

Understanding How Age Affects the Relationships Between Well-Known Predictors of Volunteerism and the Duration and Intensity of Volunteering

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Abstract

Formal volunteering within the context of an organization represents a substantial social and economic contribution to the United States. Volunteerism has been explained by various theories including: functional, behaviorist, exchange, social resources, role identity, sustained volunteerism, and the three-stage model. Because volunteerism spans all ages, a developmental perspective is necessary since age ranges of the volunteers might affect various factors related to volunteer commitment. The study reported here investigated how age affects the relationship between predictors of volunteerism and the duration and intensity of volunteering among a sample of hospital volunteers, ages 18 and older, recruited from hospital volunteer programs of the Metropolitan Detroit area. Participants completed self-report measures assessing demographic characteristics, reasons to volunteer, satisfaction, role identity, and prosocial personality. Results revealed partial support for the hypotheses. Reasons to volunteer were more strongly correlated with intensity of volunteering than duration. Age groups of volunteers significantly differed in the duration of volunteering, the desire to gain career related experience and new learning experiences, and the personality characteristic of helpfulness. Years of education, the desire to gain career related experience, and age groups of volunteers was the most parsimonious model for predicting duration of volunteering. For predicting intensity, years of education, satisfaction, helpfulness, the desire to gain career related experience, age groups, and the interactions between age groups and education and satisfaction was the best model. Thus, volunteerism does appear to be affected by age with older volunteers volunteering for a longer duration than younger volunteers. The relationship between age and intensity of volunteering is mediated by the volunteers' level of satisfaction and years of education.

Key Words: volunteer commitment, reasons to volunteer, prosocial personality, age differences, hospital

Introduction

Formal volunteering within the context of an organization represents a substantial social and economic contribution to the United States. According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau

of Labor and Statistics, approximately 63.4 million people, or 26.8% of the population, ages 16 or older, volunteered through or for an organization at least once between September 2008 and September 2009 (United States Department of Labor, 2010).

They provided 8.1 billion hours of service with an estimated dollar value of \$169 billion worth of time.

Because of the great social and financial benefits from work by volunteers, recruitment and retention of volunteers is vital. Thus, it is important to understand the factors (i.e., personality characteristics, reasons to volunteer) that influence a person's choice to become and stay a volunteer (Elshaug & Metzger, 2001). The age of the volunteer may also play a key role in further understanding volunteerism (Boling, 2006). With a greater understanding of volunteers, volunteer organizations can design and implement recruitment campaigns and institutional activities targeted toward specific populations and towards retention efforts.

Volunteerism within the organizational context has been defined as long-term, planned, prosocial behaviors that benefit strangers (Penner, 2002). While researchers have posed many other definitions of volunteerism, Penner's definition seems to best describe volunteerism within the context of an organization and is of interest as it relates to this study. As there are many definitions of volunteerism, there are also many theories of volunteerism (Clary et al., 1998; Wilson, 2000; Smith, 1982; Smith, 1994; Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood, & Craft, 1995; Wilson & Musick, 1997; Grube & Piliavin, 1996; Piliavin & Callero, 1991; Penner, Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007) that have been studied.

Outcomes regarding volunteering have been studied by measuring duration (length of volunteer commitment) and intensity (number of hours volunteered each week) of volunteering. Factors that have been studied in relation to these outcomes have included the following: prosocial personality traits (Other Oriented Empathy and Helpfulness) (Penner, Fritzsche,

Craiger, & Freifeld, 1995); reasons to volunteer (values, understanding, social, career, protective, enhancement) (Clary et al., 1998), satisfaction, the development of a role identity (Finkelstein, Penner, & Brannick, 2005), educational level (Burke & Hall, 1986; Penner, 2002), age (Penner, 2002), and degree of religiousness (Penner, 2002).

Factors Affecting Length and Intensity of Volunteering

Studies assessing factors that affect length of volunteer commitment have produced mixed results. Some researchers have indicated that prosocial personality characteristics, satisfaction, and fulfillment of reasons to volunteer are positively related to volunteer longevity (Penner, 2002; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Porter & Steers, 1973; Omoto & Snyder, 1995). Others (Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Finkelstein, et al., 2005; Davis, Hall, & Meyer, 2003) have indicated they were unrelated to length of service. Other factors that have been shown to have a positive relationship with length of volunteer commitment have included the development of social networks/friendships (Omoto & Snyder, 1995), motivation (Omoto & Snyder, 1995), the development of a role identity (Finkelstein et al., 2005), education (Burke & Hall, 1986; Penner, 2002), age (Penner, 2002) and religion (Penner, 2002).

