen the social ties and share life events with others. The person undertaking *Fazaa* is associated with the following attributes: altruism; generosity; courage, and; philanthropy (ACTVET, 2014). Where a culture of volunteerism exists and flourishes, volunteerism law and policy initiatives can find rapid success as they are taken up by pre-existing volunteer constituencies. UAE's Federal law 9 of 2004 relates to volunteering in the civil defense. This law stipulates the eligibility and functions of; “Every civilian who participates willingly in Civil Defense works in time of peace, war, disasters or contingencies” (UAE Federal Law 9, 2004).

The UAE government has designated 2017 the Year of Giving, and committed itself to promulgating a law on charity and volunteering before December 2017. While the UAE currently has more than 200,000 registered volunteers, the proposed law aims to motivate more residents and citizens, especially high school and university students, to volunteer (Moukhallati, 2017). The draft law details the establishment of a regulatory process that can monitor the number of hours volunteered by individuals. Another objective of the proposed law is to provide volunteers with incentives and a comprehensive framework for volunteering to document and reward their initiatives and efforts (Khamis, & Achkhanian, 2017). By implementing a unified database of volunteers, number of hours volunteered, and the opportunities available, this law will enhance the smooth operations of volunteer organizations in UAE, such as those described in subsequent paragraphs.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is the world's largest humanitarian network that reaches 150 million people globally through the work of over 17 million volunteers. The Emirates Red Crescent in UAE was officially launched on the 31st of January, 1983. It was internationally attested as member number 139 in the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies on the 27th of August, 1986. It has branches in all Emirates and about

2000 registered active volunteers. It is particularly active in motivating students in UAE to volunteer. Emirates Red Crescent is focused on volunteering activities in the field related to: first-aid and traffic safety programs, training and rehabilitation for the handicapped, assistance for orphans and vulnerable populations, psychological support programs for sick and elders, addiction prevention programs, environment safety and overseas aid in areas of health and community welfare. Prospective Emirates Red Crescent volunteers are required to be at least 18 years old, literate, a person of good character and reputation, holding license from Ministry of Health if they are volunteering for medical activities, and matching the requirements of Emirates Red Crescent (ERC, 2014).

The Emirates Environmental Group (EEG) is a non-governmental professional working group founded in 1991 in Dubai, UAE. EEG is composed of corporate members, federal and local government agencies, as well as students, individuals and families. With more than 125,000 volunteers from across UAE, EEG considered as one of the most active environmental NGO's in the MENA region. The EEG's Clean up the UAE campaign is the biggest volunteer waste collection initiative in UAE. In 2016, UAE 125,536 residents collected 1.5 million kilograms of waste, most of which are sent to recycling plants. Since 2001, EEG has collected 14.7 million kilograms of recyclable paper waste, equivalent to saving 279,000 trees (EEG, 2016).

The Dubai Health Authority's (DHA) volunteer program document enables users to sign up for volunteer activities at all DHA facilities with a single sign up (DHA, 2016). The most well-established of DHA volunteer programs is the Rashid Hospital volunteer program, which offers volunteer opportunities to enhance patient satisfaction while producing a well-deserved feeling of personal fulfillment for the volunteer. Volunteer activities at Rashid hospital include; greeting visitors and helping them find their destinations, being a compassionate voice on the phone, and providing clerical support, such as filing of medical records. While performing such valued services, volunteers make new friends, learn new skills, and derive personal satisfaction from helping others (Rashid Hospital, 2017).

Volunteering in the health care sector

In the UAE, about 60% of the estimated 200,000 current volunteers are affiliated with the Emirates Environmental Group (Baldwin, 2017). The proportion of UAE volunteers affiliated with the healthcare sector is estimated at between 2% and 5%, with the majority (about 2000 active volunteers out of 10,000 registered volunteers) of health sector related volunteers working with the UAE Red Crescent Society (Emirates Red Crescent, 2014). In comparison, between 6.6% of volunteers in the United States contributed to hospital and other health sector activities in 2015 (USA Department of Labor, 2015). In England, about 3 million people volunteer in healthcare and social services sector (equivalent to the total paid workforce in the sector), with 25% volunteering at least once a month (Clarence, & Gabriel, 2014). The scope and depth of volunteering is superior in the UK and USA compared with the UAE in part because of strong governmental and institutional support. In the UK, for example, the government expended over 40 million pounds between 2011 and 2013 to support research activities by

creating greater incentives, and removing barrier, to volunteer. Volunteers commonly assist in the health sector by:

- Improving patient experience in hospitals and elsewhere
- Building a closer relationship between services and communities
- Tackling health inequalities and promoting health in hard-to-reach groups
- Supporting integrated care for people with multiple needs (The Kings Fund, 2013).

