

## **MOTIVATIONS AND BENEFITS OF STUDENT VOLUNTEERING IN CANADA**

Young people volunteer for different motives and benefits than older people. A major motivator for young people is the opportunity to gain work-related experience, skills, and qualifications that can help them in their education and careers. For example, more than half of 15- to 19-year-olds in Canada said they had volunteered to improve their job opportunities. Volunteering brings outcomes, or impacts, for students, communities, education institutions, and employers. The most important reasons for volunteering were as follows: to help someone in their community; to learn new skills; to respond to their needs or skills; and, to help gain experience to benefit their future career.

The survey focused on formal volunteering, defining volunteer experiences as “giving freely of your time to help others through organizations.” A broad definition of student volunteering was utilized, covering activities that were both internal and external to the university setting. Students were asked if they had volunteered in the last 12 months in eight types of organizations: religious organizations, human service organizations, sport or cultural organizations, community organizations, student clubs or other university organizations, neighbourhood organizations, local activist groups, and youth organizations. Students were also asked how often they volunteer. Here we classify those selecting “weekly” or “monthly” as regular volunteers and those selecting “occasionally” as occasional volunteers. The “occasional” volunteers engaged in time-delimited activities or events less than once a month.

To determine their motivations for volunteering as well as the motivations they attribute to other people, students were asked why they volunteer, and non-volunteers were also asked why they think (other) people volunteer, by agreeing or disagreeing with 15 statements (using a five-point Likert scale). The items were based on the Volunteer Function Inventory and were modified to include a number of instrumental

motivations related to resumé building and work experience. These motivations are collected into three groups.

First, **instrumental/careerrelated motivations** related to resume building:

- to put volunteering on CV (resumé) when applying for a job;
- to put volunteering on CV for admission to higher education;
- to make new contacts that might help a business career; and
- to help one get a foot in the door for paid employment.

Second, **altruistic/value-driven motivations**:

- it is important to help others, to work for a cause that is important;
- to learn about a cause;
- to make one feel better; and
- to give one a new perspective.

Third, **social/ego-defensive motivations** were measured by the following items:

- to make new friends;
- because my friends volunteer;
- people close to me influenced me to volunteer; I was advised to do so by a career advisor or family member;
- volunteering offers a good escape from one's troubles; and
- it relieves some of the guilt over being more fortunate than others.

Students also stated their level of agreement with 11 benefits of volunteering for the volunteer as derived from the literature. Altruistic/value-driven benefits were measured by:

- self satisfaction;
- the opportunity to learn new things; and
- development of trust among people in society.

Instrumental/career-related benefits were measured by:

- job/career experience;
- professional networking;
- references for employment or college;
- leadership skills; and
- fulfilling requisites for government or school program (service requirements).

Finally, social/ego-defensive benefits were measured by two items:

- social contact; and
- recognition from colleagues/friends.