Studies assessing factors that affect amount of time spent volunteering have produced mixed results. Penner (2002) found that Other-Oriented Empathy and Helpfulness were positively and significantly related to time spent volunteering, while Davis et al. (2003) and Finkelstein et al. (2005) found no significant relationship between time spent volunteering and these characteristics. Time spent volunteering was positively related to satisfaction (Davis et al.; Finkelstein, 2008),

and with the fulfillment of two reasons to volunteer (Values – to express concern for others and Understanding – to acquire new learning experiences) (Finkelstein, 2008). Other factors that have been shown to have a positive relationship with the amount of time spent volunteering have included the development of a role identity (Finkelstein et al., 2005; Grube & Piliavin, 2000), education (Penner, 2002), and religion (Penner, 2002).

Review of the volunteer populations selected for the research studies above reveals that the researchers have studied primarily two populations, college students (Clary et al., 1998) and elderly volunteers (Clary et al., 1998; Finkelstein, 2008; Finkelstein et al., 2005). Or, they have not specified an age range of their volunteer populations (Davis et al., 2003; Penner, 2002; Grube & Piliavin, 2000). Thus, conclusions about the relationship between the factors associated with volunteer intensity and duration are limited and may account for some of the conflicting results among the variables affecting duration and intensity of volunteering. Research studying the factors affecting intensity and duration of volunteerism needs to address age in an effort to resolve conflicting results. To understand how age relates to volunteerism, a developmental perspective is necessary.

Numerous theories of development have been proposed by writers and researchers. A theory that appears to be most applicable to the study of volunteerism is Elder's (1994) life course perspective of development, which emphasizes the social forces that shape the life course and its developmental consequences. Elder's theory suggests that there are roles and activities that individuals assume and abandon over the life course. They have various needs and purposes, including those related to the stage of life course, that they pursue through activities such as volunteerism. Their needs

and purposes influence the meanings attached to the activities in which they participate, including their volunteer role, and the roles in which they engage. They may draw on different resources to accomplish certain roles or activities depending on their life stage. Thus, concerns relevant to the different stages of the life course influence the content of the volunteer process and the measures of interest researchers of volunteerism have studied.

Research has included reasons to volunteer (Boling, 2006), human social, cultural, and religious capital (Tang, 2006), number of hours volunteered (Tang, 2006), empowerment, satisfaction, burnout (Kulik, 2010), and intensity of volunteering (Omoto, Synder, & Martino, 2000). Overall, results of these studies have demonstrated that the age of volunteer has an impact on some aspects of volunteerism, but little research has focused on volunteer commitment.

Hypotheses

The present study investigated how age affects the prediction of duration and intensity of volunteering from satisfaction, prosocial personality, reasons to volunteer, role identity, educational level, and degree of religiousness. While the candidate predictors of volunteerism may not have simple positive relationships with duration and intensity of volunteering, it is predicted they will become significantly and positively related to the intensity and duration of volunteerism when age is considered. Volunteering was measured using two variables, duration and intensity of volunteering. Four age groups were considered as they reflect different stages of the life course. The following hypotheses were tested:

- Hypothesis 1: Duration and intensity of volunteering will be positively correlated.

- Hypothesis 2: Degree of religiousness, reasons to volunteer, satisfaction, years of education, role identity, and prosocial personality will be significantly and positively correlated with duration and intensity of volunteering.
- Hypothesis 3: Age groups of volunteers will differ in levels of volunteering (duration and intensity) and in the levels of the predictors of volunteering (degree of religiousness, reasons to volunteer, satisfaction, years of education, role identity, and prosocial personality).
- Hypothesis 4: A model predicting volunteering (duration and intensity) from the predictors of volunteering will be improved by incorporating age groups and the interactions of these predictors of volunteering with age.