In community and public health settings, volunteers provide social support for vulnerable groups; signposting and improving access to services; teaching and training; advocacy and interpreting; providing wellbeing activities in the community; coaching patients through lifestyle changes; fundraising. In acute hospital settings, volunteers assisting with meal times; buddying; delivering supplies to frontline staff; collecting patient feedback; ambulance ‘first responders’; plain language volunteers (to edit written materials); clerical support; welcoming and guiding around the hospital. In home care, volunteers assist with visiting and befriending older people outside care homes to reduce isolation; provide home escorts for vulnerable patients; carer support services.

Although volunteers normally complement the work of paid professionals, there is a perception that they may end up substituting the work of the paid workforce, thereby encouraging cuts in staff on the payroll. Related to this issue is the tendency for volunteers to stimulate de-professionalization of the health workforce. For example, there is increasing evidence on the effectiveness of peer support in mental health, long-term conditions such as diabetes (Fisher et al, 2012) and for promoting healthy behaviours (Phillips, 2006).

Volunteering in the health sector constitutes an enormous reservoir of skills, energy and local knowledge which can assist governments and voluntary sector organizations in carrying out more targeted, efficient, participatory and transparent public programs and policies. Concept maps provide visual aids to highlight the determinants and interrelationships between the processes and outcomes of volunteering activities. A conceptual framework for volunteering in the health sector needs to align recruitment, training and motivations of volunteers with the objectives of volunteer recruitment organizations and the requirements of populations in need of volunteer service, and to evaluate the extent to which stakeholders’ needs are met (Figure 1).

