

Factors Explaining Intentions to Volunteer as a Mentor to Peers

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Abstract

Brief summary to be written once final results are obtained.

Factors Explaining Intentions to Volunteer as a Mentor to Peers

This project was undertaken to assist a mentoring program called “GEMS” understand what factors might motivate individuals to volunteer as mentors. Guiding, Empowering, and Mentoring Students (GEMS) was introduced to Metropolitan State University on 2008. The goal of the program is to match beginning-level students with mentors who can help students fulfill their potential in their academic, career, and personal lives. One group targeted as potential mentors was advanced students who can serve as peer mentors to newer students. This study targeted these advanced students in order to find out what factors might be linked to volunteer intentions. In conducting this study, we drew concepts from two theoretical perspectives that we suspected would prove useful in understanding why someone might volunteer to be a mentor in the GEMS program.

The Functional Motivations of Volunteerism

Omoto and Snyder (1995) proposed that people volunteer their time to help others for a variety of reasons. More specifically, it was argued that volunteering is done to satisfy certain needs of the volunteers. Omoto and Snyder developed a “functional” measure of volunteer motivations, a measure which taps into the functions that volunteering serves for different people. This measure of volunteer motivations was developed and validated within the context of volunteering to work with individuals living with AIDS. The final questionnaire measured five functions that motivate volunteering.

[describe these, we went over the paper in class]

We examined these same volunteer motivations in this study, to determine if any of these motivations or functions of volunteering would be predictive of students’ intentions to become peer mentors. The Omoto and Snyder (1995) scale was adapted to fit the mentoring context because their original items targeted volunteering to assist those living with AIDS.

The Theory of Reasoned Action/Theory of Planned Behavior

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action to use social psychological variables to explain and predict behavior. Within this framework, the best predictor of a behavior is one’s intention to perform that behavior within a given context and time. An intention is viewed as being formed on the basis of that person’s attitude toward performing that behavior and the individual’s subjective norm, which is one’s perception of how much important referents want him or her to perform the behavior, combined with the person’s motivation to comply with those referents. Each person’s attitude and subjective norm are determined by past experiences, personality factors, values, and so on. To summarize this theory, attitudes and subjective norms determine one’s intention, which in turn leads to behavior. If one is able to determine if attitudes and/or subjective norms are important in a given context, one could use that information when attempting to change intentions in a desired direction.

Ajzen (1991) developed the theory of planned behavior as an extension of the theory of reasoned action that could be applied to contexts in which factors beyond one's control might play a role in the forming of intentions or actual behavior. Drawing upon similar work on self-efficacy, perceptions of behavioral control, or one's belief that he or she can performed desired behaviors, can be an important factor in some contexts. In some applications, perceived behavioral control, as well as attitudes and subjective norms, can be predictive of intentions to perform a behavior. Thus, many current applications include perceive behavioral control when applying these models.

White the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior typically consider values and moral beliefs to have their impact by affecting an individual's attitude and/or subjective norm, some research has indicated that moral beliefs can sometimes impact intentions or behaviors directly. For example, Harrison (1995) found that moral obligation was an important factor in predicting intentions to volunteer at a homeless shelter, and that moral obligation had an effect that was in addition to those of attitudes and subjective norms. In the study conducted here, we used measures of attitudes, subjective norms, perceive behavioral control, and moral obligation as predictors of intentions to volunteer as a GEMS mentor.

In summary, constructs from both the volunteer motivation literature as well as the theory of reasoned action/planned behavior areas were used to help understand intentions to volunteer as a GEMS mentor. Once the more important factors can be isolated, we would hope that these factors could be used by the GEMS program in the recruitment of volunteer mentors.

Method

Participants

Within the first few days of the survey, a total of 94 students started the online survey. However, 10 of these respondents stopped answer questions after completing less than 25% of the survey and were excluded from analysis. The remaining 84 students completed most of the survey and constituted the final sample used here. *[now it is up to you to describe the characteristics of those who gave valid responses to the demographic variables]*

Measures

Describe each measure used, the origin of the measure (reference), the number of items on the scale, etc.

Procedure

A large number of students at Metropolitan State University were contacted through the school's student email utility. The message sent to students briefly described the study and asked them to

participate in the study. The student was described as lasting about 15 minutes and being anonymous. A link to the online survey was included in the email message.

The survey started by explaining the GEMS program in general terms and explaining that the survey would ask for their opinions about the program and the possibility that they might volunteer for the program this year. The survey posed the questions contained in the measures described above. At the end of the survey, a final item asked respondents if they would like to learn more about the GEMS program. This last item could be a measure of interest in the program, but also allowed students to learn more about the program. About 46% did want to learn more about the GEMS program, and they were referred to a web page that explained the program in greater detail, linked to a mentor application, and provided contact information for the administrator of the GEMS program.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

[Explain/summarize the stuff in Table 1]

Functional Volunteer Motives

[statistics that examine if/how the five volunteer motivations are predictive of intentions – Table 2]

Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behavior

[statistics that examine if/how attitude, subjective norm, perceived behavioral control, and moral obligation are predictive of intentions – Table 3]

Intentions and Actions

[Don't forget to look at the correlation between intention to volunteer and whether they said yes or no to the item asking if they would like to learn more about the GEMS program.]

Discussion

[Some overall conclusions/recommendations.]

References

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179-211.

Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Harrison, D. A. (1995). Volunteer motivation and attendance decisions: Competitive theory testing in multiple samples from a homeless shelter. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 371-385.

Omoto, A. M., & Snyder, M. (1995). Sustained helping without obligation: Motivation, longevity of service, and perceived attitude change among AIDS volunteers. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 671-686.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients (Alpha) for Primary Variables.

<u>Variable/Measure</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Alpha</u>
Values Motivation			
Gain Understanding Motivation			
Personal Development Motivation			
Community Concern Motivation			
Esteem Enhancement Motivation			
Intention to Volunteer			
Attitude Toward Volunteering			
Subjective Norm – Volunteering			
Perceived Behavioral Control			
Moral Obligation to Volunteer			

Table 2. Predicting Intentions to Volunteer from the five Volunteer Motivations

<u>Volunteer Motive</u>	<u>Correlation</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Model R-Squared</u>
Values Motivation			
Gain Understanding Motivation			
Personal Development Motivation			
Community Concern Motivation			
Esteem Enhancement Motivation			

Table 3. Predicting Intentions to Volunteer from Attitudes, Subjective Norm, Perceived Control, and Moral Obligation

<u>Predictor Variable</u>	<u>Correlation</u>	<u>Beta</u>	<u>Model R-Squared</u>
Attitude Toward Volunteering			
Subjective Norm – Volunteering			
Perceived Behavioral Control			
Moral Obligation to Volunteer			