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Participants were 144 volunteers who were recruited from the volunteer programs of major hospitals in the Detroit Metropolitan area. Eleven cases were removed due to missing data making the sample size for the data analyses 133 volunteers. Demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1. The areas of responsibility of the participants in their volunteer positions are presented in Table 2. Participants could choose one or more areas of responsibility. The percentages of participants who endorsed a particular area of responsibility are reported in Table 2.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristic	<u>n</u>	%
Race		
African American	31	23.7
American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American	1	0.8
Asian	2	1.5
Caucasian	89	68.5
Other	7	5.5
Missing	3	
Ethnicity		
Non-Hispanic or Non-Latino	53	65.4
Hispanic	2	3.0
Latino	1	1.2
European	18	22.0
Middle Eastern	2	2.4
Other	5	6.0
Missing	52	
Personal income (\$)		
0 – 5,000	36	35.3
5,001 – 15,000	18	17.7
15,001 – 25,000	18	17.7
25,001 – 35,000	7	6.9

35,001 – 45,000	8	7.8
45,001 – 100,000	11	10.7
100,001+	4	3.9
Missing	31	
Family income (\$)		
0 – 5,000	12	11.4
5,001 – 15,000	10	9.5
15,001 – 25,000	12	11.4
25,001 – 35,000	10	9.5
35,001 – 45,000	11	10.5
45,001 – 100,000	32	130.6
100,001+	18	17.1
Missing	28	
Highest level of education completed		
Some high school	2	1.5
High school diploma	25	19.2
Some college	32	24.6
2-Year college (e.g., AA)	16	12.3
4-Year college (e.g., BA, BS)	26	20.0
Some graduate school	6	4.6
Graduate degree (e.g., Master's, Ph.D.)	22	17.0
Professional degree (e.g., J.D., M.D.)	1	0.8
Missing	3	
Marital status		
Never married	47	35.9
Divorced	14	10.6
Cohabiting	2	1.5
Married	53	40.5
Widowed	15	11.5
Missing	2	
Employment status		
Full-time (35 hours or more per week)	12	9.2
Part-time (less than 35 hours per week)	17	13.1
Homemaker	4	3.1
Unemployed	17	13.0
Retired	54	41.0
Disabled	2	1.5
Full-time student	12	9.2
Full-time student and part-time employment	8	6.0
Other	5	3.9
Missing	2	

Table 2. Areas of Responsibility of the Participants

Areas of Responsibility	n	%
Direct service contact with recipients of services	109	83.2
Clerical (e.g., filing, answer phones, mailings)	35	26.7
Cleaning	30	22.9
Maintenance	7	5.3
Coordinator of special events	10	7.6
Community outreach and education	9	6.9
Fundraising	9	6.9
Volunteer coordinator	7	5.3
Other	27	20.6

Recruitment of subjects to participate in a study investigating the factors affecting volunteerism occurred via placement of advertisement brochures in the volunteer offices, newsletters, and/or via announcements about the study at the volunteer meetings. To encourage participation in the study, participants who completed the questionnaires could opt to enter their name into a lottery to win a gift card (\$5 to 20) from a retail store. The volunteer programs were provided with the information sheets, surveys, lottery entry slips, and boxes to collect the surveys and entry slips.

Measures

Volunteers completed self-report questionnaires that consisted of the following areas: demographics information (age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, educational level, religious affiliation, degree of religiousness, employment status, and past and present history of volunteering, duration (i.e., number of days, months, and/or years) and intensity (i.e., number of hours per week spent volunteering)); reasons to volunteer (Volunteer Functions Inventory

(VFI) (Clary et al., 1998); prosocial personality characteristics (Prosocial Personality Battery (PSB)) (Penner et al., 1995); satisfaction (Clary et al., 1998); and role identity (Callero, Howard, & Piliavin (1987).

Results

Hypothesis 1 concerned the relationship between duration and intensity of volunteering which was tested by computing the bivariate correlation between these two variables. Duration (months) of volunteer service was not significantly correlated with intensity of volunteering (number of hours volunteered per week) with a small negative correlation of $-.168$ ($p = .053$). The hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 assessed the degree of relationship between degree of religiousness, reasons to volunteer, satisfaction, years of education, role identity, prosocial personality, and the duration and intensity of volunteering. This hypothesis was tested by computing the bivariate correlations and was partially supported. Table 3 displays these correlations.