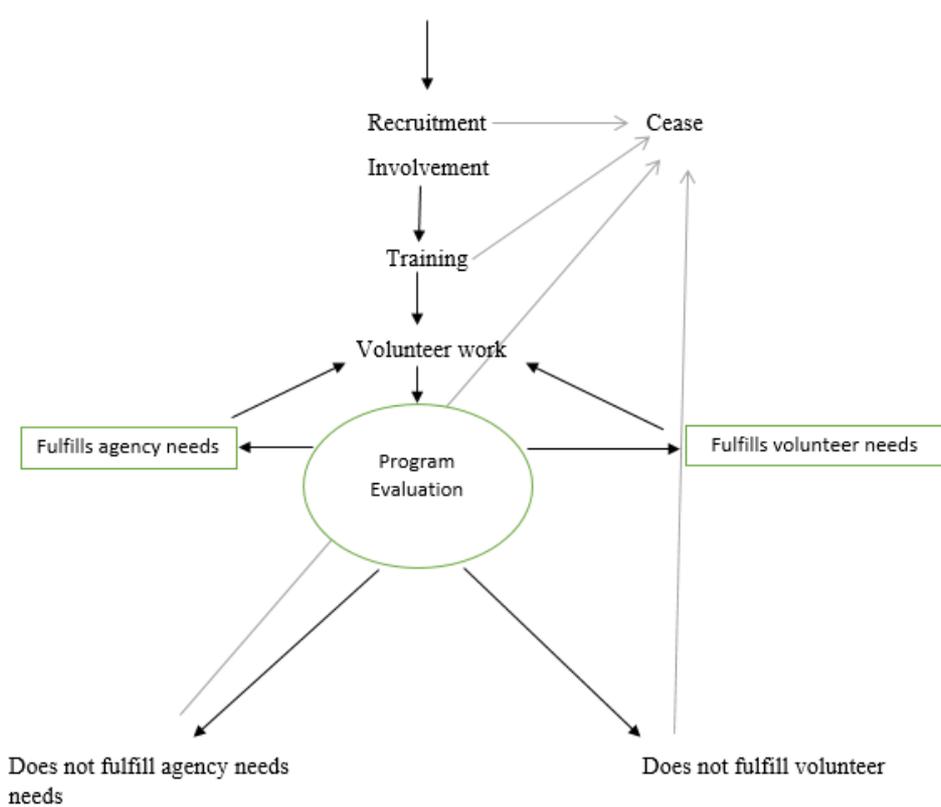


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework for volunteering in the health sector (Adapted from Cuthill and Warburton, 2005) Situation Analysis of Volunteer Needs and Health Organizations’ Volunteer Management Capacity

As shown in Figure 1, health services managers have significant influence over volunteer experience at the recruitment, training and actual volunteer work engagement points. The framework highlights the need for an understanding of volunteer motivation and how it affects each of the three engagement points. A major challenge for health services volunteer coordinators is to address problems at engagement points (indicated by unbolded

lines) where a volunteer might cease their involvement due to unsatisfactory outcomes for the volunteer, the agency, or populations who require volunteer services. In the health care sector, providers and employers should see the creation of volunteering opportunities as an essential part of their relationship with the local community, as well as being a means of improving patient or service user experience. The focus should be on quality

benefits rather than cost reduction, and inevitable sensitivities around job substitution will need to be dealt with head on.

This study examines the motivations and perceptions of a sample of volunteers in UAE, and explores opportunities to volunteering activities in the UAE health sector for the benefit of volunteers, patients and health care organizations. In so doing, we intend to address the knowledge gap on these topics in the UAE.

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted between October and December 2016. Arabic and English versions of a questionnaire were developed to determine the motivations and perceptions of volunteers, as well as perceptions and structural frameworks under which coordinators of volunteer activities in UAE operate. The survey instrument was distributed via email to the following organizations to which UAE volunteers are affiliated (Figure 2):

Fig 2: Organizations from which responses by volunteers and coordinators of volunteer programs in UAE. Names of organizations that actively recruit volunteers are underlined

Universities	Government Org	Others
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abu Dhabi University Ajman university Al falah university College of Islamic and Arabic Studies Emirates university Dubai women's college HBMSU Higher Colleges of Technology Shj & Dubai Petroleum institute Sharjah university Zayed university 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dubai driving school Dubai Customs Dubai police Emirates Identity Authority Emirates Post General Directorate of Residency and Foreigners Affairs in Dubai Islamic Affairs Ministry of Culture Ministry of health Ministry of education Sharjah International Airport The Government of Fujairah Ministry of interior Western Region Police (West part of UAE) UAE ID ASSOCIATION University dental hospital in Sharjah Department of Culture and Information and the Sharjah Institute of Heritage SHJ police 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ADNOC <u>Dubai Cares*</u> Al mazoon school Al rwade school <u>Al Qamma volunteering team</u> Armor Lubricants Al sharaf group <u>Assad Sha'ab volunteering team</u> Bal Hassa <u>Fakher AlWatan Events Organizing</u> MLG Royal Hospital Sharjah <u>Takatof Emirates foundation</u> Terra casa Strata company HCT Consultative Center for Studies The National Council Systems center Vina Contracting <u>Red crescent</u> <u>Happiness program</u> Red crescent medical center

*Underlined volunteer entities indicate volunteer programs or organizations that actively recruit volunteers.

The questionnaire content is accessible via: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B92hjoMfbkKSazlBTGxGSy1iSHM> The survey instrument is sectioned into three parts. The first part relates to demographic attributes of respondents. The second part explores motivations and perceptions of respondents towards volunteering. The third part is designed to receive responses related to volunteering-related operational issues that volunteers who work as coordinators and managers of volunteer programs experience. At the time of data analysis, a total of 103 responses were received. A purposive sampling approach, with snowball sampling elements, was utilized (Tongco, 2007). Contacted volunteers were requested to share the survey instruments with fellow volunteers and encourage them to participate in the study. The quantitative aspects of the study sought to address the following questions:

- Are there significant differences in how males and females, or different nationalities in our study participants, perceive the concept of volunteering?
- Are motivations for volunteering influenced by occupational affiliations?
- Are motivations for volunteering influenced by age?
- Are motivations for volunteering influenced by gender?
- Are Emiratis more likely to allocate more time to volunteering compared with non-Emiratis?

