

VETERANS AND VOLUNTEERING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY
OF VALUES AND MOTIVATIONS IN SERVING OTHERS

by

Felix Edward Alexander

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

School of Behavior Sciences

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study is to understand and describe veterans' perspectives of volunteering, including their values and motivation. Veterans are internally motivated and committed to helping others. Approximately 92% of veterans regard community service to be extremely important. Some researchers link military service with future volunteering in the community. Veterans possess essential skills and resources that are needed in the community. Current research affirms that social ties, religious involvement, and recruitment contacts promote volunteering. Scholars believe volunteering serves one of three purposes: sociability, self-interest, and/or altruism. It is an individual and collective empowerment with the public good, community spirit and inclusiveness, and a sense of well-being. The promotion of and reliance on volunteering validates an important and urgent need. More research is required on constituting and regulating volunteerism. The theories guiding this study are both Self-Determination Theory and Volunteer Functions Approach. The Self-Determination Theory aligns motivation on a continuum, and the Volunteer Functions Approach addresses volunteers' motivations with respect to their reasons, purposes, plans, and goals. Both the proposed data collection and data analysis strategies are interviews and observations.

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Dedication

I give honor to God, our Father, Jesus Christ, my Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit, my leader and guide. I dedicate this dissertation my family and dear friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my loving wife, Violet whose words of encouragement and push for tenacity ring in my ears. My daughters Latavia and Jasmin who have consistently believed in and supported me throughout the process. Each of you are my cheerleaders.

I also dedicate my dissertation work to my brothers and sisters in Christ and dear friends. My brothers and sisters in Christ consistently interceded for me in prayer. My dear friends were both accountability partners and sources of encouragement and strength throughout the dissertation process. You all have been and continue to be a sense of inspiration. I am grateful and blessed because of your love and kindness.

Acknowledgments

The acknowledgments page provides the opportunity for the candidate to acknowledge individuals who influenced the writing and completion of the dissertation. This page is optional.

This work would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of academic professionals, family, and friends. I am grateful to all of those with whom I have had the pleasure to work during this dissertation. The members of my Dissertation Committee have provided me extensive personal and professional guidance and taught me a great deal about research. I would especially like to thank Dr. Thomas Hudgins, the chairman of my committee. As my teacher and mentor, he has taught me more than I could ever give him credit for here. He has shown me, by his example, what a good researcher should be. I would also like to thank, Krystal Clemons, my reader, who provided great insight and guidance and kept me steered in the right direction. I am also grateful to Dr. Marti, my professional editor, who stepped in and provided much needed assistance. Thank you for your diligence and commitment to complete the task in a timely manner.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Volunteering has become an international phenomenon in the 21st Century (Krajnakova et al., 2018). Volunteers in America annually provide services worth more than \$275 billion (Mathieu et al., 2018). Subsequently, most service-providing organizations cannot function effectively without volunteers. Some volunteers attribute their motivation to strengthening their family and/or their local communities by helping those in need and enhancing their relationship with God. They are not focused on self-centered goals such as being successful and/or fulfilling personal desires, but are service motivated, focused on helping others, and have a firm belief in their social responsibilities. Potolo and Wilson (2016) stressed the importance of social equality and tolerance of others and are more interested in serving the needs or interests of individuals and community organizations. This is especially true of veterans, particularly those who have retired from the military after 20 plus years of service. Most of them have a strong motivation to continue serving.

Background

Volunteering is any activity that involves giving unpaid time and doing something that benefits individuals, groups, and/or the environment (Peachey et al., 2014). Volunteering is an integral part of Western cultures, especially the American culture. Volunteering includes individuals of all ages who willingly assist in social causes, establish connections with others, and provide community, local, statewide, national, and international services to assist those in need (Wei et al., 2012). Volunteering is an essential duty and responsibility that facilitates problem-solving and provides much-needed support to individuals, groups, communities, and organizations worldwide through non-compulsory and unpaid services (Gaber et al., 2020).

Volunteering dates from the 16th and 19th centuries, i.e., the cathedral almsmen and the Victorian philanthropy, divided into paid and unpaid workers termed volunteers. From an American perspective, Kelemen (2017) asserted that volunteering has been an integral part of citizenship since World War II. For approximately 35 years, the emphasis has shifted to benefits, and personal enjoyment and satisfaction, especially among older adults focused on staying active in their later years (Greenfield & Marks, 2004).

Whereas one scholar defined volunteering as spending unpaid time doing something that helps people and/or groups that may or may not be tied to one another or the environment is an unpaid activity (Peachey et al., 2014). Another one defines it as a unique phenomenon (Khvoostianov & Remennick, 2017). Volunteering is a collective action with a collective good that is not linked to formal organizations and has an informal character (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Hogg (2016) said volunteering involves giving time and effort without compensation to help individuals, groups, and organizations and normally takes place in the public sphere and frequently alongside paid workers. Volunteering is exclusive because it involves freely committing to certain obligations in activities and engaging in community work. Although there is no financial compensation, volunteers acquire valuable experience (Krajnakova et al., 2018). Additionally, volunteering encourages and promotes community engagement, personal satisfaction, and positive self-worth (Wood et al., 2019).

Tyler et al. (2018) believed that some individuals perceived volunteering as merely assisting individuals of lower socioeconomic status. They are reluctant to help. They stated that volunteering benefits individuals from every socio-economic level regardless of their emotional, financial, mental, political, religious, or social status. Tyler et al. affirmed that individuals benefit

from volunteers in numerous ways, including academics, communications, emergencies, health care, management, teamwork, personal satisfaction, and politics.

One of the primary objectives of volunteering is to fulfill the needs of individuals and organizations, both profit and non-profit, who would benefit from the selflessness of volunteers (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014). Volunteering is a major participant worldwide and is unanimously perceived as the willingness to assist and help others without material benefits or monetary compensation. Individuals of all ages and different levels of society willingly volunteer. Krajnakova et al. (2018) perceived volunteering as a selfless act of kindness that builds trust, encourages social interaction, enhances civic development, and strengthens communities. It plays a key role in critical judgment, independent thinking, making decisions, and realizing dreams. It enhances an individual's ability to acquire and adapt to various forms and methods of helping.

Volunteers work with public service and non-profit organizations, contributing their time, skills, knowledge, and abilities to assist others in both formal and informal manners. Matthieu et al. (2018) believed that the bulk of volunteers come from middle-class families. A small percentage of lower-class families help in informal manners. Volunteers, especially those from the public sector, have different motivations and values. They are internally motivated and committed to helping others they can personally identify with who are less fortunate than themselves (Potolo & Wilson, 2016).

Veterans who volunteer share similar sentiments. Shinnars et al. (2018) believed veterans could personally identify with the challenges and struggles of others. They receive overwhelming gratitude from individuals, families, groups such as medical professionals, organizations, and other veterans. They also re-experience what it means to lead and undertake a

mission that truly helps others. Veterans desire a successful transition. It is a time of readjustment, reconnection, and reintegration (Matthieu et al., 2019). They are reassessing their lives and goals. Many are dealing with various issues such as family life, financial well-being, mental and physical health, relationship challenges, social functioning, and spirituality (Matthieu et al.). Their behavioral and medical health is integrated into their holistic and person-centered concerns. Subsequently, participating in volunteer work often benefits their mental and physical health and social interactions (Matthieu et al.).

Veteran volunteers have reported substantial outcomes like better health, reduced depression, increased life satisfaction, fewer functional limitations, and lower mortality (Gaber et al., 2020). Approximately 70% of veteran volunteers reported experiencing a sense of well-being by volunteering, including happiness, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and decreased anxiety and depression (Matthieu et al., 2019). Subsequently, a veteran volunteer is ideal for assisting transition and reintegration into civilian life. Most veterans are motivated to re-engage in their communities. Approximately 92% of veterans regard community service as extremely important (Usbeck, 2018). Some researchers have linked military service with future volunteering in the community because most veterans believe that the military has provided them with essential skills and resources needed in the community. Many of them want to give back and have a desire to volunteer. They believe volunteering can help others and improve communities (Matthieu et al.).

Two veteran volunteer organizations that help with reintegration, Mission Continues and Team Rubicon, encourage civic engagement, community, and social therapy. They stress the importance of veterans transforming their military experience into community service that uses civic engagement to help them readjust to the civilian world (Usbeck, 2018). From a literature

perspective, significant historical research on veterans' volunteering specifically addresses barriers, benefits, motivational factors, and various volunteering perspectives. There is also a host of other research covering various issues and topics related to volunteering, all covered in Chapter Two.

Situation to Self

The researcher is a 20-year retired Air Force officer. He started volunteering as a teenager, working in his neighborhood to assist senior citizens. He volunteered throughout high school and college. He also volunteered while on active duty and continued after retiring. He believes that volunteering is a part of his calling. He firmly believes that his military experiences further equipped him to be a more effective volunteer. He also believes that other veterans are willing to volunteer provided they are appropriately approached, properly treated, and respected. Veterans can be a catalyst for other veterans to volunteer. They are invaluable and often underutilized human resources (Pickell et al., 2020). He is a veteran with a passion for volunteering. Veterans have been blessed with knowledge, skills, and abilities while serving on active duty, and many want to give back to the community through voluntary service (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). I am biased regarding volunteering. However, my bias, assumptions, and expectations as a researcher are appropriately documented via bracketing, memos, and reflexive journaling.