Table 3. Correlations of Intensity and Duration of Volunteering with Degree of Religiousness, Reasons to Volunteer, Satisfaction, Years of Education, Role Identity, and Prosocial Personality

Measure	Duration (months)			Intensity (hours)		
	r	sig.	N	r	sig.	n
Religiousness	.055	.536	130	-.175*	.047	130
Reasons to volunteer						
Values	.011	.899	133	.031	.726	133
Understanding	-.088	.312	133	.264**	.002	133
Social	.042	.631	133	.247**	.004	133
Career	-.395**	.000	133	.372***	.000	133
Protective	-.095	.277	133	.165	.057	133
Enhancement	-.024	.780	133	.216*	.013	133
Satisfaction	.051	.565	132	-.172*	.049	132
Years of education	.380***	.000	130	-.247**	.005	130
Role identity	.158	.070	133	-.158	.069	133
Prosocial personality						
Other-oriented empathy	.024	.789	132	.037	.667	132
Helpfulness	-.026	.771	132	-.004	.613	132

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Duration of volunteering was significantly and negatively correlated with the desire to gain career related experience (career) but not significantly correlated with the other reasons to volunteer. Duration of volunteering was significantly and positively correlated with years of education, but was not significantly correlated with the other predictors.

Intensity of volunteering was significantly and positively correlated with the following reasons to volunteer: acquire new learning experiences (understanding), strengthen social relationships (social), gain career related experience (career), and grow/develop psychologically (enhancement). Intensity was not significantly correlated with the desire to express concern for others (values) or reduce negative feelings about oneself/address personal problems (protective). Intensity of volunteering was significantly correlated

with degree of religiousness, satisfaction, and years of education, but was not significantly correlated with role identity, other-oriented empathy, and helpfulness.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that age groups of volunteers would differ in levels of volunteering (duration and intensity) and in the levels of the predictors of volunteering. Age groups were not distributed as expected. The age ranges for the four age groups were modified to the following to ensure there were enough participants per age group to conduct group comparisons: 18 to 39, 40 to 59, 60 to 69, and 70 plus years, with 36, 35, 37, and 25 participants respectively.

This hypothesis was tested by conducting an ANOVA using the modified age grouping categories. This procedure was done one time for each of the predictors and levels of volunteering. There was some support for this hypothesis. Table 4 displays

the means, standard deviations, and one-way analyses of variance for the effects of age group on the intensity and duration of volunteering and the predictors of volunteering. Table 5 displays the results of post hoc tests for significant ANOVAs. Age

groups of volunteers had a significant impact on the duration (months) of volunteering, years of education of the volunteers, career and understanding reasons for volunteering, and on the prosocial personality characteristic of helpfulness.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, and One-Way Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) for Effects of Age Group on Intensity and Duration of Volunteering and on the Predictors of Volunteering

Variable	18-39		40-59		60-69		70+		ANOVA
	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	F
Duration (months)	15.72	26.62	26.00	39.70	47.97	69.78	152.48	107.30	26.277***
Intensity (hours)	8.93	10.72	12.84	13.71	7.42	6.45	7.72	4.49	2.212
Religiousness	3.22	1.33	3.11	1.34	3.76	0.85	3.56	1.04	2.210
Satisfaction	35.78	6.94	37.35	6.58	37.30	8.47	38.60	4.06	0.862
Role identity	19.77	4.31	21.50	3.12	20.59	5.91	22.44	2.80	2.138
Years of education	14.44	2.87	14.50	2.82	15.80	3.78	16.72	4.30	3.039*
Reasons to Volunteer									
Values	29.61	6.85	30.34	4.11	29.36	5.01	28.88	6.76	0.351
Career	25.42	9.04	18.89	10.49	11.86	9.31	8.23	7.77	21.412***
Understanding	28.36	6.38	26.74	5.67	22.55	7.48	23.46	7.63	5.597***
Social	17.33	8.24	16.38	7.11	15.55	7.64	17.76	7.07	0.549
Protective	19.50	6.78	18.70	6.98	17.00	7.93	16.84	7.19	1.065
Enhancement	23.61	6.90	22.68	7.83	22.73	7.85	22.44	6.67	0.16
Prosocial personality									
Other-oriented empathy	77.13	17.08	73.13	12.08	77.60	13.49	76.75	9.83	0.784
Helpfulness	38.26	7.83	33.68	4.97	35.28	5.87	36.19	5.42	3.391*