The quantitative analysis was performed on STATA 12 using frequency analysis and chi-square to test in relation to the predictors and independent variables with nominal scale. The research questions were tested at 0.05 level of significance. Ethics application processes were waived as the study was deemed as having insignificant risk of any harm whatsoever to participants.

Additional questions were used to explore the following aspects among a sub-set of 32 coordinators and managers of volunteer recruitment and placement services. Although these coordinators were paid stipends for the time and expertise they provide to their respective organizations, the stipends which were far less than managerial wages in UAE. The additional survey questions that this cohort was asked relate to:

- Criteria for allocating other volunteers to volunteer projects
- Organizational strategies designed to motivate other volunteers

Results

The demographic variables of the 103 survey respondents are shown below:

Table 1: Respondents Age

Age	Freq.	Percent
<18years	7	6.80
18-25years	42	40.78
26-30years	17	16.50
30-36years	18	17.48
36-39years	3	2.91
>40years	16	15.53
Total	103	100.00

Table 2: Respondents Age

Gender	Freq.	Percent
Male	33	32.04
Female	70	67.96
Total	103	100.00

Table 3: Time allocated to Volunteering

	Freq.	Percent
< 9hours	10	9.71
9-15hours	10	9.71
15-30hours	11	10.68
30-50hours	18	17.48
>50hours	54	52.43
Total	103	100.00

In line with international trends, volunteers aged 18 – 36 years constitute the majority (85%) of respondents. Over two thirds were female, and the majority devoted over 50 hours to volunteering activities every year (see Tables 1-3)

Table 4: Details the motivations of respondents to undertake volunteer activities

Motivations	Freq.	Percent
Pursue the goal of your religion	5	4.85
Family tradition	1	0.97
To assist less privileged people and "reputation"	25	24.27
Getting experience or achieve something	17	16.50
To exchange it with benefits in future	2	1.94

Table 6: correlations of motivations for volunteering with age brackets

Age	Motivation								
	Pursue th	Family tr	To assist	Getting e	To exchan	To have f	to enhanc	Others	Total
<18years	0	1	0	1	0	1	1	3	7
	0.00	14.29	0.00	14.29	0.00	14.29	14.29	42.86	100.00
18-25years	0	0	9	10	1	10	9	3	42
	0.00	0.00	21.43	23.81	2.38	23.81	21.43	7.14	100.0
26-30years	2	0	3	4	0	2	5	1	17
	11.76	0.00	17.65	23.53	0.00	11.76	29.41	5.88	100.0
30-36years	2	0	6	1	1	2	4	2	18
	11.11	0.00	33.33	5.56	5.56	11.11	22.22	11.11	100.00
36-39years	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
	0.00	0.00	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100.00
>40years	1	0	4	1	0	5	4	1	16
	6.25	0.00	25.00	6.25	0.00	31.25	25.00	6.25	100.00
Total	5	1	25	17	2	20	23	10	103
	4.85	0.97	24.27	16.50	1.94	19.42	22.33	9.71	100.00

Pearson chi2 (35) = 49.7801 Pr = 0.050

Motivations for volunteering among study participants were significantly influenced by age (Chi –square = 49.7801, P-value = 0.05), although the motivation level is

("wealth")		
To have fun or feel happy ("warm glow")	20	19.42
To enhance self-esteem and socialize	23	22.33
Others	10	9.71
Total	103	100.00

All but one of the respondents appropriately differentiated between volunteering and charity. The non-remunerative nature of volunteering featured prominently in the way the majority of respondents perceived volunteering. Also emphasized is the notion that a volunteer activity must be of interest to volunteers. Males and females perceived the meaning of volunteering differently [Pearson chi2 (5) = 8.7117 Pr = 0.121].

