Jurnal Personalia Pelajar 27(1): 65-77
https://doi.org/10.17576/personalia.2701.2024.10
ISSN 0128-2735

Impact of Demographics on Volunteering Patterns in UUM
(Kesan Demografi Terhadap Corak Sukarelawan di UUM)

NUR ALIA ZAMZURI* & MOHD ADIB ABD MUIN

ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, an increase in psychological symptoms such as anxiety, perceived stress, and depression was observed in the general population. University students, who are already at a higher risk for mental health disorders even under normal circumstances, have been the subject of research to understand the impact of demographics on volunteering patterns at Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). This study utilised primary data collected through a survey and employed content analysis to examine the research findings. The survey participants were drawn from the UUM students. Based on the collected demographic data, the analysis revealed a relationship between volunteerism and the mental health well-being of UUM students. The implications of this research suggest that UUM and similar institutions should develop more volunteer programs. Such initiatives could foster a supportive environment that enhances students' mental health and well-being, thereby contributing to the cultivation of a new generation of successful volunteers with a positive impact on both the students themselves and the broader society.

Keywords - Impact, Demographics, Volunteering, Patterns, UUM

ABSTRAK

Semasa pandemik COVID-19, peningkatan dalam gejala psikologi seperti kebimbangan, tekanan yang dirasakan, dan kemurungan diperhatikan dalam populasi umum. Pelajar universiti, yang sudah berisiko lebih tinggi untuk mengalami gangguan kesihatan mental walaupun dalam keadaan biasa, telah menjadi subjek penyelidikan untuk memahami kesan demografi terhadap corak sukarelawan di Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Kajian ini menggunakan data primer yang dikumpul melalui tinjauan dan menggunakan analisis kandungan untuk meneliti dapatan kajian. Peserta kaji selidik diambil daripada pelajar UUM. Berdasarkan data demografi yang dikumpul, analisis mendedahkan hubungan antara kesukarelawanan dan kesejahteraan kesihatan mental pelajar UUM. Implikasi kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa UUM dan institusi seumpamanya perlu membangunkan lebih banyak program sukarelawan. Inisiatif sedemikian boleh memupuk persekitaran yang menyokong yang meningkatkan kesihatan mental dan kesejahteraan pelajar, sekali gus menyumbang kepada pemupukan generasi baharu sukarelawan yang berjaya dengan impak positif kepada pelajar itu sendiri dan masyarakat yang lebih luas.

Kata kunci - Kesan, Demografi, Sukarelawan, Corak, UUM

INTRODUCTION

The mental well-being of young individuals presents a significant concern in public health issues. The presence of mental health issues among youth leads to compromised physical and psychological well-being that can persist throughout their adulthood (Bor et al., 2014). Fostering the mental well-being of young individuals is a fundamental aspect of nurturing their growth and enhancing their health and overall social welfare throughout their lives (Regional Committee for Europe, 2014). Given the elevated prevalence of mental health issues among this group, one might expect a proportional surge in seeking assistance and utilising available support services (Gulliver et al., 2010). However, the reality is that only a small fraction of young individuals actively seek and eventually gain access to professional support (Rickwood et al., 2005). Delays in seeking help can be lengthy and are prevalent even in countries with well-established healthcare accessibility (Radez et al., 2021).

Volunteering is a type of prosocial activity where individuals actively and willingly search for opportunities to help others in need. Volunteers give their time, energy, skills, and resources to benefit people in need without expecting monetary or non-monetary rewards in return (Omoto et al., 2020). Numerous studies have indicated that various factors influence the involvement of the youth generation in voluntary work. These factors encompass the wish to form new connections and the support and encouragement received from family, friends and institutions, which inspire and drive their active engagement in such endeavors (Nursey-Bray et al., 2022).

The benefits of volunteering to the general population have been well established by the robust body of scientific literature, as improved mental health, reduced depression, improved life satisfaction, and having a sense of self-worth are among the many psychological benefits that have been identified (Lawton et al., 2021). In Islamic perspective, the skills that volunteers should have in themselves, such as the properties of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, like *siddiq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (truthworthiness), *tabligh* (advocacy), *& fathonah* (wisdom). Also mentioned by Imam Al-Ghazali in his book *'Arbain Fi Usuluddin'*, the commendable nature such as *taubah, fear to Allah, mahabbah, ikhlas, zuhud, sabar, syukur, tawakkal, redha & zikrulmaut* (Mohd Adib, 2017).