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

Table 5. Effects of Age Group on the Intensity and Duration of Volunteering and on the Predictors of Volunteering

Variable	18-39 (1)		40-59 (2)		60-69 (3)		70+ (4)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Duration (months)	15.72	26.62	26.00	39.70	47.97	69.78	152.48	107.30
Years of education	14.44	2.87	14.50	2.82	15.80	3.78	16.72	4.30
Reasons to Volunteer								
Career	25.42	9.04	18.89	10.49	11.86	9.31	8.23	7.77
Understanding	28.36	6.38	26.74	5.67	22.55	7.48	23.46	7.63
Prosocial Personality								
Helpfulness	38.26	7.83	33.68	4.97	35.28	5.87	36.19	5.42

Note. The numbers in parentheses in column heads refer to the numbers used for illustrating significant age group differences in the post hoc tests. For duration of service, significant age group differences were found for the following groups: 4 > 3, 4 > 2, and 4 > 1. For years of education, post hoc tests revealed no significant differences. For the reason to volunteer of career, significant age group differences were found for the following groups: 1 > 2, 1 > 3, 1 > 4, 2 > 3, and 2 > 4. For the reason to volunteer of understanding, significant age group differences were found for the following groups: 1 > 3, and 1 > 4. For the prosocial personality characteristic of helpfulness, significant age group differences were found for the following groups: 1 > 2.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that a model predicting volunteering (duration and intensity) from the predictors of volunteering would be improved by incorporating age groups and the interactions of these predictors of volunteering with age group. It was tested using hierarchical multiple regression. Variables were entered in blocks. In the first block, the six predictors (degree of religiousness, reasons to volunteer (6), satisfaction, years of education, role identity, and prosocial personality (2)) of volunteering were entered. In the second block, age group was entered. In the third block, the interactions of age group and the predictors of volunteering were entered. The hierarchical multiple regression procedure was done two times, once to predict duration of volunteering, and the second to predict intensity of volunteering. This hypothesis was partially supported.

Table 6 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the predictors and outcome variable of duration of volunteer service. Only the predictors that were significantly correlated ($p < .10$, two-tailed) with duration of volunteering (see Table 6) were included in the analyses and are reported in the table. Results of the hierarchical multiple regression for predicting duration of volunteering are displayed in Table 7. An overall model of fifteen predictors (years of education, desire to gain career related experience (career), role identity, age groups (3), interaction of age groups and predictors (9)) significantly predicted duration of volunteering, $R^2 = .472$, $F(15, 114) = 6.797$, $p < .001$. This model accounted for 47.2% of the variance in duration of volunteering. Significant predictors were years of education, the desire to gain career related experience (career), and age groups.

Table 6. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Duration of Volunteering and the Predictor Variables of Volunteering (N = 128)

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3
Duration (months)	53.04	80.76	.396***	-.381***	.155 ^a
Predictor variable					
1. Years of education	15.30	3.52	--	-.369***	.119
2. Career	16.59	11.20		--	-.197*
3. Role identity	21.00	4.38			--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. ^a $p < .10$

Note. Age group was analyzed using three dummy variables. Dummy variables were coded as 0's and 1s. The oldest age group of volunteers (70 plus years) was the reference group. Dummy variable 1 compares the oldest age group to the 18 to 39 year-old age group. Dummy variable 2 compares the oldest age group to the 40 to 59 year-old age group. Dummy variable 3 compares the oldest age group to the 60 to 69 year-old age group.