Table 5: shows perceptions of volunteers regarding the meaning of "volunteering":

Meaning of volunteering	Freq.	Percent
Helping the one who seek help	18	17.48
Giving money to charity	1	0.97
Doing any task without getting paid or	48	46.60
Type of fun activity that you like spend	22	21.36
Working in civil defense or other govt.	2	1.94
Other descriptions	12	11.65
Total	103	100.00

As detailed in Table 5, most of the motivational factors for survey respondents (60/103) were volunteer-centered – gaining field/work experience; interesting adventures; enhancing self-esteem and socializing. However, the single most commonly reported reason for volunteering was to assist less privileged and vulnerable individuals and communities. Interestingly, religious considerations and family tradition for volunteering were insignificant motivators among participants.

The data on the relationships between the different age brackets and motivational factors for volunteering are shown in Table 6.

significantly different by age level, with respondents between the ages of 18-25 years are more motivated while ages 36-39 years were less motivated.

Table 7: details data on the relationships between motivations for volunteering and gender among the study sample

Gender	Motivation								Total
	Pursue th	Family tr	To assist	Getting e	To exchange	To have f	to enhance	Others	
Male	3	1	8	4	0	7	8	2	33
	9.09	3.09	24.24	12.12	0.00	21.21	24.24	6.06	100.00
Female	2	0	17	13	2	13	15	8	70
	2.86	0.00	24.29	18.57	2.86	18.57	21.43	11.43	100.00
Total	5	1	25	17	2	20	23	10	103
	4.85	0.97	24.27	16.50	1.94	19.42	22.33	9.71	100.00

Pearson chi2 (7) = 6.2504 Pr = 0.511

The data in Table 7 reveal that motivations for volunteering were not significantly influenced by gender (P-value =

0.511), although females were more likely to volunteer than males.

Table 8: Time devoted to volunteering by Emiratis and non-Emiratis

Nationality	Time devoted to volunteering					
	< 9hours	9-15hours	15-30hour	30-50hour	>50hours	
UAE	9	7	7	14	26	63
	14.29	11.11	11.11	22.22	41.27	100.00
Others	10	10	11	18	54	40
	2.50	7.50	10.68	17.48	52.43	100.00
Total	10	10	11	18	54	103
	9.71	9.71	10.68	17.48	52.43	100.00

Pearson chi2 (4) = 9.8006 Pr = 0.044

The data in Table 8 reveal that Emiratis allocated significantly more time to volunteering compared with non-Emiratis.

We collapsed occupational affiliations of volunteers into two groups – those who work in universities and those who work in government agencies. Only 53 of the 103 respondents were in regular employment. The rest were either university students (43) or unemployed (7). Six of the participants volunteer in a health-related organization. Among the employed participants, university workplace affiliation had a significant influence in participants’ participant motivation level participants who were affiliated with University establishments were more likely to volunteer than workers affiliated with government public service (P-value =0.002). This may be due to the work schedules of universities, which may provide greater opportunities for staff to volunteer during student holidays. There was no significant relationship between occupation affiliation and time allocated to volunteering, although respondents with University affiliation tended to allocate more time to volunteering.

Of the 32 survey respondents (self-identified volunteer managerial staff) with varying levels of involvement in recruitment and placement of volunteers, the two most important criteria for placement of volunteers are according to the skillset and according to the requirements of individuals and communities who require volunteer services. Managers of UAE volunteer recruitment and placement organizations motivate volunteers to enroll and actively participate through: (a) providing volunteers with interesting and challenging responsibilities, and providing appropriate training for such missions; (b) public recognition that enhances their esteem within the community. About 70% of responding managers devoted at least 50% of their time to volunteer-related activities. Over 90% of managers of volunteer recruiting and placement organizations strongly agreed or agreed that; establishing a culture that engages volunteers will enhance

their performance. Culture engagement of volunteers was explained as a strategy that builds organizational capacity through employee and volunteer collaboration and the development of high-impact, meaningful volunteer opportunities that create greater influence and outcome for the organization (JFFixler Group, 2012).