Therefore, higher education must encourage students, especially undergraduates, to leverage student volunteering to become a valuable human capital for the nation and simultaneously enhance their mental health issues. Engaging in volunteerism serves as a means to encourage active learning, offering an experience that reinforces their dedication to civic participation, enriches their educational journey, and enhances their ability to make a positive impact on our communities (Mardhiyyah Sahri et al., 2013).

RESEARCH SIGNIFICANCE

The findings of the 'Impact of Demographics on Volunteering Patterns in UUM' study will significantly bolster student volunteerism, particularly in community service programs within the university among higher education students. By understanding the importance of student volunteering in overcoming mental health issues, UUM institutions can develop tailored volunteerism programs that align with their interests. Addressing the challenges faced by student volunteering through mentorship will create a supportive environment and enhance the mental health and well-being of the students. This will help universities nurture a new generation of successful volunteers, positively impacting both the students and the broader society. Equally significant, this study will hold benefits for the the country as the government can gain advantages from the involvement in managing areas, establishing goals and devising strategies.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quantitative Method

To investigate the relationship between volunteering and mental health well-being from a UUM perspective, a quantitative method using a Google Form survey was employed. The questionnaire was distributed to 100 UUM undergraduate students. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study. The Google Form survey consisted of questions related to demography and the motivations driving UUM students towards participating in volunteering, including questions regarding the specific challenges faced by students in their volunteering experience. The survey responses were collected anonymously to ensure confidentiality. The quantitative data was collected through the Google Form survey and then exported into Microsoft Excel; descriptive statistical analysis techniques such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the responses. The data were then summarised and presented using tables, graphs, and charts to provide a clear overview of the findings.



Google Form questionnaire

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section consists of analysis and interpretation. The data were collected from 100 UUM respondents through a structured questionnaire. The charts and graphs are based on the primary data collected. Aside from analysis based on the chart, new findings, author's comments on obtained results theoretical and practical implications of the obtained results were also discussed. Plus, agreement or disagreement with any previous finding were also included. Possible directions for future research on the relationship between volunteerism and mental health well-being among university students is highly encouraged.

Demographic Questions

Gender classification of the respondents

The pie chart of Fig.1 shows the gender classification of the respondents. The analysis shows that 25% of the respondents are male and 75% of the respondents are female. Hence, the majority of respondents are female.

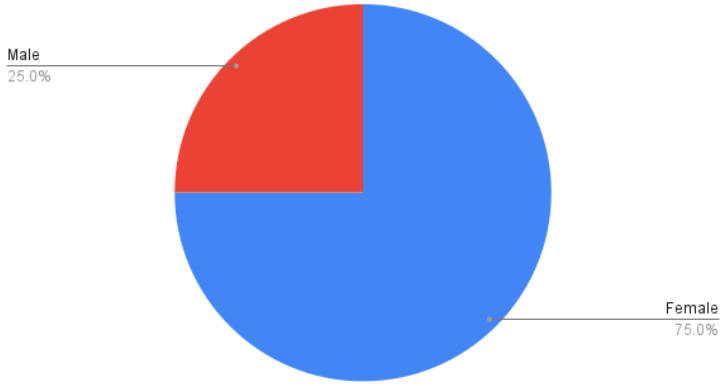


FIGURE 1. Gender classification of respondents

TABLE 1. Gender classification of the respondents

Gender classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	25	25
Female	75	75
Total	100	100

Age classification of the respondents

The age of the respondents is revealed by the data in Fig.2. In the classification, it is clear that only a small percentage of respondents are 26 to 30 years old (1%), while the majority are 21 to 25 years old (72%) and the rest is 18 to 20 years old.