Table 7. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Duration of Volunteering with the Predictor Variables of Volunteering

Step and predictor variable	<u>R</u> ²	<u>ΔR</u> ²	<u>ΔF</u>	<u>β</u>	<u>F</u>
Step 1	.224	.224	12.131***		
Years of education				.271**	
Career				.278***	
Role identity				.077	
Step 2	.443	.219	16.086***		
Dummy variable 1				-.526***	
Dummy variable 2				-.586***	
Dummy variable 3				-.628***	
Step 3	.472	.029	.705		
Dummy variable 1 X Years of education				-.481	
Dummy variable 2 X Years of education				-.688	
Dummy variable 3 X Years of education				-.363	
Dummy variable 1 X Career				.148	
Dummy variable 2 X Career				.165	
Dummy variable 3 X Career				.405	
Dummy variable 1 X Role identity				.066	
Dummy variable 2 X Role identity				-.158	
Dummy variable 3 X Role identity				.017	
Full Model	.472				6.797***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

When the hierarchical multiple regression was formulated to predict intensity of volunteer service, a model of thirty nine predictors would be required. Because the sample size was not sufficient for a regression with thirty nine predictors, only the predictor variables with beta weights in Step 2 of the analysis that approached significance ($p < .1$) were included in the analysis. This resulted in the model being reduced to four predictors (years of education, satisfaction, prosocial personality characteristic of helpfulness, and the desire to gain career related experience (career)).

Table 8 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations for the four predictors and outcome variable of intensity of volunteer service. Results of the hierarchical multiple regression for predicting intensity of volunteering using the four predictors are displayed in Table 9. An overall model of nineteen predictors (years of education, satisfaction, prosocial personality characteristic of helpfulness, desire to gain career related experience (career), age groups (3), and interaction of age groups and predictors (12)) significantly predicted intensity of volunteering. Significant predictors were years of education, satisfaction, helpfulness, career, age groups for dummy variable 3 (age group

60-69 vs. age group 70 plus), the interaction between dummy variable 2 (age group 40-59 vs. age group 70 plus) and years of education, and the interaction between dummy variable 2 (age group 40-59 vs. age group 70 plus) and satisfaction.

To further understand this model and the interactions that had significant beta weights, correlations between intensity of volunteering and years of education and satisfaction were conducted for each age group. Since the interactions of the predictors with significant beta weights were only with dummy variable 2 (age group 40-59 vs. age group 70 plus), this means that the relationship between the years of education and hours volunteering is not the same for the 70 plus age group as it is for the 40 to 59 age group. The same is true for the relationship between satisfaction and hours of volunteering for the two age groups. The correlation between years of education and intensity of volunteering is moderate and negative ($r = -.389$) for the 40 to 59 age group and is very small and negative ($r = -.060$) for the 70 plus age group. The correlation between satisfaction and intensity of volunteering is moderate and negative ($r = -.365$) for the 40 to 59 age group and is very small and positive ($r = .066$) for the 70 plus age group.

Table 8. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Intensity of Volunteering and the Four Predictor Variables of Volunteering (N = 128)

Variable	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	1	2	3	4
Intensity (hours per week)	9.08	9.90	-.242**	-.189*	-.064	.348***
Predictor variable						
1. Years of education	15.30	3.52	--	-.022	-.180*	-.359***
2. Satisfaction	37.06	6.95		--	-.250*	-.047
3. Helpfulness	35.76	6.40			--	.170
4. Career	16.59	11.20				--

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 9. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis Predicting Intensity of Volunteering with the Four Predictors Variables of Volunteering

Step and predictor variable	R^2	ΔR^2	ΔF	β	F
Step 1	.206	.206	8.058***		
Years of education				-.173*	
Satisfaction				-.229**	
Helpfulness				-.205*	
Career				.310***	
Step 2	.259	.053	2.862*		
Dummy variable 1				-.155	
Dummy variable 2				-.048	
Dummy variable 3				-.301*	
Step 3	.399	.140	2.109*		
Dummy variable 1 X Years of education				-.347	
Dummy variable 2 X Years of education				-1.303**	
Dummy variable 3 X Years of education				-.284	
Dummy variable 1 X Satisfaction				-.044	
Dummy variable 2 X Satisfaction				-1.530 ^a	
Dummy variable 3 X Satisfaction				-.637	
Dummy variable 1 X Helpfulness				-.028	
Dummy variable 2 X Helpfulness				-.611	
Dummy variable 3 X Helpfulness				-.270	
Dummy variable 1 X Career				-.115	
Dummy variable 2 X Career				.249	
Dummy variable 3 X Career				-.229	
Full Model	.399				3.801***

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$. ^a $p = .084$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate how age affected the relationships between volunteerism (duration and intensity) and the well-known predictors of volunteerism (satisfaction, prosocial personality, reasons to volunteer, role identity, educational level, and degree of religiousness). Connections in the literature regarding volunteerism have suggested that the age of the volunteer may play an important role in how the predictors of volunteerism affect the intensity and duration of volunteering. There was partial support for the proposed hypotheses.