Problem Statement

Little research describes how military veterans perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, why they continue volunteering, and/or why they choose not to volunteer. The current volunteer rate is the lowest since 2002 (Hurst et al., 2017). There has been a gradual decline in retired military volunteers since 2008, even though veterans, especially those who

retired from active duty, have a strong desire to continue serving (Hurst; Shinnars et al., 2018). It is important to know and understand why there is a decline, but it is equally important to acknowledge and recognize how they have positively impacted local and military communities. Veterans, who volunteer in local communities and on military installations, are an integral part of American society and play a significant role in the lives of other veterans (Shinnars et al.). Veterans can be invaluable resources in the local communities (Pickell et al., 2020).

Volunteering provides a window of opportunity to continue serving and give back to the local community (Shinnars et al., 2018). There is a large, retired military population in Fayetteville, North Carolina (NC). These veterans are more than likely to voluntarily participate in various activities and service projects, especially in Fayetteville and the surrounding communities. However, there is limited literature on the veterans' perspectives of volunteering. Additional research could describe how veterans perceive volunteering and provide guidance on the recruitment and retention of veteran volunteers.

Current literature addresses what collaboratives, philanthropies, policymakers, and service providers have done to service veterans. More effort needs to be directed toward veterans' struggles with accessing Veteran services, and unique health care needs, especially among women veterans. There are also issues with transitioning, reintegrating and feeling culturally isolated from the civilian society (Van Slyke & Armstrong, 2019). There is limited research on veterans' perspectives of volunteering. Much has been written about veterans' motivations and benefits from a third person's perspective (Van Slyke & Armstrong). This phenomenological transcendental qualitative study will address transition and reintegration, including attitudes, barriers, benefits, and other related topics regarding volunteering. Veterans were interviewed to obtain their perspectives on volunteering and answer the following

questions: RQ1: How do military veterans perceive volunteering? SQA: What encourages/discourages their willingness to volunteer. SQB: What is considered an ideal volunteer assignment?

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to describe how military veterans perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, why they continue volunteering, and/or why do they choose not to volunteer? This insight will facilitate developing models and procedures to encourage and promote more military veterans to volunteer and facilitate the training and retention of veteran volunteers. The study primarily targeted veterans in Fayetteville, NC, and the surrounding communities. Fort Bragg Army Post, located in Fayetteville, is the home of the 82nd Airborne and the Special Operations Commands. Fort Bragg is the second largest Army installation in the United States and the largest employer in Fayetteville. Additionally, given the constraints of COVID-19, the study was opened virtually to other veterans via social media.

Significance of the Study

There is a slow decline in individuals volunteering, especially among military veterans. Despite the wealth of information about volunteering, there is a limited understanding of the organizational and social aspects. Specifically, the processes individuals learn, the job internalizes organizational goals/values and positively impacts the organization by becoming an effective and actively involved volunteer (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). Additionally, no studies examine veterans' perspectives, values, and motivation for volunteering.

Volunteering is linked to community involvement because volunteers have a tangible stake in the public good, i.e., parents participating in Parent Teacher Associations. Volunteering

is connected and facilitated by social interactions with others because of face-to-face social ties (Jones, 2006). Increased social connection is associated with increased volunteering. Individuals are more likely to volunteer when requested by a family member or friend, particularly if they acquired a habit as a kid from a parent or other authority figure. Individuals' willingness to offer their time is strongly influenced by the links that promote communal integration. Individuals who spend a significant amount of time with family and friends, who are members of frequent groups and/or hold civic memberships, are inspired and encouraged to volunteer (Jones, 2006).

Individuals with strong social ties tend to volunteer more frequently than individuals who attend church regularly. Frequent church attendees are often involved in religious activities, which leaves little time to volunteer in the community (Jones, 2006). Community-based involvement is tied to active participation in public life, which encourages and stresses social interaction (Jones). Voluntary activity traditionally comes from civic organizations such as church groups and civic movements. Many of these organizations are steadily under fire, and volunteer participation is declining (Jones). If the turmoil continues, it will inevitably erode the social capital in local communities where both funding and human capital are scarce.

The aim was to acknowledge a viable source of human capital. Military veterans expressed appreciation/gratitude and understood their perspectives, motivations, and barriers regarding volunteering. Acknowledging, recognizing, and respecting veterans as viable human capital helped create a concept or plan that brought together local, state, and voluntary organizations to sustain invaluable human capital with limited resources (Halsall et al., 2016).

Research Questions

The study is designed to answer the following question:

RQ1. What are veterans' perspectives on volunteering?

SQ1: What do veterans value regarding volunteering?

SQ2: What drives and/or motivates veterans to volunteer?

Definitions

The definitions are as follows:

Burnout: the occupational stress that results from demanding work-related tasks and relationships (Allen & Mueller, 2013).

Re-integration: transitioning back into civilian life after separating or retiring from military service (Hawkins et al., 2015).

Resilience: positive adaptation in the face of disturbing experiences, i.e., maintaining or recovering positive physical or mental health (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020).

Volunteering: freely and willfully providing services without financial compensation (Yanay-Ventura, 2019).

Volunteer Retention: the length of time an individual continues to willingly donate their time, skills, and abilities to the same organization (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016).

Volunteer Satisfaction: a pleasurable emotional state that comes from fulfilling important individual values (Greenfield & Marks, 2004).

Volunteerism: any activity that involves spending time, unpaid, doing something that aims to benefit individuals and groups, other than or in addition to close relatives, or for the benefit of the environment (Peachey et al., 2014).

Supper Volunteer: an individual who volunteers at least 10 hours per week with a single organization (Einolf & Yung, 2018).

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study described veterans' volunteer experiences in Fayetteville, NC, and the surrounding communities. The study assessed veterans' perspectives of volunteering concerning their motivations and values. It also described the common meaning of volunteering for veterans and their lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The worldview relates to the Good Samaritan parable (International, 2014, Luke 10:25-37) "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down and shaken together, and running over shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it shall be measured to you again." (International, 2014, Luke 6:38).

While there is literature on veterans' reintegrations and retentions and mental health benefits, there is little to no literature discussing veterans' perspectives, values, and motivations. This is important because most veterans desire to continue servicing in some capacity. They have knowledge, skills, and abilities that could greatly benefit local communities. This study provided information on how veterans perceive volunteering and highlighted their motivations and values. This study could be used to enhance the recruitment and retention of veterans.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Volunteering is any activity that involves giving unpaid time and doing something that benefits individuals, groups, and/or the environment (Peachey et al., 2014). Volunteering is freely giving time and deliberately helping others in need. The relationship between motivation, perspectives, and values are important determinants of volunteering (Perry et al., 2008). Research indicated that they are useful in predicting or determining important outcomes for society and public organizations (Niebuur et al., 2018). Volunteering is inversely related to depression, functional limitations, and mortality and is positively related to self-rated health. Systematic reviews on volunteers and volunteer work contribute immensely to volunteering factors. Most studies on volunteering and volunteers focus primarily on benefits, roles, responsibilities, recruitment, and retention (Oh, 2019). There is limited research on volunteers' perspectives, especially among military veterans.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that led to this research is phenomenological. The study was conducted to describe veterans' common meaning (i.e., motivations, perspectives, and values) of their lived experiences (Creswell & Poth, *Qualitative inquiry & research design, Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.), 2018). The worldview that shaped this study was biblically based on both the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) and Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again (International, *The Holy Bible, King James Version*, 2014)." Giving is highly encouraged

from a biblical perspective, yet it is not mandatory. Veterans choose to volunteer or voluntarily give various reasons for volunteering, which ultimately benefit others and themselves.

Two theoretical approaches were used: Self-Determination Theory and Volunteer Functions Approach. The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) aligns motivation on a continuum from self-determination to control. Self-determined motivation acts on free will and has a sense of choice, whereas controlled motivation acts are done with pressure and forced to engage in actions. The SDT deals with individual attitudes, internalized external values, and regulatory structure (Van Schie et al., 2015). The Volunteer Functions Approach is a broad and common theory that addresses volunteers' motivation concerning their reasons, purposes, plans, and goals related to volunteering (Yanay-Ventura, 2019). The results of the study could be used to facilitate the recruitment and retention of other veterans (Matthieu & Carbone, 2020).

The personal and professional assumptions, concepts, theories, and prior research provides a better understanding of the topic (Maxwell, 2005). Interviews with military veterans helped to understand their voluntary actions. Specifically, their perspectives, values, and motivations for volunteering were conducted. Prior research on volunteering revealed that cultural, personal, and social resources and demographics directly impact the number of hours volunteered and the type of volunteer organization. Prior research regarding veteran volunteers examined reintegration, retention, and mental health (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). General counseling literature discussed benefits to volunteers, such as positive impacts on depression, life satisfaction, self-reported physical health, social support, learning, and mortality (Dolovich et al., 2020). There is a gap in the literature concerning veterans' perspectives regarding volunteering.

Like other volunteers, veterans who are satisfied with their work environment tend to perform their duties and responsibilities without complaining. They are normally more willing to continue volunteering and frequently donate more time than originally intended, especially if they feel valued and useful (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016).

Volunteering

Volunteering involves various activities and initiatives, including activist campaign work, leisure, mutual aid, service, and social (Bedford, 2015). Definitions of volunteering normally include an altruistic focus, a balance between work and volunteer activity, limited volunteer leadership/management control or power, and minimal barriers to participation (Steimel, 2018). Formal volunteering, which is time given without financial compensation, is beneficial for individuals with limited social roles and ties (Chambre & Netting, 2018) and provides services for organizations or others outside their homes (Niebuur et al., 2018). Older volunteers engage in formal volunteering because it contributes to their well-being and reduces the probability of cognitive decline, higher life satisfaction, and better health (Chambre & Netting). For example, education is an environmental factor that could potentially trigger volunteering (Son & Wilson, 2009).