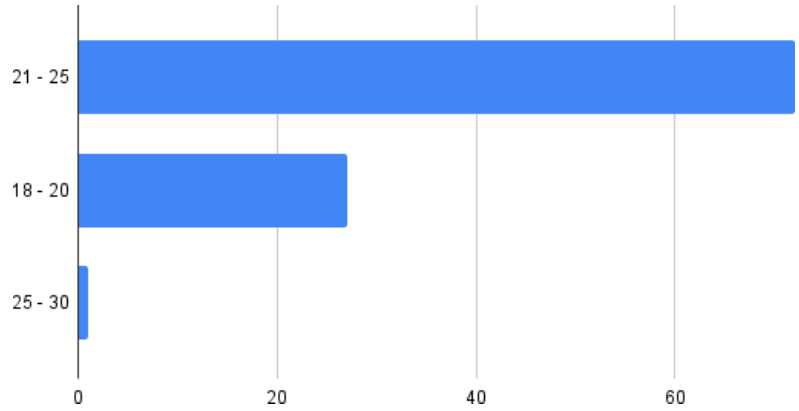


FIGURE 2. Age classification of respondents

TABLE 2. Age classification of the respondents

Age classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
18 - 20	27	27
21 - 25	72	72
26 - 30	1	1
Total	100	100

Race classification of the respondents

From Fig.3, the majority of responders are Malay (81%), while the minority is Indian (6%) and the rest is Chinese (13%).

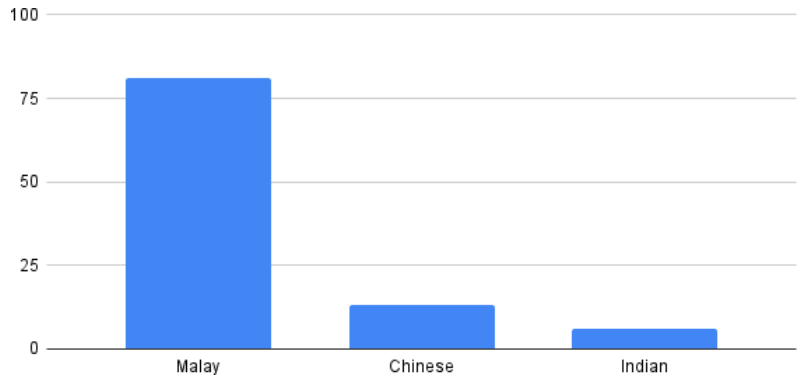


FIGURE 3. Race classification of respondents

TABLE 3. Race classification of the respondents

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Malay	81	81
Chinese	13	13
Indian	6	6
Total	100	100

College classification of the respondents

The information in Fig.5 reveals the respondents' colleges. According to the data, 14% of respondents are from the College of Law, Government, and International Studies (COLGIS), while 17% are from the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS), and majority of 69% of respondents are from the College of Business (COB).

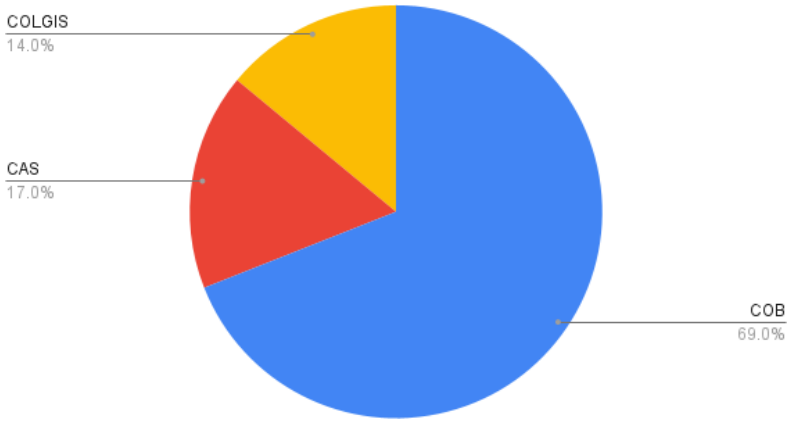


FIGURE 4. College classification of respondents

TABLE 4. College classification of the respondents

College classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
COLGIS	14	14
CAS	16	16
COB	69	69
Total	100	100

Semester classification of the respondents

The table shows the semester classification of the respondents. According to the data, semester four students account for the majority of the respondents (45%), while semester seven students account for the least (1%).

