

***Can Volunteering Choices Reflect Job Expectations? – Motivational Impact of Perceived Self-Sufficiency and Personal Religious Beliefs***

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**Abstract**

In this paper we set out to explore the impact of perceived self-sufficiency and personal religious beliefs on the connection between motivation to volunteer (VFI) as theorized by Clary and Snyder (1998) and job expectations which students possess before entering the workforce for the first time. Our goal is to find out the relation between six personal and social functions (values, understanding, social, career, protective and enhancement) potentially served by volunteering and students' first job expectations, while controlling for psychological variables of perceived self-sufficiency (locus of control) and religiousness. Our sample is composed of 130 Croatian and international students in their junior and senior years of study. Methods used are quantitative and the research nature is correlational. Results show that students whose locus of control is more internal are more motivated to volunteer before entering the workforce. Internal locus of control leads to having intrinsically - oriented motivational preferences upon entering the workforce. Finally, results show that measurement of future job candidates' religiousness in the context of job selection yields no predictive value.

Keywords: Motivation to Volunteer, Job Expectations, Locus of Control, Religiousness

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## Introduction

Researchers have spent a lot of time trying to shine a light on the phenomenon of volunteering, devising numerous theories and models which all possess one common goal – understanding whether the nature of volunteering revolves around selfish or purely altruistic motives (Coghlan & Fennell, 2009). Some scholars are interested in the utilitarian nature of volunteering, looking at it from the point of behavioral psychology (Meier & Stutzer, 2007; Jackson & Adarlo, 2014). The act of helping others is associated with the concept of positive reinforcement, which means that the outcome produced by helping others (such as verbal praise and status) is rewarding in itself. As a result, chance for the volunteering behavior at hand to be repeated is increased. Other scholars are more interested in the altruistic nature of volunteering, perceiving it as an activity that serves a more noble purpose (Parker, 1997; Kahana et al., 2013). Regardless of this dual perspective, the fact remains that volunteering is an excellent alternative to a paid job as it provides experience, knowledge, and skills that can increase students' employability (Leko-Simic & Peric, 2018). The more detailed take on motivation to volunteer was brought by Clary and Snyder (1998). They enlist six functions (values, understanding, social, career, protective & enhancement) and argue that every one of them provides a certain form of positive feedback to the self.

In this research we will try to explore the connection between students' aforementioned volunteering functions and job expectations they have upon entering the workforce. With jobs paradigm switching from serving merely existential needs to jobs being a medium for self-development and self-actualization – researchers began to investigate what do individuals expect from a workplace. For instance, Swiatek (2000) had discussed students' and employers' expectations from higher education in regards to the way it can enrich them when entering the workforce for the first time. The author points out that young people would like to position themselves in society and most of them think of the university studies as a good pathway to proper job opportunities (Weligamage & Siengthai, 2003). However, students' incentives vary a lot when it comes to their job expectations. Some students are motivated intrinsically – seeking opportunities for personal growth, maintaining work-life balance and having companies' ethical standards aligned with their own (Stansbie, Nash & Jack, 2013). Other students, on the other hand, are motivated extrinsically – seeking opportunities for ladder climbing, acquiring lucrative compensations and getting plenty of benefits (Klein & Weiss, 2011).

Another theoretical framework our research is grounded in delves into cognitive psychology and our perceived self-sufficiency. We take into consideration the concept called locus of control, which describes the extent to which people attribute their personal outcomes to their own agency on one end, as opposed to other peoples' actions and/or randomness on another end. The former dimension characterizes an internal locus of control while the latter characterizes an external locus of control. In other words: "Internal locus of control is defined as the perception that events are contingent on one's own behavior or one's own permanent characteristics, while external control is characterized by the feeling that outcomes are more a result of fate, luck or chance" (Österman et al., 1999). Research shows that internal locus of control leads to more driven and more generally motivated workers, via mediating effect of intrinsic motivation (Yi Li et al., 2015). We will try to prove that same connection

exists between internal locus of control and more driven volunteers as well, with mediating effect of intrinsic motivation stemming from intrinsically oriented job expectations.

Other theoretical framework we will closely link to volunteering functions and job expectations has to do with personal religious believes. The question poses itself: which cultural factors produce this link between motivational forces on one hand, and religiousness and locus of control on the other?