Volunteering is an interesting and unique phenomenon. Although it is work, it is not considered a form of work (Krajnakova et al., 2018). Volunteering does not provide compensation but has invaluable benefits for those receiving and providing the services. Volunteering is a free-will gesture often influenced by cultural, personal, and religious desires to serve others (Krajnakova et al.). Volunteering provides opportunities to both help and care for others. Approximately 50% of Americans volunteer, with nearly 70% giving their wealth and 47% contributing time and money to support charities. Volunteering is a direct engagement with

communities and organizations and demonstrates an interest in public concerns by supporting the actions of others (Jones, 2006).

Volunteering is either individualistic or collectivistic. Several variations involve acts of generosity that groups initiate, inspire, and oversee (Eckstein, 2001). Volunteering has an individualistic root and a middle-class base centered on compassion and commitment. Compassion centers on the caregiver, not the relationships, whereas commitment is a private affair; both are essential to volunteering (Eckstein). Individuals, who want to make a difference, are willing to work even if they must develop their niche or start something new. For example, Pobanz and Gonzales started in 2016 with trucks. They knew individuals who had furniture to donate and veterans who did not have furniture (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). Their engagement in community service facilitated their social interaction and helped develop both support networks and new relationships (Holdsworth, 2010). Nonprofit organizations (NPO)s can benefit immensely from promoting policies to expand educational opportunities and foster civil engagement, religious participation, and social interaction. Diversity in friendships and education, formal group involvement, informal social networking, and intense religious beliefs increase the likelihood and level of volunteering (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014).

Volunteering involves voluntarily giving time and talents to deliver services or perform tasks without financial compensation (Allen & Mueller, 2013). As previously stated, volunteering involves free-will behavior with no monetary rewards aimed at helping others on a long-term basis or in a formal setting. Volunteering could be viewed as any activity involving unpaid time doing something that benefits individuals, groups, and/or the environment (Peachey et al., 2014). Volunteering is a complex and prevalent form of prosocial action. It is planned, non-obligated behavior that targets community improvement and engages established

community organizations with no expected payment to the volunteer (Maki & Snyder, 2017; Weerts et al., 2010).

Volunteering is also an integral part of the American and Western cultures that involves individuals of all ages who freely and willfully serve their communities, establish connections with other people, and contribute to social causes (Wei et al., 2012). It encompasses a wide range of distinct actions to help individuals and communities better society. Volunteering involves a diverse set of behaviors and responsibilities that targets different social issues and elicits distinctive thoughts, feelings, and experiences from the volunteer (Maki & Snyder, 2017). It is often linked to religiosity because faith-based organizations provide numerous avenues to volunteer (Weerts et al., 2010).

Importance of Volunteering

Volunteering encompasses a myriad of activities, motivations, and organizational issues. Three schools of thought that accurately describe volunteering are the 1) nature of activities, i.e., active, passive, compulsory, or discretionary; 2) the purpose of volunteering, based on the nature of the activities undertaken; and 3) the temporal aspect, whether long or short term. It often resembles paid employment because it incorporates active and planned activities. However, volunteering is characterized by the freedom to choose whether to continue or quit, making it discretionary (Kelemen et al., 2017).

Most scholars believe that volunteering serves one of three purposes: sociability, self-interest, and altruism. In contrast, others view it as an individual and collective empowerment with the public good, community spirit and inclusiveness, and a sense of well-being (Kelemen et al., 2017). Past volunteer researchers focused on the giving characteristic of the middle class entrenched in the heart's individualistic habits. They asserted that individual volunteering was

fragile and sporadic, while group members are more apt to volunteer and give because volunteering, joining, and giving, are mutually supportive. Individuals who join groups are 10 times more likely to give their time and money (Eckstein, 2001).

As a social activity, volunteering is often referred to as participation, engagement, and/or capital (Maes, 2012). Some scholars believe an individual's involvement is influenced by genes and the environment (Son & Wilson, 2009). It was once perceived as a middle-class phenomenon. However, there are numerous motivations for today's volunteers, such as health, knowledge, opportunities, relationships, religious beliefs, and remuneration (Maes). Volunteering provides services and critical infrastructure that agencies and organizations could not otherwise afford. The stipulations for the services are no financial compensation, free will, and benefits to the organization (Steimel, 2018).

Volunteering is associated with a higher quality of life and social adjustments and was once more common among higher social classes. A typical volunteer was young, well-educated, healthy, economically secure, and displayed a higher level of trust. According to the social capital model, involvement in social networks was the primary reason demographic features like age, education, and gender correlated with volunteerism, why people of higher socioeconomic status are more active, and why ethnic minorities are less likely to volunteer than whites (Vecina & Fernando, 2013). The model asserts that individuals with greater personal resources share with others and display gratification from nonmaterial rewards, which is why they volunteer. Nevertheless, volunteering also empowers disadvantaged individuals. Those who cannot find work because of age, disability, or ill health escape from stigmas attached to these statuses by performing volunteer work (Khvoostianov & Remennick, 2017). Volunteering is an active and willing type of social participation that provides status, social support, identity, and a sense of

community. Volunteering helps those in need and those who provide the help with intangible results such as life purpose and satisfaction, perceived state of better health, positive emotions, psychological well-being, reduction in mortality, and self-acceptance (Vecina & Fernando).

Individuals who are structured and well-organized tend to be driven by self-interest instead of altruism (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Volunteering meets the needs of groups such as non-profit and public organizations and individuals, including the volunteer. Individuals of all ages engage in volunteer activities as a means and an end. It is positively related to improved health and well-being among civilians, military retirees, and older adults. It is positively associated with mental and physical health and psychosocial factors, including depression, life satisfaction, mortality, and self-rated health (Lawrence et al., 2017).

Altruistically speaking, volunteering is positively related to consistency over time and participation diversity, significantly related to self-reported health and well-being. Volunteering boosts freely chosen activities that increase physical health and psychological well-being (Piliavin & Siegel, 2007). Some researchers consider volunteering as a purposive leisure. Individuals who volunteer have a specific goal or purpose. Their motivation may range from developing leadership skills and finding balance to enhancing their socialization skills and strengthening their family (Palmer et al., 2007). Volunteering has been perceived as merely helping people in need. Subsequently, some non-profit organizations find it extremely difficult to obtain support. Research has found benefits in academic and clinical skills, communications and teamwork, experience and dignity, management and policy, and personal satisfaction and interest (Tyler et al., 2018).

Volunteering is often promoted as an avenue to increase employment prospects. Advocates of civic engagement assert that volunteering is a powerful technique for job seekers.

Volunteering is a viable and successful strategy that supports reemployment (Spera et al., 2015). Volunteering is an important prerequisite for collective action, a subset of civic engagement involving individuals or organizations working to advance shared interests (Matthieu & Carbone, 2020). It is also a vehicle for creative and independent activity and an alternative form of employment, especially for individuals with a disability. Volunteering enhances volunteers' quality of life and encourages social interaction through establishing ties with the local community (Yanay-Ventura, 2019).

Volunteering provides personal growth and development (Alfes et al., 2017) by gaining professional skills and experience beneficial in obtaining employment. For individuals with mild intellectual deficits, volunteering reinforces their sense of self-worth, improves verbal communication, fits better with family commitments, and empowers and enables them to engage with social networks (Yanay-Ventura, 2019). It provides individuals with opportunities to address ill feelings and personal problems, apply their knowledge and skills, develop new relationships, engage in new ventures, enhance personal growth and development, express concerns, and learn new skills (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014). It also provides a sense of soft support or interactions with individuals or an organization that can help address and overcomes the negative effects of isolation and loneliness (Halsall et al., 2016).

Impact on Society

Volunteering is a public health intervention that contributes to mental health and survival (Dolovich et al., 2020). It has contributed to improving health among the general population by promoting voluntary activities that fit enjoyment and interest (Held & Lee, 2020). Volunteering in an organizational setting is positively or negatively affected by organizational characteristics. Volunteer administrators must foster and control the volunteer spirit of those who have offered

their services for free to meet organizational needs. They must learn to balance energizing and disciplining volunteers without trying to control them (Van Schie et al., 2015). It varies by sex, race, ethnicity, and age. For example, Caucasians tend to volunteer more than African Americans and Hispanics (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Volunteering is periodically marketed as a social interaction that promotes mental well-being (Miller et al., 2020). Even though it does not provide financial compensation, it encourages and promotes community connections, positive self-worth, and social interaction, indirectly affecting access to healthcare, cultural and social integration, and mental and physical health (Wood et al., 2019). Volunteering does not protect individuals from the effects of aging but does provide a means for older adults to maintain a purpose in life and help to facilitate a feeling of happiness and joy (Greenfield & Marks, 2004). Volunteer organizations actively recruit older volunteers through marketing strategies that promote volunteering as a pathway to civic and social activities (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014).

Current research reveals that social and associational ties, religious involvement, and recruitment contacts promote volunteering. Social and association ties and the number of those ties facilitate volunteering. Recruitment is a predictor of volunteering, and religious involvement is associated with higher probabilities of volunteering. Their association dictates what is created, either bonding social capital or bridging (Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2011). Additionally, researchers discovered that education and income are not related to volunteerism, but age and life satisfaction are negatively related to volunteerism. However, materialism, physical health, and subjective well-being are all related (Wei et al., 2012). This data affirms that volunteer research has shifted from asking why people help others without being obliged to examining the benefits of helping (Vecina & Fernando, Volunteering and well-being: Is pleasure-based rather than pressure-based prosocial motivation that which is related to positive effects?, 2013). Views

of volunteering are also shifting from dedicated and habitual interchange to an episodic, flexible, non-committal, self-directed social interaction (Hustinx, 2010).