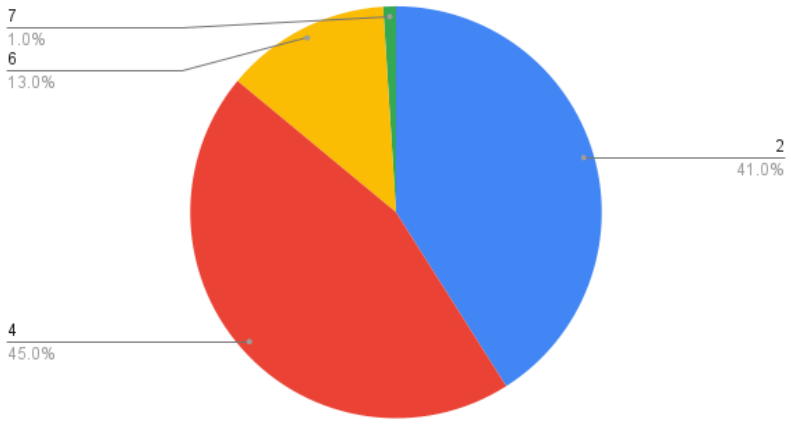


FIGURE 5. Semester classification of respondents

TABLE 5. Semester classification of the respondents

Semester classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
2	41	41
4	45	45
6	13	13
7	1	1
Total	100	100

Program classification of the respondents

The pie chart shows the program classification of respondents. From the analysis, it is clear that the majority of them have a Bachelor's in Human Resources Management (16%), while Tourism Management, International Affairs Management and Social Work are the minor (2%).

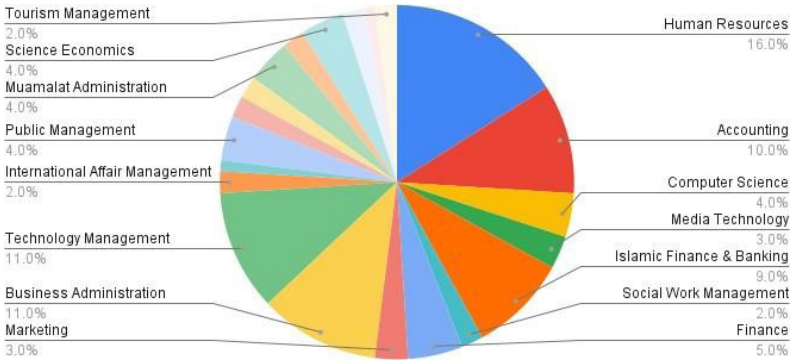


FIGURE 6. Program classification of respondents

TABLE 6. Program classification of the respondents

Program classification	Percentage (%)
Tourism Management	2
Science Economics	4
Muamalat Administration	4
Public Management	4
International Affair Management	2
Technology Management	11
Business Administration	11
Marketing	3
Human Resources Management	16
Accounting	10
Computer Science	4
Media Technology	3
Islamic Finance & Banking	9
Social Work Management	2
Finance	5
Total	100

Participation in volunteerism

The information shows the respondents participation in volunteerism. According to the data, 25% of the respondents are male and 75% of the respondents are female.

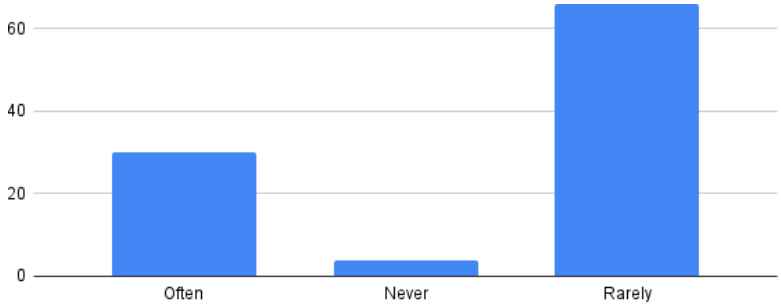


FIGURE 7. Participation in volunteerism

TABLE 7. Participation in volunteerism

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Often	41	41
Rarely	45	45
Never	1	1
Total	100	100

