

# Voluntary Motivation and Emotional Well-being: Exploring Differences Based on Internal and External Drives

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## ABSTRACT

*This research aims to explore how individuals' motivations for volunteering can affect their emotional well-being. Voluntary motivations driven by internal needs, such as the desire to benefit others or the search for meaning in life, often have a more significant positive impact on individual happiness. External motivations, such as the drive for social recognition or external rewards, do not always result in long-term improvements in well-being. Existing literature suggests that individuals who engage in internally motivated volunteering report more sustained satisfaction and well-being. While internal motivation is more often associated with higher happiness, social factors and the type of volunteering also influence its impact on emotional well-being. This research suggests that to maximize the benefits of volunteering, individuals should engage with motivations derived from their internal values, as well as engage in activities that support the development of healthy social relationships. The results of this study are expected to provide insights in designing more effective volunteering activities to improve participants well-being.*

## INTRODUCTION

In this modern era, more and more individuals are engaging in activities that they choose voluntarily, such as volunteer work, contributions in social organizations, and philanthropic activities. These activities, known as voluntarism, give individuals the opportunity to engage in activities that provide a sense of purpose and meaning. Many studies have shown that engaging in voluntary activities can improve one's emotional well-being, as it provides a greater sense of contribution to society (Berridge, 2018). Individuals who engage in voluntarism often report higher feelings of happiness, which may stem from the positive contributions they make, as well as from the social connections they build in these activities (Post, 2005).

Unfortunately, voluntarism does not always bring positive effects to every individual. Some people feel depressed or exhausted by the additional burden that volunteering brings, especially if they feel forced or trapped in the situation. According to some, the motivation to engage in volunteering may come from social pressure or external expectations, which in turn decreases their personal happiness (Oostlander et

al., 2014). An imbalance between contributions made and rewards received can create feelings of frustration or burnout that lead to reduced life satisfaction (Wilson & Musick, 1999). This makes the effects of voluntarism on individual happiness worthy of further study, especially in relation to motivation and psychological impact.

One of the main issues that has emerged from research on voluntarism is that not all individuals experience increased happiness after engaging in volunteering. The research says that some individuals may experience stress and burnout due to large demands on their time and energy, especially if they do not have sufficient resources to deal with the burden. These negative experiences can reduce life satisfaction and cause individuals to feel that the contributions they make are not worth the benefits they receive. Cases suggest that the social pressure that comes with volunteering can also affect the quality of the experience, as individuals feel forced or burdened by the obligations (Cnaan et al., 2011).

Differences in motivations for engaging in volunteering also affect its impact on individual sssvolunteering due to an internal drive, such as a

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desire to help others, is likely to experience more psychological and emotional benefits. In contrast, individuals who engage due to external pressures, such as social pressure or expectations from others, may not feel as satisfied with the activity, and the impact on their happiness could be less significant or even negative. Further research is needed to understand the factors that influence the relationship between voluntarism and individual happiness, as well as to identify conditions that can optimize the positive impact of voluntary involvement (Wilson, 2000).

Examining the effects of voluntarism on individual happiness is important, especially as more and more individuals are now engaging in various forms of volunteering. These activities, while often perceived as altruistic acts, can have a variety of different psychological outcomes depending on the individual and the context. More in-depth research could provide insights into how voluntarism can serve as a tool to enhance personal well-being, as well as identify specific conditions or factors that influence its impact. With a better understanding of these dynamics, policies and programs designed to encourage voluntary participation could be more effective and beneficial to society.

Individual happiness is also an important factor in quality of life, and many factors influence happiness. Voluntarism is one such variable that can make a significant contribution to an individual's social and psychological well-being. Examining the effects of voluntarism allows us to better understand how engagement in social activities can serve as an instrument to achieve long-term happiness and well-being. This knowledge is crucial, both for the individuals involved in volunteering and for the organizations that manage these activities, to ensure that such involvement has the maximum positive impact.