## **Literature Review**

As for the connection between the locus of control (LoC) and volunteering functions, recent research shows that employees with the internal LoC, who were dissatisfied with their jobs, were more likely to volunteer for the reasons of personal growth and skill advancement, thus postulating the connection between the internal LoC and intrinsic job expectations (Lefcourt, 2014; Giles, 1997). Furthermore, research shows that employee's future motivation for self-advancement and personal agency in form of employee involvement – are both predicted by the internal LoC (Allen & Van Norman, 1996). In the context of our research, when exploring the structure of participant's volunteering functions, this finding emphasizes the importance of taking LoC assessment into consideration. However, one recent study suggests that the causal connection between the LoC and volunteering might perhaps be of a mutual nature. Namely, it has been shown that volunteering experience itself can lead to an internal shift in volunteer's LoC (Desai, Dalal & Rawal, 2018) and change attitudes towards work (e.g., Korican Lajtman, Ocak & Oblakovic, 2019). Hence, involving in various forms of volunteering might be beneficial for the work-related motivation of future employees. Thus, we hypothesize that the connection between intrinsic volunteering functions and locus of control will be positive and statistically significant. When the intrinsic portion of future job expectations is controlled for, this connection will become weaker, thus implying the moderating effect of the intrinsic motivation.

As for the connection between religiousness and volunteering, recent research shows that binary variables, such as ones that put people in two boxes: religious & nonreligious, do not help with the prediction of participant's general motivation to volunteer, nor with the prediction of the subtle nuances in participant's volunteering functions. One research has shown that, in order to determine and predict participant's volunteering efforts, we have to assess their very approach towards the notion of religion. This specific study has assessed the participant's approach towards religion alongside the intrinsic-extrinsic spectrum. Intrinsic religiousness implies a deep and personal sense of one's religion, while extrinsic one implies perceiving religiousness as a mean to a certain end – whether it be moral superiority, social praise or individual well-being. It has been shown that the individuals who report higher levels of volunteer activity have scored significantly higher on the intrinsic scale of religiousness (Bernt, 1989). Other researchers also hypothesize the connection between religiousness and motivation to volunteer, manifested in participant's intrinsic outlook towards the volunteering activity itself (Uslaner, 2002). Helping others is regarded as an important value inside the religious communities – more frequent religious service attendance was even associated with higher proclivity

towards volunteering (Haggard et al., 2015). However, intrinsic religiousness is not synonymous to intrinsic motivation per se – former is a biopsychosocial construct, while the latter is more of a spiritual construct. Thus, we hypothesize that the connection between future job expectations (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and overall motivation to volunteer, when controlled for religiousness, will remain unchanged.

### **Volunteering Functions**

We have already mentioned that Clary and Snyder's (1998) VFI model encompasses six volunteering functions. Values function implies an altruistic outlook for the volunteer and thereby introduces positive self-evaluation to self-concept. Career function provides the much-needed notion of being connected inside the business network, which benefits the future career of a volunteer. Understanding function provides the volunteer with a required set of skills which they cannot acquire through formal education in their respective fields. Further on, some volunteers rely on Social function to serve their need for socialization and getting along with their peers. This way they are able to practice their social skills whilst doing something noble, making acquaintances along the way. Moreover, some volunteers even perceive volunteering work as a part of their psychological development, serving an enhancement function. Psychological categories such as self-esteem, self-respect, assertiveness and autonomy can all be improved and worked on through engagement in volunteering activities. Finally, the last function is called Protective function and it provides the volunteers with a safety net that helps them to cope with internal conflicts and compensate them through helping others. For example, to dismantle the feelings of guilt and selfishness and escape them by doing something that will lead to societies' praise (Clary et al., 1998).

Thus, we hypothesize that the connection between overall motivation to volunteer and locus of control will be positive and statistically significant. When the intrinsic portion of future job expectations is controlled for, this connection will become weaker, thus implying the moderating effect of the intrinsic motivation.

### **Methodology**

Our sample counted 130 Croatian and International students, currently enrolled into undergraduate programs at Zagreb School of Economics and Management (ZSEM). Sample was obtained via convenience-sampling method.

The nature of this research was correlational, with a design structure observing four major variables (volunteering functions measured by 18 items, expectations from work measured by 12 items, locus of control measured by 12 items and religious beliefs measured by 8 items) and one set of demographic variables (measured by 4 items). Data was collected via survey method, conducted via both PAP and computer-assisted questionnaire designs.

Reliability analysis shows that locus of control scale produced a moderate Cronbach Alpha score ( $\alpha=0.62$ ), while expectations from work, volunteering functions and religious beliefs scales yielded an excellent Cronbach Alpha scores ( $\alpha=0.80$ ,  $\alpha=0.90$ ,  $\alpha=0.96$ , respectively).