Relationship Between Volunteerism and Mental Health Well-being

Persons who motivate volunteerism pursuit

Drawing insights from the data displayed in the pie chart Fig.8, we can observe that most respondents (65%) are highly self-driven when it comes to venturing into volunteer activities. Various factors, such as the wish to form new connections and the support and encouragement received from family, friends, and institutions, have all contributed to this trend. These factors have empowered students to take the initiative to help others in need without asking for a return. Next, a large chunk of 27% also agreed that friends highly inspire them. This shows the important role of a friend in their daily life as an undergraduate student. This is because their success is a real-life example, offers peer support networking opportunities, and fosters a sense of community that leads students to pursue their volunteer experience.

Besides, 3% of the chart shows that inspiration from public figures. Their role model status, aspirational lifestyles, media exposure, global impact, and influence of these figures on social media motivate students to get

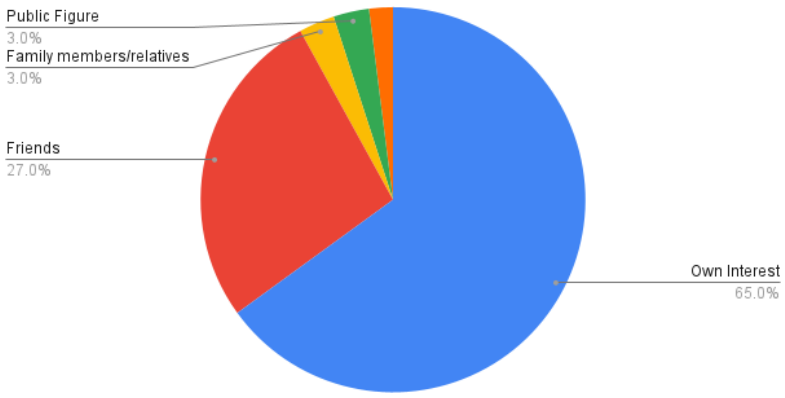


FIGURE 8. Persons who motivate volunteerism pursuit

TABLE 8. Persons who motivate volunteerism pursuit

Classification	Percentage (%)
Public Figure	3
Family members/relatives	3
Own interest	65
Friends	27
Total	100

out of their comfort zone and positively impact people. Apart from that, 3% admit to being inspired by family members or relatives who are believed to have volunteer experience. The familial influence, mentorship opportunities, and shared values motivate students to pursue volunteerism as a viable and meaningful hobby while studying.

Connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being

Based on the data collected, 83% of the respondents admit that there is a connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being. In comparison, only 17% of the respondents responded with 'maybe', indicating their uncertainty about this connection. Last but not least, 0% said there is no connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being.

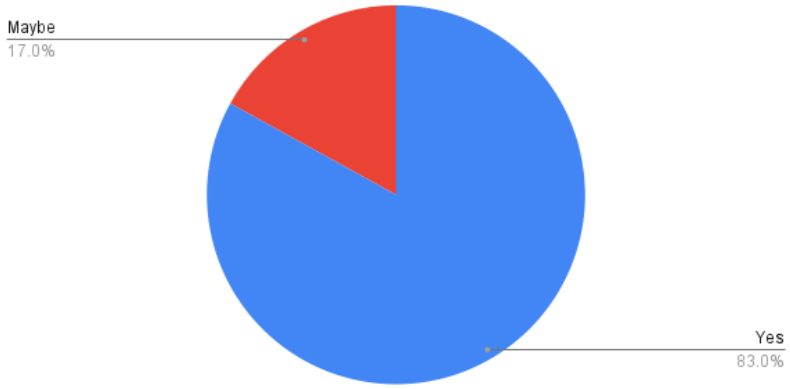


FIGURE 9. Connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being

TABLE 9. Connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes	83	83
Maybe	17	17
No	0	0
Total	100	100

The justification based on Question 9

Respondents were required to justify their response to Question 9. After analysing the data, 83% of respondents believe participating in volunteerism can improve mental health and reduce depression. In comparison, 13% are not really sure whether there is a connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being. Only 4% said participating in volunteerism does not affect mental health well-being.