Volunteers are an integral part of the labor force. Volunteers donate approximately 8.1 billion hours annually. More than 64.3 million adults volunteer each year in various ways (Dolovich et al., 2020). Volunteers provide a host of services such as consulting, educational knowledge, free business relationships, work experiences, and workforce are invaluable human resources that help attain organizational goals (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). Volunteers who serve as health connectors are often fulfilled through learning new skills in communication and interpersonal techniques that can be applied in their personal lives (Dolovich et al., 2020).

Community volunteer organizations recruit volunteers who are appropriate for the organizational role. One size does not fit all because of volunteers' characteristics and the contexts in which they operate. The volunteer role description should be clear, with a detailed breakdown of commitment levels and expectations (Stathi et al., 2021). Researchers suggested that formal community volunteering is extremely beneficial for older adults' well-being. It is directly associated with better self-health ratings, decreased mortality, higher levels of contentment, increased life satisfaction, and lower levels of depressive symptoms and functional dependence (Greenfield & Marks, 2004).

Community and hospital volunteer programs that recruit the elderly (including veterans) have positively impacted decreased hospital admissions, lengths of stay, re-admissions, healthy behavior changes, enhanced coping mechanisms, and greater psychosocial outcomes. Volunteers perform various functions, including health coaching, home visits, patient education, peer counseling, and physical activity programs. Most volunteer services are equally as effective as

those delivered by healthcare professionals (Gaber et al., 2020). In some healthcare facilities, ongoing practice integrates community volunteers with primary healthcare professionals. This practice has greatly enhanced coordinated care, improved personal focus, and strengthened human connections. Volunteers from different age groups working together enhanced the development of practical skills and task completion and provided rich and rewarding experiences for healthcare professionals, patients, and volunteers (Gaber et al.).

Volunteer organizations rely on and benefit from volunteers (Englert et al., 2020; Peachey et al., 2014). The labor and indispensable tasks volunteers perform are the primary reason for organizational success (Englert et al.). For example, over 62 million Americans volunteered between 2009 and 2010 (Peachey et al.). Some of the marketing strategies developed to recruit volunteers to offer trade-offs such as ability and availability to assist others in providing constructive activities and rewarding roles (Greenfield & Marks, 2004). For example, an online video platform was implemented when volunteer services were temporarily postponed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even though it was not adequate because the volunteer services rendered to patients were crucial, the online video platform did alleviate some pressures on medical professionals, provided a sense of normalcy, and reduced the risk of viral infections for patients and their families (Pickell et al., 2020). This was another way of providing complementary professional services. An online video platform proved cost-effective and a plus in positive patient experiences. The virtual volunteers' efforts greatly contributed to individualized care and vital human companionship for patients dealing with end-of-life care and little or no support without friends or family (Pickell et al.).

Non-profit or not-for-profit organizations (NPOs) daily depend on volunteers. This is why NPOs aggressively recruit and add volunteers to their ranks (Karl et al., 2008). Some

volunteers come with leadership and technical skills. NPO managers should encourage and allow the volunteers to be flexible, grow, own what they are doing, and share their knowledge, skills, and abilities (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Volunteers are not formally bound to organizations; their participation may be based on either affiliative or altruistic motives. NPOs should clearly communicate their vision, values, and mission and create autonomous structures for volunteers that encourage and support responsiveness, recognition, freedom, flexibility, and appreciation (Englert et al., 2020).

Some NPOs use peer volunteers to mobilize community assets and promote active aging, which has become a major emphasis in community aging initiatives. Some peer volunteers are actively engaged in the decision-making of community initiatives and execution, resulting in personal fulfillment, mental and physical well-being, and social interactions (Stathi et al., 2020). They are classified as non-essential personnel. However, they consistently provide essential services to clients and medical staff (Pickell et al., 2020).

Benefits to Volunteering

Volunteering is beneficial in various ways. It provides opportunities for skill and language development, co-produce social services, access to workforce experience, and exposure to cultural norms (Greenspan et al., 2018). Some volunteers report positive impacts on depression, individual/personal needs, life-satisfaction, mortality, peer support, social support, and well-being (Dolovich et al., 2020). Other benefits of volunteering are decreased mortality and increased mental and physical health (Messias et al., 2005). These benefits have had a substantial economic impact on the health care system. Their overall value tremendously exceeds the cost of operating volunteer programs. Thus, volunteer training is not only essential but also critical in helping to demonstrate self-efficacy and foster protective factors for peer support

volunteers (Gaber et al., 2020). Individuals who volunteer are more vocal in the community. They discover balance and renewal in their lives, experience feelings of accomplishment, help in community development, and learn and develop new skills. They also express feelings of well-being and personal growth, and satisfaction (Palmer et al., 2007).

Given these benefits and the importance of retaining volunteers, organizations have recognized their value and have created marketing plans that focus on recruitment, recognition, and retention to increase volunteers' commitments and long-term loyalties (Karl et al., 2008). Some organizations realize that volunteering can create a potential conflict between work and family and provide an opportunity to enrich an individual's life (Cruz & Meisenbach, 2017). For example, community volunteering for seniors is holistic. While potentially taking the elderly away from assumed family support, volunteering helps the elderly achieve self-integration, self-directed non-coercive nature, and feelings of freedom (Narushima, 2005). It also helps counteract the role loss and provides a productive way to contribute to society. Elderly interest in volunteering increased from 10% in 1974 to 37% in the 1990s (Chambre & Netting, 2018).

Volunteering is periodically marketed as a social interaction that promotes mental well-being (Miller et al., 2020). Volunteering encourages and promotes community connections, positive self-worth, and social interactions, which indirectly affects access to healthcare, cultural and social integration, and mental and physical health (Wood et al., 2019). Volunteering does not protect individuals from the effects of aging but does provide a means for older adults to maintain a purpose in life and help to facilitate a feeling of happiness and joy (Greenfield & Marks, 2004).

Issues Related to Volunteering

Even though the number of families who volunteered in the US from 1991 to 1998 increased from 22% to 28% (Palmer et al., 2007), family volunteering became an interest of research. Unemployment rates increased in the 21st century (Krajnakova et al., 2019). Forty-three percent of the families surveyed volunteered regularly every three months. However, both volunteers and potential volunteers were confronted with practical and psychological barriers, which created obstacles to volunteering (Krajnakova et al., 2019).

Subsequently, a decrease in volunteering stemmed from external factors such as family commitments and unexpected events, resulting in the re-engagement of paid work (Hogg, 2016). Some traditional volunteer organizations no longer fit with the desires of potential volunteers because volunteering has been negatively impacted by budget and time constraints and structural conditions of rural life (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Volunteers want to try new activities and interests and work directly with people (Metteberger & Kupper).

Additionally, despite the positive impact volunteering has on mental health outcomes, it can also potentially trigger mental health responses that may impede post-traumatic growth or reintegration. Volunteering is an opportunity to foster a sense of connectedness and purpose (Weiss, 2020). For example, two potential barriers or challenges associated with volunteering are compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue which can occur simultaneously (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020).

Compassion satisfaction (happiness or well-being) reduces the risk of burnout (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). Volunteering is a social commitment that minimizes isolation and encourages community involvement and social interaction. However, several things can hinder volunteer development and participation, such as age, health, lack of information, knowledge,

and an appreciation for volunteering (Krajnakova et al., 2018). Some individuals have consistently volunteered throughout their life, while others only volunteer during different phases of life. Life obligations can become a barrier and hinder or limit an individual's level of involvement in volunteer activities. Despite a volunteer's commitment, there may be periods when his/her involvement may be somewhat minor. The changes are often a result of external factors such as family commitments, other obligations, and/or unexpected occurrences (Hogg, 2016).

Compassion fatigue and secondary traumatic stress are the costs of caring that occasionally come from working directly with people (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). There are times when organizational requirements and structure are not compatible with the volunteer's interest or schedule. Their availability and willingness to volunteer are hampered by an inflexible organizational structure and dissimilar interests or values. Other barriers are related to geography, such as rural areas with limited resources and space. Although the need is great, their budget constraints and population size cannot accommodate the required voluntary support (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Most external barriers are related to various activities and events, inadequate or inappropriate appreciation, lack of information and skills, and limited financial resources. Some internal barriers are primarily related to age and inadequate individuals (Krajnakova et al., 2018). There are also practical and psychological barriers. For example, some individuals find it difficult to consider volunteering as a form of leisure. They cannot comprehend how doing work, voluntarily or otherwise, is enjoyable and relaxing. They see work as an obligation that requires commitment, energy, and time, often demanding and potentially stressful (Krajnakova et al., 2018).

Finally, volunteers prefer being valued, respected, included in decision-making, and greeted by their name (Costello et al., 2020). Using their time and talents to help others feel valued enhances self-confidence, self-esteem, and retention (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). Volunteers are key human resources components, often the backbone of non-profit organizations and tend to perform their duties out of care and concern for the beneficiaries of NPOs. Non-profits have been using a more professional approach to volunteer management (Alfes et al., 2017).

Traits of Volunteers

Volunteers get to express themselves and feel comfortable and efficient in another area. They are often driven by personality types and social preferences, which are essential features concerning volunteer activities. Volunteer organizations should pay particular attention to character traits and other distinguishing features of individuals willing to give their time without compensation. They should also be mindful of their motives and reasons for volunteering. Some features are consistent in all volunteers, such as availability, desire to help, empathy, enthusiasm, independence, integrity, kindness, openness, tolerance, and trust. Because volunteers are not monetarily compensated, volunteer organizations must engage them in meaningful, purposeful, significant, valuable, and well-organized (Krajnakova et al., 2018).