Discussion

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the motivations and perceptions of volunteers in UAE. The predominantly youthful and female demographic of volunteers suggests opportunities to analyze volunteer activities in the health sector that will be of interest to volunteers, and to provide the right incentives to attract more volunteers to health sector activities. In Europe, the voluntary sector is the setting through which most volunteers contribute to society in general and the health sector in particular (Mathou, 2010). In the UAE, health focused civil society organizations are few, and established entities are generously funded by government and almost fully staffed, leaving very few opportunities for volunteers to collaborate with such organizations. Improving Wayfinding for volunteers in the health sector is another important approach to optimizing the benefits of volunteering in healthcare (Hunter et al, 2013). For example, the poorly functioning online single sign-on volunteer web site of Dubai Health Authority needs to be supplemented with regularly updated lists of volunteer activities at DHA facilities, like what obtains in health care organizations such as Mayo Clinic (2017). Health sector volunteering is still evolving in UAE. It requires careful nurturing to optimize its currently unrealized potential as a significant contributor to the health system development of UAE. University students appear to be self-motivated to participate in volunteering activities. This observation provides opportunities for health sector volunteer programs to recruit suitable individuals, given that fairly high levels of literacy are required even for relatively basic tasks. A

recent survey research on the motivators for United States health science and medical student volunteers indicated that they were motivated by tasks related to their university education that an inherent desire for volunteer work (Rovers, et al, 2016). Aligning the personal goals of medical, public health and health science volunteers with health care organizations' objectives and volunteer organizers' practices is a feasible task (Rozier, Lasker, & Compton, 2017). In Dubai Emirate of UAE, Volunteering hours between January and September 2016 exceeded 60,000 hours, which is double the 30,000 volunteering hours in the Emirate for the whole of 2015. According to Dubai's Community Development Authority (CDA) the January-September 2016 volunteering hours by 5000 registered volunteers (of which 2000 are active) translates to a saving of AED 4.9 million. The CDA is currently advocating for health care professionals to join the 34 volunteer doctors and nurses currently registered with the agency (De Leon, 2016).

In the United States, which has a very strong culture of volunteering in the health sector, the use of volunteers offers significant cost savings to hospitals and enhances patient satisfaction scores (Hotchkiss, Fottler, & Unruh, 2009). A 2012 survey of 105 volunteer administrators in healthcare volunteer management suggests that primary challenges included volunteer recruitment and retention, as well as administrative issues related to volunteer engagement and cordial working relationships with paid staff. Key opportunities included more explicitly linking the volunteer function to hospital strategic objectives and community impact, expanding volunteer recruitment pools and roles and jobs, developing organizational support for volunteers and making the volunteer management functions more efficient and effective (Rogers, Rogers, & Boyd, 2013). In the UAE with its expanding health sector and an enthusiastic pool of young, educated volunteers, major opportunities abound for utilizing volunteer activities to promote community engagement, patient satisfaction and containment of cost of health services particularly in the areas of mental health and aged care.

A noteworthy limitation of this study is that the sampling is non-probabilistic. There is currently no register of volunteers in UAE that could have been consulted for a random sampling study. In line with purposive sampling techniques, we approached organizations we know are associated with volunteer activities and requested volunteers to participate in our online survey. Interested individuals were requested to contact fellow volunteers and request their participation – snowball component. Consequently, there may be some bias in our survey sample. Nevertheless, we believe that the voluntary, non-compensatory, and anonymous approach for our study may lessen the bias.

Conclusion

Health sector volunteering is currently underdeveloped in UAE, both in terms of the number of volunteers (about 8% of participating volunteers in this study) and the activities in the health sector open for participation by volunteers. Volunteering needs to be perceived by health system stakeholders as a high-value activity in health care, and volunteers as important players of the health workforce. Consequently, stakeholder health sector managers should

take a much more strategic approach, with a clear vision of how volunteers will help meet organizational objectives and benefit patients and the local community. Volunteering in the UAE health sector is currently sub-optimally organized with less volunteering opportunities relative to the number of eligible volunteers, and frequent misalignment between the motivations of volunteers and organizational objectives. Volunteering should be used as a means of improving quality rather than reducing short-term costs. The management of volunteering and supporting infrastructure should be adequately resourced. It is important to maintain the boundaries between professional and volunteer roles, with volunteer work defined as complementing rather than replacing paid work. Paying of stipends may also be considered as an approach to improve volunteer diversity and retention.

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