This indicates that UUM undergraduate students have been exposed to the importance of volunteerism and how it affects mental health and well-being. However, 17% of UUM students are still not sure about the relationship between these two. This ignorance can lead to unawareness about leveraging

students volunteering in mental health enhancement. In order to increase the awareness, UUM institutions can develop volunteerism programs that can create a supportive environment and enhance the mental health well-being of the students.

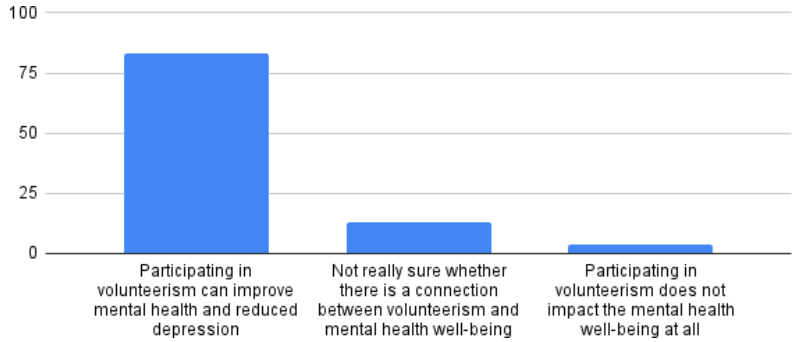


FIGURE 10. The justification based on Question 9

TABLE 10. The justification based on Question 9

Classification	Percentage (%)
Participating in volunteerism can improve mental health and reduce depression.	83
Not really sure whether there is a connection between volunteerism and mental health well-being	13
Participating in volunteerism does not affect mental health well-being at all.	4
Total	100

Main characteristic of volunteering

From the chart's data in Fig.11, it is evident that a large portion of 55% of the respondents agreed that 'willing to help' is the main characteristic in volunteering that each student must have to be a good volunteer that can lead to having a lot more positive attitude in order to help more people in need. Moreover, 17% of the respondents choose 'Passionate' as being a volunteer is not something that everyone can easily be. A strong determination is needed in order to be a volunteer. Other than that, a small portion of 16% believe that 'positive' is what it takes to be a volunteer. By spending time in service to others, volunteers report feeling a sense of meaning and appreciation, both given and received which can lead to stress-reducing effects. The rest of the respondents choose 'Organized, Patient and Reliable" as the characteristics that a volunteer should have. These characteristics also play a significant role in volunteerism as they believe that volunteers can help in enhancing mental health and well-being of the undergraduate students.

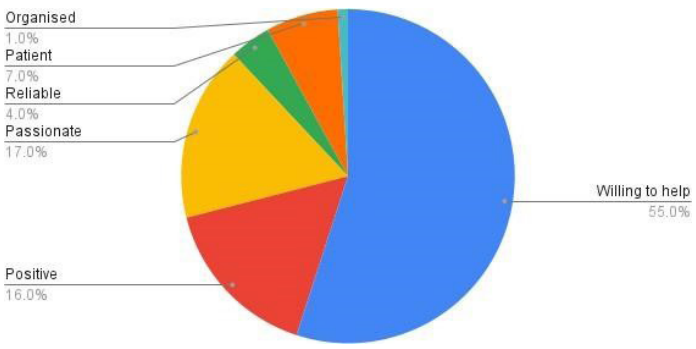


FIGURE 11. The main characteristic of volunteering

TABLE 11. The main characteristic of volunteering

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Organised	1	1
Patient	7	7
Reliable	4	4
Passionate	17	17
Positive	16	16
Willing to help	55	55
Total	100	100

Motivations of students in participating volunteerism

Drawing insights from the data displayed in the chart Fig.12, we can observe that 41% of the respondents believe that 'personal growth and development' is the main motivation for students to participate in volunteerism. This means a strong desire in the students to pursue a better self in the future. On the other hand, 19% agreed with 'networking and social' as the primary motivator in pursuing volunteerism. This can be shown by the example of a public figure who is able to make connections by volunteering. Next, 'The desire to make a difference' was chosen by 15% of respondents. They must be highly driven by their desire to realise personal dreams, achieve autonomy, positively impact, overcome challenges, and create a unique identity.