This research aims to explore how individuals' motivations for volunteering can affect their happiness. It also seeks to understand the difference in impact between individuals who engage in volunteering due to internal drives (such as the desire to help) and external drives (such as social pressure). Both factors when analyzed can be concluded that this research aims to provide deeper insights into how voluntarism can contribute to individuals' emotional well-being, as well as what factors can optimize the positive impact of volunteering.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research method used in this study is a literature review, which aims to analyze and summarize relevant research results on the relationship between voluntarism and individual happiness. This approach involves collecting various literature sources from journal articles, books, research reports, and other academic publications that address this topic from various perspectives, such as social psychology, sociology, and welfare studies. The literature review allowed the researcher to identify existing findings, analyze similarities and differences in various studies, and gain insight into the relationship between individuals' motivations for volunteering and its impact on their happiness. According to Musick and Wilson (2003), literature analysis allows researchers to understand the broader scope of a particular theme, as well as provide a solid foundation for further, more empirical research.

The literature review also provides knowledge about the theories underlying the phenomenon of voluntarism and happiness. Researchers can explore different theories, such as social exchange theory or subjective happiness theory, which can explain why and how involvement in volunteering can relate to individual happiness. Previous research suggests that volunteering can have a positive effect on happiness, but also reveals complexities in its effects, depending on individual motivations and experiences (Baker & Velez, 2016). This literature review will provide a better understanding of the factors that influence the impact of voluntarism on happiness, as well as clarify the variables that need to be taken into account in further research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Motivation in Voluntarism and its Impact on Happiness

Individual's motivation for volunteering plays an important role in determining the extent to which the activity can increase their happiness. Research by Clary et al. (1998), says that the motivation for volunteering can be divided into two types: internal and external motivation. Individuals who engage in volunteering with internal motivation, such as the desire to help others or gain personal satisfaction, tend to report higher levels of happiness after engaging in the activity. This is because internal motivation provides a sense of accomplishment and meaning, which is a major factor in improving psychological well-being (Brown & Pargament, 2013).

Individuals who engage in volunteering due to external pressures, such as to fulfill a social obligation or gain recognition from others, are less likely to feel the same impact on their happiness. Existing research suggests that if the motivation to engage in volunteering comes solely from external factors, such as social pressure or family expectations, then the experience may lead to burnout or stress rather than emotional satisfaction (Wilson & Musick, 1999). The happiness gained from volunteering may be temporary and focused more on social recognition than deep internal fulfillment.

Another factor that influences individuals' happiness in volunteering is the type of activity they participate in. Research by Piliavin and Siegl (2007) shows that individuals who engage in volunteering activities that involve direct social interaction, such as working with vulnerable groups or helping out in the community, report higher levels of happiness than those who engage in more anonymous or isolated activities. Direct social interaction provides an opportunity for individuals to feel connected to others, which is an important factor in improving emotional well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2004).

Involvement in volunteering is also associated with an increased sense of personal control and empowerment, which can further contribute to individual happiness. Individuals who feel that they can make a real and positive contribution to society are more likely to feel valued and purposeful. This concept is known as self-efficacy or a sense of ability to influence the world around them. Research conducted by Schopenhauer and Koo (2009) revealed that feelings of control over social situations and influence over others can increase individual happiness, especially if they feel that their efforts can bring about significant change.

It is important to note that not all types of volunteering contribute to happiness in the same way. There are individuals who may feel burdened or exhausted if they engage too much in activities that they do not enjoy or that exceed their capacity. A study by Aknin et al. (2013) identified that over-involvement in volunteering without considering personal boundaries can cause stress and reduce life satisfaction. As such, individuals' motivation to participate in volunteering should be balanced with their personal capabilities and desire to be involved.

The type of social relationships formed through volunteering also affects happiness. Individuals who build positive and sustained relationships with related others through volunteering report greater increases in happiness than those who simply engage without forming social bonds. Research by Okun and

Schultz (2003) suggests that volunteering activities that lead to the formation of deep social networks provide emotional support that can improve individual well-being in the long term. Strong social relationships not only provide support, but also provide meaning and a sense of community that is critical to one's happiness.

Ultimately, an individual's motivation for volunteering is a key determinant in influencing their happiness. Motivated by an internal desire to contribute or help others, volunteering can provide deep personal satisfaction and enhance emotional well-being. Where the motivation is purely external, the happiness gained from the activity tends to be temporary. This illustrates that it is important for individuals to choose volunteering activities that match their values and capacities in order to maximize the positive impact on happiness.