There are at least three types of volunteers: constant, serial, and trigger (Hogg, 2016). Constant volunteers provide continuous services to individuals, groups, or organizations, often over a lifetime. Serial volunteers give their time and effort during various stages of their life. Trigger volunteers first give their time around the age of 50. Volunteering, for most individuals, is not an isolated occurrence. It normally occurs over time and may include various activities (Hogg). As such, some volunteers' primary motives for volunteering in certain events are to do

something different, experience personal and social gratification, and make a difference in the community and/or in the lives of others (Kodama et al., 2013). For example, 51% of individuals 65 and older want to help, while 42% want to make a difference. Socialization and diversion are their two crucial motivational components; 44% desire social interaction, and 37% want a diversion from daily routines (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019).

Individuals do not volunteer because they were not asked, do not want to, or cannot (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). Volunteering takes time, participatory skills, and money. Individuals, who do not possess these resources, typically do not volunteer. Subsequently, individuals with higher educational levels and incomes are more likely to volunteer (Nesbit & Reingold). Social status variables such as age, gender, and race also affect volunteering because they impact how much social, human, and cultural capital may be accumulated and later used for volunteer work (Nesbit & Reingold). Social relationships can be extremely important to health outcomes. For example, although some former military members are considered an obstacle to re-integration, there is a strong bond or connection between veterans who served or were deployed together (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). This relationship could help facilitate the transition from active duty to civilian life. Functional and supportive interactions help minimize and protect against mental health problems (Hinojosa & Hinojosa).

Views on Volunteering

Research reveals that most volunteer coordinators do not link volunteers' purposes, which may have a possible reason why volunteer organizations are still suffering high turnover rates. This fact may also contribute to one of the reasons why the current volunteer rate has been the lowest since 2002 (Hurst et al., 2017). Sound organizational values help to recruit and retain

volunteers. Volunteer organizations should promote their values and adhere to and enforce them (Einolf & Yung, 2018).

Initially, only individuals who had a significant inheritance and/or were from a white-collar background volunteered (Youssim et al., 2015). However, volunteering has become an integral part of older adults' lifestyles. Older adults volunteer equally as younger adults and devote significantly more time (Chambre & Netting, 2018). NPOs increase their involvement in welfare provision and call for more formalized partnership relations with the state (Bedford, 2015). Some volunteer coordinators make time commitments clear to would-be volunteers and have succession plans. To successfully recruit veteran volunteers, volunteer coordinators allow flexibility, limit terms of service, and validate that volunteers were assisted and supported (Dolovich et al., 2020).

Organizations are asking volunteers for their time and effort. Given the cyber, episodic, and micro changes in the way individuals volunteer, coordinators must be mindful of their approach when asking volunteers to donate more time or effort (Costello et al., 2020). Volunteer coordinators should encourage and promote staff/volunteer interactions which enhance inclusiveness and provide opportunities for volunteers to learn, embrace, and accept organizational values, norms, and rules (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016).

Community volunteer organizations are recruiting volunteers who are appropriate for the organizational role. One size does not fit all because of volunteers' characteristics and the contexts in which they operate. The volunteer role description should be clear, with a detailed breakdown of commitment levels and expectations (Stathi et al., 2021). Researchers suggested that formal community volunteering is extremely beneficial for older adults' well-being. It is directly associated with better self-health ratings, decreased mortality rates, higher levels of

contentment, increased life satisfaction, and lower levels of depressive symptoms and functional dependence (Greenfield & Marks, 2004).

Regarding well-being, volunteers' compassion and companionship directly affect patient wellness, including decreased feelings of loneliness, isolation, depression, and anxiety. They also improve efficiency and standards of care by allowing medical professionals to focus on treating the physiological needs of the patients and reduce the cost of hospice care (Pickell et al., 2020). They help bridge the gap between excellent clinical treatment and patient satisfaction by improving mood, increasing adherence to treatments, and providing hope, leading to enhanced patient outcomes (Pickell et al., 2020).

Well-being is a powerful behavior reinforcement (Vecina & Fernando, 2013) that comes in two forms: hedonic and eudaimonia. Hedonic is subjective well-being that is associated with the presence of pleasure and satisfaction of desires; it is a good feeling. Eudaimonia is feeling better about oneself, and hedonic is just feeling good. It extends well-being beyond pleasure and adopts interpretations such as flourishing or personal growth (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020; Piliavin & Siegel, 2007). Volunteer participation has a direct effect on eudaimonia and hedonic well-being. Researchers reported that good feelings alter bodily functions and positively impact the immune system (Piliavin & Siegel, 2007).

Volunteering, especially in poor communities, is critical. Volunteers make a major difference in these communities by doing things to help change people's lives. They are actively engaged in activities that involve a democratic sense of responsibility, a desire to share with others, a love for people, and parental duties. Their personal and community involvement is a driving force behind health promotion (Messias et al., 2005). They engage in various activities and events such as academics, construction, development, leadership, maintenance, management,

research, sports, and training, all designed to assist cities, communities, countries, states, groups, individuals, and nations around the world (Morrow-Howell et al., 2014). For example, volunteers who provide connection, education, and maintenance to encourage conservation and ecological work are invaluable human resources for green infrastructure. These individuals have expressed positive feelings and outcomes (Miller S. , 2019).

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Volunteers' helping behaviors have immensely impacted recovery from severe mental illnesses because of their expanded role and attitude towards meaningful work (Firmin et al., 2015). For example, drivers for the Meals on Wheels program provide a sense of comradery which helps to minimize social isolation and facilitates timely problem-solving. Volunteers' willingness to go beyond the expected duties greatly enhances the lives of individuals receiving the services. These results are beneficial in promoting and enhancing volunteer recruitment and retention (Thomas et al., 2020).

Motivation to Volunteer

Most volunteers have multiple motivations, such as avoiding boredom, diversion of daily routine, gaining recognition from others, and social interaction (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Volunteer motivation also includes satisfaction, perceived self-efficacy, integration in the

organization, and duration of the volunteer activity (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). For example, retiring from work is one of life's major transitions that significantly change daily routines. Subsequently, most retirees want to transition into areas where they seldom use their professional knowledge, skills, and abilities. Some volunteers have contact-intensive, demanding, and hectic duties and do not want to continue exercising those attributes. However, some encounter conflict and/or experience overwhelming stress to continue and do not want to move in a different direction (Metteberger & Kupper).

Although most volunteers share similar prosocial characteristics such as agreeableness, generative concern, and a sense of obligation to volunteer, every volunteer is unique. They are motivated differently and for different reasons and should be treated accordingly (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Individuals attending religious services frequently volunteer for religious causes because they are embedded in cohesive and dense networks that provide greater volunteer opportunities. However, individuals involved in church-based organizations often engage in non-religious activities. In short, religious service attendance is associated with bonding social capital, whereas church-based organizations and activities are gateways to other volunteering activities (Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2011). More informal social networking and formal group involvement, greater diversity in friendships, and greater religious participation and belief increase the likelihood and/or level of volunteerism (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014).

Individuals are motivated to volunteer for different reasons, such as addressing personal problems, expressing or acting on important personal values, gaining career-related experiences, learning more about the world, reducing negative feelings, and/or strengthening their social relationships. Historically, religious institutions have been the hubs of voluntary charity work, which is considered an important moral obligation of believers in all monotheistic faiths

(Khvoostianov & Remennick, 2017). Statistically speaking, 95% of individuals volunteer to help a cause, 81% use skills/experience, 69% are personally affected, and 57% explore strengths (Narushima, 2005). Married couples with good church attendance, comfortable socio-economic status, a solid social network, and prior volunteer experience are likely to volunteer. However, individuals with small children and functional limitations are less likely to volunteer (Niebuur et al., 2018). Statistically, roughly 26% of individuals ages 25 and over volunteered at least once a year (Steimel, 2018). Statistics also show that between 7% and 23% of individuals volunteer in areas different from their profession or skill level. In contrast, skills-based volunteers use their professional skills to enhance the organization and refine their skills (Steimel).

The functionalist theory states that individuals are motivated to volunteer to fulfill diverse needs (Kulik et al., 2016). The classic two-dimensional model asserts that volunteering motives are either egoistic (instrumental) or altruistic (ethical). Egoism fills personal needs, and altruism satisfies the need to help others (Kulik et al.). The Integrated Theory of Volunteerism states that volunteer work is an ethically guided productive activity that involves collective action and requires cultural, human, and capital resources (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014). Even though some individuals volunteer for altruistic reasons, they want to know their efforts are making a difference and desire to have a voice in decision-making to stay invested and engaged (Peachey et al., 2014). Motivation, organizational congruence, and leadership support can benefit or hinder work engagement, performance, and job satisfaction (Van Schie et al., 2015). Individuals desire personal growth, life satisfaction, and opportunities of participating in interesting work. They want to associate with other people, feel connected with the community, satisfy personal religious beliefs, and/or wish to accomplish a task (Palmer et al., 2007).

Even though volunteers are motivated to satisfy personal and social goals, organizations help shape their attitudes and behaviors, influencing what they consider important regarding volunteering (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). For example, hospice volunteers are motivated because of a personal experience with death that involved extending compassion, transforming suffering, exploring and growing through grief, and discovering/developing emotional and caring capacities. Hospice volunteers cope with, learn from, and draw on their grief experiences (Baugher, 2015).

Most adults initially volunteer because of family influence and to benefit youth. Approximately 80% volunteered because they were asked by family and/or friends and 90% continued or increased their level of volunteering when their children were involved. Adults frequently volunteer with family members to be good role models, have fun, spend quality time with family members, and transmit positive values to their children (Palmer et al., 2007). Whereas young adults volunteer with businesses, community organizations or schools with the hope of developing decision-making, leadership, and life skills, children volunteer to give back to the community, have fun, spend quality time with family and friends, or for religious reasons (Palmer et al.).