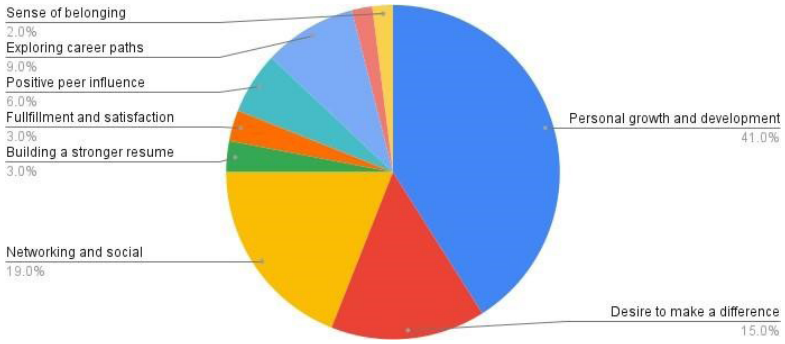


FIGURE 12. Motivations of students in participating volunteerism

TABLE 12. Motivations of students in participating volunteerism

Classification	Percentage (%)
Sense of belonging	2
Exploring career paths	9
Positive peer influence	6
Fulfillment and satisfaction	3
Building a stronger resume	3
Networking and social	19
Personal growth and development	41
Desire to make a difference	15
Total	100

Type of supports in volunteering

Upon reviewing the chart Fig.13, 49% admitted that 'training and orientation' is the type of support that volunteers should have which is by getting training on how to be a volunteer. This can lead to volunteer development as a good leader. Next, 30% believe that 'supervision and mentorship' is the most important type of support that is needed while only 21% believe that 'resource and materials' is the type of support in volunteering. All these types of support are actually essentials in volunteerism since they play a significant role in order to make sure the volunteering program is a success.

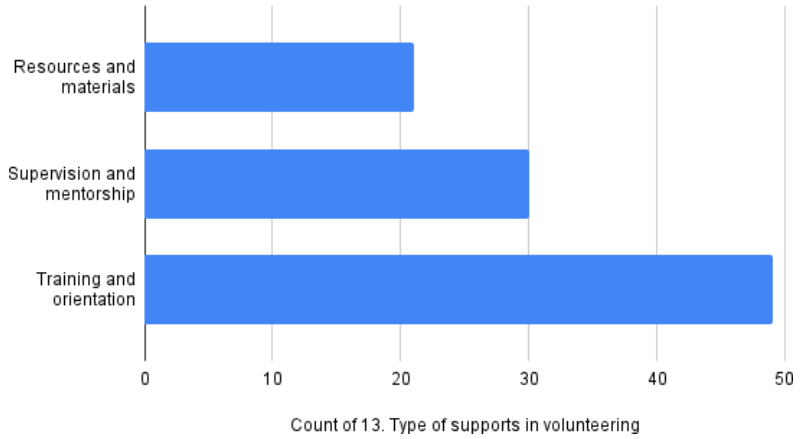


FIGURE 13. Type of support in volunteering

TABLE 13. Type of support in volunteering

Classification	Percentage (%)
Resource and materials	21
Supervision and mentorship	30
Training and orientation	49
Total	100

Preferred age for participating in volunteerism

By examining the chart in Fig.14, we can better understand the preferred age for venturing into volunteerism. Data depict that 70% of the major agreed that 20-25 years old is the perfect time for exposure to volunteerism. This is because this age group often possesses a unique blend of enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge, making it an ideal time to explore and pursue entrepreneurial ventures. In distinct, only 2% of respondents believe that age 25-30 is not ideal for pursuing any kind of volunteerism because they have already reached an age where they should focus more on their career rather than a hobby.

