

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:FS 2011

Department:Parks, Recreation, & Tourism

Degree:MS

Title:The Functional Approach to Volunteerism in Organizational Volunteers

The act of volunteering has been described as "any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, organization or group (Wilson, 2000, p. 215)." Such prosocial behavior is carried out by an array of individuals whose involvement in numerous helping activities are linked to a variety of altruistic, ego-oriented and other influences. Because of the previously understood and future contributions of volunteers, this study sought to broaden and update the demography, attitudes, motives, outcomes and commitment of volunteers using a functional approach. A variation of Clary et al.'s (1998) Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) was administered to two distinct organizational volunteer samples from mid-Missouri. Electronic questionnaires were disseminated to volunteers from each affiliate over the summer of 2011. Demographic results were consistent with most previous studies, which portrayed the mid-Missouri volunteer as primarily white, middle aged, highly-educated, financially stable and female. In terms of motivation and outcomes, the values function was considered the most important driving force for voluntary activity. The functional constructs of understanding, self-enhancement, social, career and ego-protection were also present in secondary varying order among organizations. Volunteers from these samples were also highly ambitious to continue volunteering one full year in the future and were not overtly influenced by organizational intent. Though the results of this study are not fully representative of the complete administration of the VFI or to all volunteers and locales, they do help reaffirm previously obtained findings that used a similar functional approach and shed light on a few additional nuances toward the investigation of volunteerism.