### **Voluntary Experience: Internal vs External in Influencing Well-Being**

The difference in experience between individuals who engage in volunteering due to internal and external drives has a significant impact on their emotional well-being. Research conducted by Clary et al. (1998), says that individuals who are motivated by internal drives, such as the desire to help others or gain personal satisfaction, tend to experience greater improvements in emotional well-being than those who engage due to external drives. These internal motivations provide a deep sense of accomplishment and meaning, which are important factors in improving one's psychological well-being (Brown & Pargament, 2013). In contrast, individuals who engage in volunteering due to external factors, such as social obligations or expectations of others, often do not experience the same satisfaction, as the activity is not driven by deep personal needs.

Individuals who engage in volunteering due to external drives, such as the desire for social recognition or other external rewards, often report lower levels of happiness after engaging in such activities. Research by Wilson and Musick (1999) suggests that although these individuals may feel temporary satisfaction from rewards or recognition, their experiences in volunteering do not have a sustained positive impact on emotional well-being. This could be due to their reliance on external rewards, which may reduce their sense of personal accomplishment and affect their relationship with volunteering in the long term.

The difference in experiences in volunteering driven by internal and external motivations is also reflected in the impact on mental health. Research by

Piliavin and Siegl (2007) found that individuals who engage in internally motivated volunteering tend to experience reduced levels of stress and anxiety. This may be because internally motivated volunteering provides a greater sense of control and connectedness with others, which are important elements in maintaining emotional and mental well-being. Individuals who engage in volunteering due to external factors often feel pressured and are more prone to burnout, as they do not feel they have full control over their involvement.

Another factor besides motivation, namely the type of volunteering activity, can also affect an individual's emotional experience. Research by Aknin et al. (2013), said that volunteering activities that involve direct social interaction, such as helping vulnerable groups or participating in social activities in the community, can have a greater impact on individuals' emotional well-being. Individuals who feel that they can make a positive impact and are emotionally connected to others, they tend to report higher levels of happiness. This is strongly linked to the human need to feel valued and connected, which further enhances their emotional well-being (Deckers, 2018).

While internal motivation is often associated with a positive impact on emotional well-being, this does not mean that external motivation is entirely incapable of producing positive experiences. Individuals may feel more inspired to engage in volunteering after being encouraged by social expectations or pressure from their environment. This means that volunteering can serve as a means to increase social connections and networking, which can have a positive impact on their emotional well-being, even if their initial motivation was not internal. Research by Okun and Schultz (2003) shows that involvement in volunteering coupled with positive social relationships can improve well-being, even though their initial motivation is more likely to be external.

Involvement in volunteering driven by internal or external motivations can also affect individuals in the long term. Individuals who engage in internally motivated volunteering tend to sustain their involvement longer and report a greater impact on their happiness in the long term. Individuals who engage due to external motivation may tend to reduce their involvement over time, especially if the external rewards they expect are not met. This suggests that the relationship between volunteering motivation and emotional well-being depends not only on short-term experiences, but also on the continuity and depth of involvement in volunteering (Musick & Wilson, 2003).

Motivational differences in volunteering play an important role in determining an individual's emotional well-being. Internal motivations tend to have a more positive and sustained impact on well-being, as they provide a deeper sense of achievement, control and meaning. External motivations may result in more temporary happiness and less impact on long-term mental health. It is important for individuals to engage in volunteering activities that align with their internal values to maximize emotional benefits.

### **Factors that Can Optimize the Positive Impact of Involvement in Volunteering on Individual Happiness**

Involvement in volunteering can have a positive impact on individual happiness, but this impact is not always the same for everyone. There are various factors that influence whether an individual will experience increased happiness through participation in volunteering. Some of these include individual motivation, type of volunteering, social support, and the balance between contributions and rewards received (Haski-Leventhal et al., 2018). These factors can optimize or even reduce the positive impact of volunteering engagement on one's emotional well-being.

In addition to motivation, which is one of the most important factors in influencing the impact of volunteering on individual happiness, social support factors are also very influential in optimizing happiness through volunteering. Volunteering activities done in groups or together with friends or coworkers can strengthen social bonds and provide a greater sense of community, which in turn can improve emotional well-being (Penner, 2002). Individuals who feel accepted and valued within the volunteering community tend to feel greater happiness than those who volunteer in isolation.