In contrast to adults, young people who participated in volunteer programs such as service-learning activities through schools, community-based organizations, and businesses perceived the benefits of volunteering to develop leadership, decision-making, and life skills. There has also been an increasing trend in families volunteering together. For example, there was an increase in family volunteering from 1991 (22%) to 1997 (28%). Family volunteering is volunteer activities carried out by family members as a joint activity, whether in their local community or another area (Palmer et al., 2007).

From a gender perspective, Kulik et al. (2011) asserted that the main motive for volunteering is social solidarity. However, personal empowerment, volunteer activity, and the willingness to volunteer were higher for men than women. Men tend to volunteer frequently in a similar profession which speaks to stability, commitment, and the distinct role of men. Women are more focused on motives. Einolf (2011) believed women are usually more likely to volunteer than men, but this does not mean they volunteer or give more. There is a relatively small gender difference in volunteering and charitable giving based on the organizations involved (Einolf). For example, men dominate volunteer fire and rescue squads, whereas women volunteer with hospice.

Recruitment and Retention

Volunteering is not popular in some cultures. It is perceived as being unattractive because it is unpaid work. It is regulated and/or discouraged (Greenspan et al., 2018). Creative approaches that focus on membership and communal aspects of volunteering are necessary for volunteer recruitment and oversight (Chambre & Netting, 2018). Sound volunteer recruitment and selection makes identifying, attracting and retaining individuals for a specific task much easier. This is important because most organizations no longer have a consistent and loyal team of volunteers. There is a steady challenge in recruiting and retaining new volunteers (Alfes et al., 2017). Organizations must seek different ways to recruit and retain volunteers, like offering free meals and/or medical services. A reluctance to pay for volunteers' out-of-pocket expenses has negatively affected retention (Alfes et al.).

Current volunteer literature addresses motivation, experiences, and consequences of volunteering, with motivation receiving the greatest attention (O'Toole & Grey, 2016).

Individual and social factors are motivations for volunteering. For example, higher education and

sound employment increase the likelihood of volunteering (Becker & Dhingra, 2001). A decision to volunteer is also influenced by the benefits and costs of volunteering and the individual's perspective of themselves (Becker & Dhingra). Some scholars perceive that volunteering strictly involves the availability and nature of remuneration, formal organization, free will, and proximity to beneficiaries, whereas most simply view it as free will without financial gain that benefits others (O'Toole & Grey). Scholars commonly measure volunteering effort based on time, conveyed in days or hours. Satisfaction plays a major role in the amount of time an individual volunteers (Costello et al., 2020). Volunteering is unpaid non-compulsory work. Others suggested promoting volunteering to engage community members instead of making a difference. Volunteering is popular among individuals with strong social ties who actively participate in recreational and social activities. Marketing volunteering as a leisure activity is a far more successful recruiting strategy (Chambre & Netting, 2018).

Although there has been an increased awareness of volunteering over the last 20 years, there is limited knowledge and understanding of volunteer organizational socialization or learning the task, internalizing organizational values, and becoming an effective volunteer. Volunteers face ambiguity regarding their task expectations, lack formal training, and gradually learn about organizational culture and technology on the job (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, The volunteer stages and transitions model: Organizational socialization of volunteers, 2008). Fortunately, some agencies/organizations appreciate and celebrate their volunteer. For example, the United Nations celebrated the Year of the Volunteer in 2001, and the European Volunteer Centre launched a Manifesto for Volunteering in 2006 (Bedford, 2015).

Some volunteers are difficult to retain. One-third quit after the first year, especially if the assignment or tasks are not meaningful, rewarding, and/or satisfying. Volunteers who feel valued

and respected tend to continue indefinitely (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). Past research revealed that cultural, personal, and social resources and demographics affect the decision to volunteer and the number of hours and organization (Sundeen et., 2007). Religion is also a major influence in an individual's life. Individuals who attend church regularly are more likely to volunteer (Becker & Dhingra, 2001).

Current Trends

Volunteers traditionally come from civic associations such as church groups and civic movements. Many of those associations are declining and negatively impacting the voluntary human capital within communities. It is important to build a bridge that connects groups, individuals, and local and state voluntary organizations to sustain vital volunteer services (Halsall et al., 2016). Approximately 28% of Americans volunteer roughly 52 labor hours a year. Fifty percent claim they volunteered either time and/or money to a cause, and 91% of these volunteers are affiliated with a religion and religious-based organizations (Eckstein, 2001; Paik & Navarre-Jackson, 2011). Since they appear to be extremely committed, they will likely continue volunteering (Cheek et al., 2015).

However, there has been a slow decline in volunteering since 2003, from 26.8% to 24.9% (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Nevertheless, large charitable organizations still rely heavily on volunteers to accomplish their mission (Einolf & Yung). Volunteers serve thousands daily and collaborate to create a working model that stresses spontaneous and improvised behaviors (Gardner, 2013). Volunteers play an integral role in day-to-day operations. Volunteers are invaluable resources who serve and help others achieve their goals and objectives. Effective management, recruitment, and retention are critical, especially for NPOs. NPOs need to develop and maintain a person-fit environment to ensure positive work outcomes. A person-fit

environment strives to balance the volunteer and the working environment. A good person-fit environment promotes sound human resource practices and productive employee performances (Englert et al., 2020).

Some volunteers, who are dissatisfied with the volunteer placement and/or experiencing burnout, are becoming either activists or change agents (Yanay-Ventura, 2019). Burnout is occupational stress that results from both demanding work-related tasks and relationships. It is typically characterized by depersonalization, diminished personal accomplishment, and emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization refers to either general personal withdrawal or mental distancing as an individual's energy and resources are depleted (Yanay-Ventura). Diminished personal accomplishment is a negative evaluation of an individual's work that causes feelings of professional failure, low self-esteem, insufficiency, and demotivation. Emotional exhaustion is a source of occupational stress that comes through energy depletion and the draining of emotional resources. Volunteer burnout affects turnover when volunteers leave an organization and need to be replaced. High turnover rates can hinder quality services and resilience (Allen & Mueller, 2013).

Time is essential in volunteer work but not unlimited and is a major issue for commitment and volunteer burnout (Boehm, 2002). Volunteers assert and express their preferences and views, which is uncomfortable for traditional organization structures (Hustinx, 2010). Volunteers donate smaller amounts of their time at irregular intervals. Nonprofit organizations are forced to entertain flexible and shorter hours (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Volunteers not only want to be properly educated and/or trained; they also want to be valued, heard, and given less bureaucratic tasks and more resources and time to complete the assignment (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). They often deal with human suffering, such as compassion

fatigue (Gonzalez-Mendez et al.). Volunteers, especially those transitioning from the military, want to be treated with respect and as viable, valued team member (Einolf & Yung).

Support and psychological endurance are significant predictors of resilience outcomes (Gonzalez-Melendez, 2020). Even though volunteering is viewed as a symbolic part of the volunteer's identity, some NPOs are stigmatized for having both challenging and unconventional lifestyles. These organizations should consider using a strategy other than social media for publicity because it may not be advantageous in helping them recruit volunteers (Jeong, 2020). Additionally, volunteer coordinators should link volunteers' purposes to the organizations and be aware of volunteers' motivations and orientations to happiness (Gonzalez-Mendez et al.).

Lastly, most volunteers must sign a one-year written contract that validates their willingness to adhere to organizational rules. However, there is a psychological contract based on their beliefs and expectations, first impressions, former experiences, the organization's image, and training and promises. If the psychological contract is broken, volunteers are disappointed and often leave the organization (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008).

Volunteering and the Military

Volunteering can replace peer support networks, some employment roles and responsibilities when individuals retire. Organizations should ensure volunteers are valued and have an opportunity to experience the prestige and social contact they did while working full time (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Military activists and protagonists tend to draw parallels between wars and portray veterans' reintegration as an ongoing social concern. Activists and protagonists believe that civil society neglects military issues and is responsible for sending soldiers to war on its behalf. As such, activists and protagonists are strong proponents of community and encourage civil society to take responsibility for and assist soldiers with reintegration (Usbeck, 2018).

Veterans are familiar with disaster operations and embody adaptability, flexibility, and resiliency during crises (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019). Veterans are also familiar with search and rescue operations, disaster medical operations, hazardous material, terrorist incidents, and fire safety. While on active duty, some veterans participated in disaster response efforts such as Hurricanes Katrina (2005) and Florence (2018), the aftermath of the Haiti earthquake in 2010, and the Yutu Typhoon in 2018 (Der-Martirosian et al.). Veterans prefer organizations that provide individual attention, flexibility, and custom-designed positions. Organizations that take a bureaucratic approach to volunteering to maximize professionalism and efficiency are rigid and do not allow for flexibility (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Volunteering and community service involvement enhance the adjustment process, competence, identity development, and learning (Holdsworth, 2010).

Disaster volunteer organizations (such as Mission Continues, Team Red, White, and Blue, and Team Rubicon) are critical, especially during the initial hours and days after major crises (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019). Veterans are underused resources that may be readily available to respond effectively when disasters strike. They are good disaster volunteer candidates because they have communication and leadership skills, a can-do attitude towards tasks, and are comfortable working in teams. Veterans are also action-oriented, self-sufficient, prepared, highly flexible, adaptable, and able to stay calm during times of crisis (Der-Martirosian et al.).