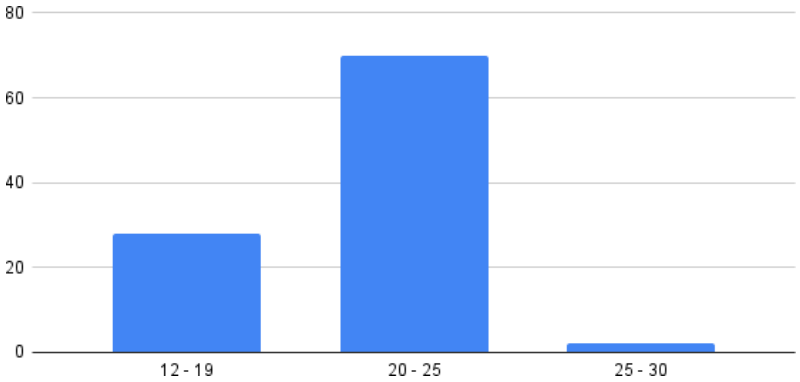


FIGURE 14. Preferred age for participating in volunteerism

TABLE 14. Preferred age for participating in volunteerism

Classification	Percentage (%)
12 - 19	28
20 - 25	70
25 - 30	2
Total	100

Challenges During Volunteering

Challenges faced by Students During Volunteering

From the chart's data Fig.15, it can be shown that 'time commitment' takes a major portion (53%) out of the chart as respondents admit that time management is the biggest challenge as a student since students have other responsibilities such as studying and getting good grades. Hence, students with bad grades will avoid participating in volunteering. Next, 14% of respondents agreed to 'balancing personal life' and 'burnout and exhaustion' as hindrances. This is due to many assignments, coursework and campus events that keep them busy. Besides, at 10%, 'lack of communication skills' is also agreed by many as a volunteering challenge since joining volunteerism requires a lot of communication. The rest scattered at 1-5% respectively.

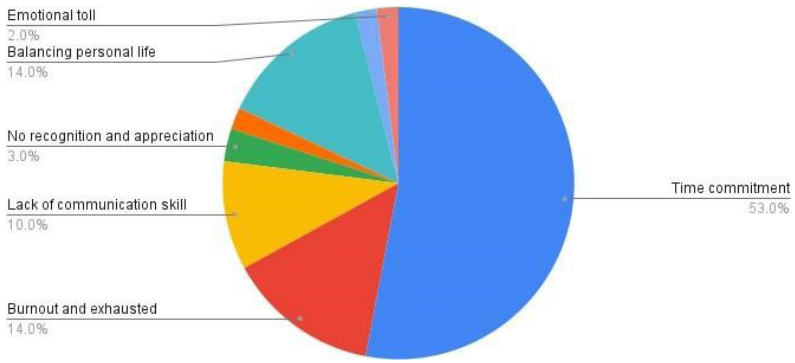


FIGURE 15. Challenges faced by students during volunteering

TABLE 15. Challenges faced by students during volunteering

Classification	Percentage (%)
Emotional toll	2
Balancing personal life	14
No recognition and appreciation	3
Lack of communication skill	10
Burnout and exhausted	14
Time commitment	53
Total	100

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, these research findings indicate a significant and positive relationship between volunteerism and mental health well-being in undergraduate students. Through quantitative surveys, valuable insights were gained into the unique dynamics of student volunteering at UUM. The findings reveal that UUM students are driven by various motivations, including self-employment, the desire to apply skills learned in lectures, and the desire to indulge in volunteerism. However, students also face challenges, mostly from burnout and exhaustion, time management, and balancing their personal lives.

This study will surely convince UUM institutions to develop more volunteer programs that can create a supportive environment and enhance students' mental health and well-being. This will help universities nurture a new generation of successful volunteers, positively impacting both the students and the broader society. These findings highlight the relationship between volunteerism and mental health well-being and the students' challenges to pursue volunteering. In short, this study provides an in-depth exploration of volunteerism definitions, motivations and challenges students must overcome and how it relates to mental health issues. Understanding these motivations and challenges is vital for fostering a culture of volunteerism among students for mental health enhancement.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors would like to thank Inasis Yayasan Al-Bukhary and Bank Muamalat for funding this project and for giving valuable insight and guidance throughout the development of this project.

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Nur Alia Zamzuri*
School of Business Management (SBM).
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

Mohd Adib Abd Muin
Islamic Business School (IBS),
Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 Sintok, Kedah, Malaysia

*Corresponding author: nuraliazamzuri@gmail.com