The level of control individuals have over volunteering also affects its impact on happiness. Individuals who can choose the type of volunteering they want to do, as well as have flexibility in determining their time and commitment, tend to feel more satisfied and less burdened by social obligations (Finkelstein et al., 2005). This freedom allows individuals to enjoy the activities more, thus having a positive impact on their well-being.

One often overlooked but important factor is the balance between contributions made and rewards received. In highly taxing volunteer activities, where individuals give more than they receive, there can be feelings of burnout or frustration (Cnaan et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important to ensure that individuals feel valued and recognized for their contributions, even if these rewards are not always material. Social



rewards, such as thanks or public recognition, can help optimize the positive impact of volunteering on individual happiness.

Successful experiences in volunteering can also strengthen the positive impact on happiness. When individuals feel that they have achieved a goal or made a significant contribution in volunteering, they are likely to feel a sense of pride and accomplishment that enhances their well-being (Batson et al., 2002). These positive experiences become an important part of optimizing happiness through involvement in volunteering.

An individual's age and life stage can also influence how they perceive the impact of volunteering on their happiness. Research shows that younger people tend to seek meaning and new experiences through volunteering, while older people are more likely to engage in volunteering to build social relationships and feel useful to society (Musick & Wilson, 2003). Therefore, an individual's life stage may influence the type of volunteering they choose, which in turn influences its impact on happiness.

The importance of involvement in volunteering as part of self-identity is also a factor that can optimize its positive impact on happiness. When individuals feel that volunteering is an important part of who they are, they are more likely to feel happiness and fulfillment in the activity (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001). Self-identification with a volunteering role can increase a sense of meaning and purpose in life, which in turn has a positive impact on happiness.

The interpersonal experiences built during volunteering can also optimize the positive impact on happiness. Involvement in volunteering often involves interacting with people from different backgrounds, which can broaden perspectives and increase a sense of empathy and appreciation for diversity (Wilson, 2000). These experiences can enrich an individual's life and provide the happiness that comes from a sense of connection and understanding of others.

The influence of the social environment also plays an important role in influencing the impact of volunteering on individual happiness. Individuals who engage in volunteering in communities that are supportive and have values that align with their principles are more likely to feel greater happiness (Musick & Wilson, 2003). Conversely, if a person feels that they are not accepted or supported enough within the volunteering community, the positive impact on their happiness can be hindered.

Time availability is also an important factor in optimizing the impact of volunteering on happiness. Individuals who have enough time to engage in volunteering without feeling burdened by other

responsibilities tend to feel higher satisfaction in the activity (Shye, 2010). In contrast, those who feel that they have to sacrifice personal time or other obligations to engage in volunteering may experience stress and burnout, which can reduce their happiness.

Finally, the policy and management factors of volunteering in organizations or institutions can also influence the positive impact on happiness. Organizations that are able to create well-organized volunteer experiences, provide training, and create a supportive environment can improve the quality of volunteer experiences for individuals (Wilson & Musick, 1999). Good organizations also ensure that volunteers do not feel burdened and can experience psychological benefits from their participation.

## CONCLUSION

Individual's motivation for volunteering plays an important role in influencing their emotional well-being. Individuals who engage in volunteering due to internal drives, such as the desire to make a positive impact or gain meaning in life, tend to experience greater increases in happiness and well-being compared to those who engage due to external factors. This is because internal motivation allows individuals to feel a deeper sense of personal accomplishment, as well as enhancing social relationships and a sense of connectedness with others. Individuals who engage in volunteering due to social pressure or to gain external rewards do not always experience sustained well-being, and may even experience long-term burnout or boredom.

The volunteering activities have a more positive impact on emotional well-being, so it is important to encourage individuals to engage with strong internal motivation. Organizing volunteering activities that focus on achieving personal goals and meaning in life, rather than based solely on social expectations or external rewards, may provide greater benefits to participants in the long run. It is also important to recognize that the well-being derived from volunteering is greatly influenced by the type of activity undertaken, the social relationships established, as well as the depth of the individual's involvement in the activity.

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