Greitens, an Iraq veteran, founded Mission Continues (MC) in 2007 (Usbeck, 2018). His objective was to institutionalize self-help. MC's 20-hour per week civic service fellowship program integrates veterans in local NPOs for six months, provides a stipend for financial support, and accompanies their work with a leadership development curriculum that offers

vocational guidance and opportunities for developing new skills and networks. MC combines social and mental support for individual veterans with a general drive toward civic engagement and community integration (Usbeck, 2018). Veterans work no more than 26 weeks for an NPO in their hometown and receive a stipend. Veterans often improve social isolation, post-traumatic stress disorder, and loneliness symptoms (Weiss, 2020).

Team Red, White, and Blue (TRWB) is a nonprofit organization comprising over 130,000 volunteers with 210 chapters (Weiss, 2020). TRWB provides physical training and social service activities while instilling renewed feelings of belonging and purpose. This program has been instrumental in enhancing social networks, physical health, life satisfaction, and civilian connections (Weiss). TRWB volunteers provided approximately \$173 billion in services and devoted over 8.1 billion hours to organizations, individuals, and communities (Forbes & Zampelli, 2014). Without the help of volunteers, the volunteer organizations would not have achieved their goals (Allen & Mueller, 2013). Given economic conditions and governmental constraints, there is an ongoing need for volunteers (Forbes & Zampelli).

Team Rubicon (TR), established in 2010 by military veterans, deploys humanitarian aid teams to areas acutely affected by major disasters and consists of more than 25,000 volunteers. Approximately one-third of the volunteers are veterans (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019). TR was founded during the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas in Haiti in 2010. TR is a nonprofit volunteer organization that provides disaster relief to areas and civilians affected by natural disasters. Its membership includes civilians, first responders, and over 30,000 veterans who provide damage and impact assessment, debris management, disaster mapping, work-order management, hazard mitigation, incident management, and medical services. TR also helps veterans transition from the military by encouraging and stressing the importance of community, purpose, and self-worth

(Kranke et al., 2017). TR provides worldwide disaster relief. Veterans' critical military skills and experiences are used to create opportunities for continued service. Blending military culture and organization with altruism in civilian communities facilitates the transformation of military skills for civilian tasks. TR uses disaster relief to bolster veterans' sense of self-worth and gain purpose and community, which is achieved by serving others (Usbeck, 2018). TR, a national and international disaster relief organization, provides disaster relief that parallels serving in combat. TR veterans form social networks with one another. TR volunteers are uniformed, equally valued, and not separated by branch, gender, or rank (Weiss, 2020).

Veterans who participated in Team Rubicon used thought restructuring strategies to promote adaptive and flexible thinking, drastically reducing mental health stigmas. TR is also beneficial in helping veterans address irrational and negative thoughts. This is because veterans have time, space, and location (i.e., disaster setting) to reevaluate their experiences with a different mindset and mission (Kranke et al., 2017).

Veteran Volunteers

Concerning life satisfaction, veterans, like other volunteers, tend to solve problems in one of three ways. These are applying context-sensitive strategies, relying on past experiences to create new strategies or remaining calm in stressful situations. They frequently coordinate with other veteran volunteers to share their knowledge and experiences and support one another, contributing to their effective problem solving and emotional stability (Cheek et al., 2015).

Veteran volunteers appreciate activities and events that bring about enjoyment and help reduce stress. Veterans prefer to be considered a unique group that helps strengthen their relationship with one another (Miller, 2019).

Veterans' willingness to continue service beyond deployment and avoid losing purpose after returning are addressed in reintegration programs (Usbeck, 2018). These programs promote veterans' interaction with civilian communities and seek to reintegrate them via their war-related skills. Many of the tasks veterans perform are designed to facilitate personal growth, instill a sense of social responsibility, and strengthen relationships between veterans and their local communities (Usbeck). Veterans experiencing mental health conditions increasingly receive care in non-military facilities (Maiocco et al., 2019). Volunteering can be an adjunct to traditional mental health services and/or a potential alternative for veterans who choose not to seek professional mental health services (Weiss, 2020). Most veteran volunteers choose causes that target fellow veterans, specifically their reintegration and well-being (Khvoostianov & Remennick, 2017).

Additionally, veterans, who engage in voluntary service, have shown positive mental and physical health and social outcomes. A recent study of adults who had volunteered revealed that 40% improved happiness, health, life satisfaction, mastery, and self-esteem and decreased depression. Transitioning and retiring veterans, especially those with disabilities, frequently benefit from civic service (Matthieu et al., 2018). For example, peer support veterans are committed to helping other veterans. They willfully support one another during emergencies, such as an admission to a civilian hospital. They will go beyond to ensure veterans understand hospital procedures and care management practices (Shinners et al., 2018). They also provide emotional encouragement and support because some veterans who struggle with disabilities, either mentally or physically, do not actively seek out support services. This is one of the reasons for the increase in homeless veterans. Peer support volunteers are invaluable in connecting with and providing veterans with an accessible route to essential services (Weir et al., 2017). They are

willing to work with veteran and non-veteran services, donating their time to provide comfort and manage logistics. Their assistance and support are essential, especially for those veterans who are transitioning and re-integrating into civilian life (Pickell et al., 2020).

Veterans' Reintegration

Reintegrating veterans is a good fit for volunteer programs. Most veterans have reported positive mental, physical, and psychosocial outcomes and life satisfaction (Matthieu & Carbone, 2020). Veterans have completed a professional career and are well-educated. Many of them want to give back in an interesting and challenging manner (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Their training and experiences have equipped veterans with unique characteristics and a transferrable skillset. Veterans and communities can help one another. For example, veterans can help communities prepare and respond during disasters, while communities help successfully reintegrate into civilian life (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019). Most veterans desire to serve again. Volunteering enhances their self-efficacy and mental and physical wellness. Voluntary programs that pair veterans with a shared mission and purpose facilitate social support and strong ties while providing memorable opportunities (Matthieu & Carbone).

Volunteering has proven to be an invaluable re-integration tool for veterans, especially those dealing with self-care, social functioning, productivity, physical and mental health, and community involvement (Lawrence et al., 2017). The transition from military service to civilian life presents various challenges for some veterans, including losing a common military identity, difficulties developing new social support systems, finding meaningful employment, and being at risk for mental health concerns and suicide (Weiss, 2020). Transitioning veterans often feel a loss of purpose and experience difficulties transferring military skills and training into civilian life. Volunteering provides veterans with a sense of satisfaction and camaraderie that facilitates

re-integration. Providing disaster relief allows veterans to continue serving others while seeking a renewed purpose and connection (Der-Martirosian et al., 2019).

Approximately 55% of veterans have difficulty transitioning and/or reintegrating into civilian life (Perkins et al., 2020). They experience various issues, including continuing education, financial and legal challenges, interpersonal and social relationship issues, obtaining employment, and untreated mental and physical health conditions. Perkins et al. identified a few private and public social services programs that are aware of and understand the veteran reintegration process and are willing to assist. Only the VA is properly equipped and prepared to address veterans with mental health challenges (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). Other non-VA healthcare programs are needed to help with transition and reintegration.

Veterans' education and training help them develop communication and organizational skills, equipping them to function effectively and efficiently. Additionally, the VA daily interacts with individuals from different racial, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, facilitates their ability to work with diverse groups, learn teamwork, and develop their professional and interpersonal skills. Their experiences open pathways and make them ideal candidates for volunteering (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). However, their reintegration into civilian life is challenging because of financial, personal, and professional complications. Nevertheless, volunteering can help veterans overcome these hurdles by providing opportunities and support during reintegration (Lawrence et al., 2017).

Reintegration or transitioning can last a few weeks, several months, or years (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). It is characterized by hanging on to military friendships and realizing the bond that was developed is not as strong as it once was. However, the bond could be beneficial because of some veterans' experiences during reintegration (Hinojosa & Hinojosa). Nevertheless,

veterans are instantly faced with numerous challenges, obstacles, and opportunities when discharged from the military, including re-immersion into the civilian workforce. Major employers aggressively recruit veterans to help ease the transition and facilitate reintegration. (Dexter, 2020).

Civic service, an evidence-based practice, is a formal and structured form of volunteering because it improves veterans' health outcomes and affects their home communities (Matthieu et al., 2018). Military service is indirectly connected to civic engagement because military service motivations are linked to other forms of civic service, such as volunteering. Volunteer organizations help veterans overcome barriers in various ways, such as interacting with civic organizations, making veterans aware of volunteer opportunities, and providing veterans opportunities to use their knowledge, skills, and abilities to assist with community reintegration (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011).

Community reintegration is returning to participation in the community, home, and social engagements after deployment or retirement from military service. Some barriers to community reintegration that directly affect creating social connections, job performance, and maintaining a job are employer's lack of knowledge about mental health issues, lack of social support at work, and mental health stigma (Hawkins et al., 2015). Community reintegration is especially challenging for disabled veterans because of co-occurring mental and physical issues such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, severe mental illness, and substance abuse. Identifying, preventing, and/or minimizing community re-integration problems is a public health mandate because demobilization and reintegration are challenging, especially for disabled veterans (Resnik et al., 2009).

Motivation, Perceptions, and Values Related to Volunteering

Veterans are motivated by the wish to build support networks and overcome transition issues. For some veterans, personal empowerment and community identification are more important (Khvoostianov & Remennick, 2017). Veterans are considered super volunteers because they have more skills, free time, and managerial/supervisory experience (Einolf & Yung, 2018). A super volunteer is an individual who volunteers at least 10 hours per week with a single organization and tends to have more skills and free time. Volunteers with relationally designed roles tend to stay with their organization and volunteer more (Alfes et al., 2015).