## Results

The connection between overall motivation to volunteer and locus of control was positive and statistically significant. When the intrinsic portion of future job expectations is controlled for, this connection becomes weaker – which indicates a moderating effect yielded by intrinsic motivation. Statistical significance in case of full correlation is 0.01 ( $t=0,26$ ,  $df=129$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ) ; but in case of partial correlation, it is 0.05 ( $t=0,18$ ,  $df=129$ ,  $p < 0,05$ ).

Furthermore, the connection between intrinsic volunteering functions and locus of control was positive and statistically significant ( $t=0,24$ ,  $df=129$ ,  $p < 0,01$ ). When the intrinsic portion of future job expectations is controlled for, this connection overall ceases to be statistically significant ( $t=0,17$ ,  $df=129$ ,  $p > 0,05$ ).

Finally, the connection between future job expectations (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and overall motivation to volunteer, when controlled for religiousness, has remained positive and unchanged (from  $p < 0,01$  to  $p < 0,01$ ).

## Discussion

Our results suggest that students whose locus of control is more internal are more motivated to volunteer before entering the workforce. Our results also suggest that, when controlling for the intrinsic portion of their job expectations when entering the workforce, the connection between Overall motivation to volunteer and locus of control becomes slightly weaker – which indicates a moderating effect yielded by intrinsic motivation. In other words, internal locus of control coincides with having intrinsically-oriented motivational preferences upon entering the workforce – that is a valuable piece of information for a company that wants to select the right person for the job.

In terms of volunteering functions, the results show that internal locus of control is positively connected with intrinsic volunteering functions (understanding, values, and enhancement), meaning that students with internal locus of control will choose volunteering opportunities that provide them with a room for personal and professional growth, while volunteering under conditions where the organizational values are aligned with their own. As we have already posed, internal locus of control is something that can be nurtured and attained. Therefore, by its association with internal volunteering functions, building an internal LoC also builds up students' proclivity towards intrinsically oriented volunteering positions, which could impact their professional choices upon entering the job market. Companies that want this intrinsic orientation to overspill into their workplace culture can use this information when selecting for new employees. Bear in mind that this strategic maneuver couldn't be possible without also measuring the LoC variable – this presents us with a strong argument for including the LoC measures into standard test-batteries for job selection. Who wouldn't consider the implementation of LoC measure if they are certain it will help weed out those candidates that are not suited for the position, maybe because of their maladaptive outlook towards task ownership or control hierarchies within the workplace.

Finally, our research shows that the connection between future job expectations (both intrinsic and extrinsic) and overall motivation to volunteer, when controlled for religiousness, has remained positive and unchanged. This finding implies that religiousness does not mediate the connection between future job expectations and overall motivation to volunteer, meaning that measurement of future job candidates' religiousness in the context of job selection yields no predictive value.

### **Practical Implications**

The implications of our research make a reasonable case for the utilization of volunteering programs within academia – by doing that, universities can produce better equipped future job market entrants. Also, institutionalized volunteering within academia can subsequently make an impact on students' locus of control, shifting it towards the internal end of the continuum. As we've already noted, some studies suggest that volunteering activity itself can influence one's affinity towards internal attributions of own actions (Desai, Dalal & Rawal, 2018). This type of diligence and positive mindset is certainly something that every academic institution wants to instill in its' students. Moreover, the fact that institutionalized volunteering leads to an increased motivation among future job market entrants should incentivize the academia to implement mandatory volunteering into curriculums.

Furthermore, a good case has also been made for the utilization of volunteering programs within companies – by getting involved into volunteering programs and by sponsoring them, companies can improve the acquisition process of future interns – customizing the environment they want their future employees to train in. The very title of this research poses the question: can volunteering choices reflect job expectations – the answer is yes. Our research has discovered a specific relationship between overall affinity to volunteer and preferred motivational outlook (extrinsic or intrinsic) that future employees could possess upon entering the workforce (reflected in their job expectations). Motivated and competent employees are more efficient and less dangerous for the company in the long run, in terms of unplanned costs (Richards, Skreblin Kirbis & Korican, 2009). To prevent these costs, companies can offer tailored volunteering programs to students and, by doing that – impact the development of preferred motivational outlook (intrinsic or extrinsic) they will want them to possess when performing on entry level jobs. This is a prime example of preselection because the very fact that someone choose one volunteering program over the other (for whatever reason) certainly tells us something about that person. This information may disclose preferences towards receiving intrinsic or extrinsic incentives when looking for a first job, therefore contributing a predictive value to the selection process.

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