With regard to the prediction of the duration of volunteering, the most common

factors that played a role in how long someone will volunteer were age, years of education, and the desire to gain career related experience. As the years of education and age of the volunteer increased, so did the duration of commitment. As the desires to gain career related experience of the volunteers increased, the duration of commitment decreased. Satisfaction with volunteering and other reasons to volunteer did not appear to affect the duration of volunteer commitment as has been suggested previously by researchers. This is likely due to the poor Michigan economy and the high unemployment rates. Obtaining job skills and experience were likely more important to this volunteer sample than other

factors that are normally and more strongly related to the prediction of the duration of volunteering.

With regard to the prediction of the intensity of volunteering, the number of hours a person volunteered each week was strongly and positively related to whether or not they were able to satisfy their reasons to volunteer. The most common reasons to volunteer were to acquire new learning experiences, gain career experience, enhance social relationships, and/or to grow and develop psychologically. Intensity of volunteering was found to have a significant inverse relationship with satisfaction. A qualitative review of the comments from volunteers regarding what they might like to see improved in their volunteer program revealed that participants often requested increased responsibilities and roles and better utilization of their skill sets. It is possible participants may have increased or decreased the number of hours they volunteered each week to maintain an adequate level satisfaction in their volunteer role.

Regarding the relationship between age and the intensity of volunteering, this relationship appeared to be mediated by the volunteers' level of satisfaction and years of education. When volunteers were older, their intensity of volunteering did not appear to be affected by satisfaction level and years of education. However, when volunteers were younger, intensity appeared to decrease when satisfaction and years of education increased.

Clinical and Practice Implications

Results of the research impact both the volunteers and the volunteer organizations. One of the major reasons individuals choose to volunteer appears to be related to the desire to gain career related experience regardless of age of the volunteer. Thus, volunteer programs might

want to consider incorporating career related skills training programs into the volunteer positions and market their programs in a way that suggests career training as an option in the volunteer position. Because the relationship between satisfaction with one's volunteer role and intensity of commitment appears important, volunteer programs may want to regularly assess volunteer satisfaction in their roles and make changes as needed to their program. They may also want to consider allowing volunteers to carry varied responsibilities and incorporate social activities into their programs. For potential volunteers considering making a commitment to a volunteer position, it might be helpful for them to assess the match between their reasons to volunteer and whether or not the potential organizations can meet their reasons to volunteer. This may have an impact on the duration and intensity of their volunteer commitment.

In summary, the type of volunteer who is going to be able to commit to a long duration of volunteering is one who is older, well educated, and not motivated to volunteer to gain career related experience. The type of volunteer who will volunteer the most number of hours per week is one who is less educated, has several reasons to volunteer, specifically oriented towards learning new skills, is capable of tolerating the distress of others well, and is easily satisfied.

Limitations and Future Research

Generalizability of the results is limited to volunteers in the hospital setting. Future research might consider including hospital volunteers and individuals who volunteer in other health settings (clinics/doctors offices). Sample size was limited among participant age groups. A larger sample may allow for more precise multivariate comparisons to be made among age groups of volunteers. The continuous

rise in unemployment and the poor Michigan economy may have contributed to the career motive being significant in the prediction of volunteering across all hypotheses. Individuals may partly be seeking volunteer positions to gain career related experience.

Because of the cross-sectional research design, in which different groups of participants are compared at one point in time, the findings do not provide a basis for definitive conclusions of cause and effect. The results from this research added to the knowledge that age affects the relationships between the well-known predictors of volunteering and the duration and intensity of volunteering. But, in order to show that differences in the predictors of volunteering across the life cycle are a function of age differences, longitudinal research is needed in the future.

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