Veterans and their families face many challenges when separating/retiring from employment (Van Slyke & Armstrong, 2019). The first three months of separating/retiring from the military is critical because most veterans tend to have difficulty coping with chronic stressors influenced by ecological factors such as community, individual, interpersonal, and societal systems (Perkins et al., 2020). Post-deployment and/or retirement reintegration are stressful for veterans and their families. Subsequently, a dysfunctional family environment can create mental states that contribute to negative mental health outcomes, marital dissolution and divorce, intimate-partner violence, homelessness, and child abuse (Hinojosa & Hinojosa, 2011). There is no unifying definition for a successful transition for veterans returning home from a military deployment or retirement. This transition period is normally a time filled with readjustment and reintegration into civilian life, reassessment of life and goals, and reconnection with family and friends. It occurs after a deployment or during separation or retirement from the military (Matthieu et al., 2018).

Veterans, like most volunteers, tend to solve problems in one of three ways: apply context-sensitive strategies, rely on past experiences to create new strategies, or remain calm in

stressful situations (Cheek et al., 2015). They frequently coordinate with other volunteers through various organizations to share their knowledge and experiences and support them, contributing immensely to their effective problem solving and emotional stability (Cheek et al.).

Summary

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), approximately 26% of adults between 55 and 64 and 24% of adults ages 65 and over actively volunteer. Volunteerism has been attributed to their active lifestyles and good health. As middle- and older-aged adults increasingly experience good health for longer periods than in earlier generations, they continue to live active lifestyles well into old. Adults will likely continue volunteering well into their old age (Cheek et al., 2015).

Volunteering is perceived as any activity involving free time to benefit others. It encompasses a myriad of activities, motivations, and organizational issues. It is either individualistic or collectivistic, and there are several variations of each that involves acts of generosity that groups initiate, inspire, and oversee (Eckstein, 2001). Most scholars believe that volunteering serves one of three purposes: sociability, self-interest, and altruism. Current research reveals that social and associational ties, religious involvement, and recruitment contacts promote volunteering (Kelemen et al., 2017). The existing research also addresses motivation, experiences, and consequences of volunteering, with motivation receiving the greatest amount of attention (O'Toole & Grey, 2016).

Volunteering is beneficial in various ways, including providing opportunities for skill and language development, involvement with social services, access to workforce experience, and exposure to cultural norms (Greenspan et al., 2018). The vitality of a society is often determined by the number of hours and individuals that volunteer (Sundeen et al., 2007). Volunteering can

serve as a means of character development for young adults. It enhances their prosocial behaviors, social responsibility, and thinking, increases happiness and resilience, and provides a sense of community belonging (Ranapurwala et al., 2016). Subsequently, volunteer organizations target them through offerings of improved conflict resolution, peer mediation, self-control/regulation, and other social skills (Ranapurwala et al.).

Volunteers are considered the backbone of volunteer organizations and civil society, freely giving their time to serve others and organizations with limited resources, knowledge, and high organizational ambiguity (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008). Volunteers are an integral part of the labor force. For example, in 2005, approximately 65.4 million Americans volunteered at least 50 hours, equating to a dollar value of \$280 billion (Sundeen et al., 2007). On average, volunteers donate approximately 8.1 billion hours annually). They provide immeasurable economic and social values and play a major role in almost every aspect of life. Traditionally, volunteers have come from civic associations such as church groups, civil movements, and others. However, there has been a slow decline in volunteering since 2003, from 26.8% to 24.9%. Volunteers donate smaller amounts of their time at irregular intervals. Nonprofit organizations are forced to entertain volunteers with flexible and shorter hours (Einolf & Yung, 2018).

Researchers suggested that formal community volunteering is extremely beneficial for older adults' well-being. It is directly associated with better self-health ratings, decreased mortality, higher levels of contentment, increased life satisfaction, and lower levels of depressive symptoms and functional dependence (Greenfield & Marks, 2004). Volunteering can replace peer support networks and some employment roles and responsibilities when veterans retire. Many veterans are willing to continue servicing beyond retirement and avoid losing purpose

(Usbeck, 2018). Reintegrating veterans is a good fit for volunteer programs. Volunteering has proven to be an invaluable re-integration tool for veterans, especially those dealing with self-care, social functioning, productivity, physical and mental health, and community involvement (Lawrence et al., 2017). Veterans, like most volunteers, have multiple motivations such as avoidance of boredom, diversion of daily routine, gaining recognition of others, and social interaction (Metteberger & Kupper, 2019). Veterans are also motivated by the wish to build support networks and overcome transition issues.

The proliferation and intensity of volunteering are declining even among military veterans. Promoting and reliance on volunteering validates an important and urgent need. More research is required on constituting and regulating volunteerism holistically (Bedford, 2015). This study was designed to interview veteran volunteers to gain their perspectives on volunteering and learn about their motivation and values regarding volunteering. The results of this study may be used to enhance the recruitment and retention of veteran volunteers.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

This was a phenomenological qualitative study on volunteering from veterans' perspectives. It will answer the following three questions: What are veterans' perspectives of volunteering, veterans' values, and what motivates veterans to continue volunteering? Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the study was virtual. Permission was requested from the Institution Review Board to conduct the study. Veterans (between 10 and 15) were recruited to participate. The data was collected, documented, and bracketed to better understand veterans' perspectives, values, and motivations. The study was conducted because the current volunteer rate has been the lowest since 2002. There is a gradual decline in volunteerism, including veteran volunteers (Hurst et al., 2017).

Qualitative research is an appropriate methodology because I examined a topic with limited knowledge regarding veterans' perceptions of volunteering. I wanted to know how veterans perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, and what values help sustain their volunteering. A qualitative method is designed to provide greater insight into a specific phenomenon. I chose convenient sampling due to COVID-19 restrictions to obtain a wealth of information from the participants using semi-structured interviews. It was extremely resourceful to examine the perceptions of individuals who share similar experiences to better understand volunteering (Creswell et al., 2007).

Design

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore veterans' perspectives on volunteerism. A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon, i.e., volunteering (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study provided in-depth insight into veterans' perspectives, values, and motivation. It

offered recommendations that could lead to changes and implementations to reverse the trend and promote an increase in veteran volunteers.

My approach was to examine the phenomenon of how veterans perceive volunteering. I used the phenomenological research design because it is flexible and helps provide a deeper understanding by allowing the participants to have a voice (Hays & Singh, 2012). The questions captured the veterans' perceptions, motivations, and values. The study examined retired veterans' experiences and perceptions of volunteering based on their motivations and values. A primary goal of phenomenology was a detailed and rich description of the perspective of individuals experiencing a specific phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003).

Phenomenology describes the phenomenon through individual experiences with the phenomenon. The researcher chose an area of study and interviewed individuals who have experienced the specific phenomenon. The researcher examined themes by analyzing the interviews and other qualitative design methods such as observations. The themes helped convey participants' structural (how) and textural (what) experiences. This data was combined to provide an overview of the participants' experiences concerning conditions, context, and situations (Creswell, 2007). This information may be beneficial in recruiting and retaining retired veteran volunteers. This study could contribute to the current body of knowledge related to the perceptions of veteran volunteers.

I wanted to examine the perceptions of retired veterans regarding volunteering. It is believed that military veterans' perceptions, motivations, and values are similar, but a constructivist perspective will help to validate the data (Hays & Singh, 2012). Military veterans are a unique group of individuals; it is conceivable that there are several distinctions related to the phenomenon of volunteering. Social constructivism permits examining various distinctions

or realities, enabling the researcher to work with participants to describe, comprehend, and address the research problem (Hays & Singh, 2012).

Research Question

Acknowledging, recognizing, and respecting veterans as viable human resources will help create a concept or plan that brings together local, state, and voluntary organizations to sustain volunteers with limited resources (Halsall et al., 2016). The study will answer the following question:

RQ1: What are veterans' perspectives on volunteering?

SQ1: What values are associated with veterans volunteering?

SQ1: What motivates veterans to continue volunteering, even during difficult times?

Setting

The study was conducted virtually. The following link was used to contact the researcher: <https://form.jotform.com/Felixalexander/MilitaryVeteranVolunteerInitiative>. A description of the research study, Participant Consent Form (Appendix B), and Interview Protocol (Appendix C) were provided to each participant. Interviews were conducted Monday through Friday between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM EST.

Participants

Between 10 and 15 veterans were recruited. Veterans (regardless of age) must have completed one full tour of military service, received an honorable discharge from the military, and have at least one year of continuous volunteer service. Veterans can be from any of the four branches of service (Army, Navy, Air Force, or Marines). Retired National Guard veterans will also be considered. Spouses of veterans' will not be considered.

Procedures

Prospective participants were contacted face-to-face and on the internet using social media. A link was established to obtain participant data (Appendix D). After participant data was obtained and reviewed, participants were selected and scheduled for an initial interview. Three veterans were selected to participate in the study. Selected participants were asked to sign a consent form indicating a willingness to participate in the study.

During the interview, participants were given a detailed description of the study. The interviews lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview was recorded via audio for the accuracy of documentation. Approximately three weeks later, a second interview was scheduled for each participant to review his/her transcribed report to make corrections, changes, and modifications, as necessary.

The Researcher's Role

The researcher conducted and documented the research study. He sought permission from the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study. The researcher asked each participant to sign a consent form. He was interviewed twice.

The candidates' responses were documented and recorded for the interview for accuracy and clarification. Each received a written report review with the appropriate participant and was asked to validate it. The researcher included the written reports in the dissertation.

Data Collection

Data for the study was informal virtual interviews via Zoom. The interviews were scheduled, and audio recorded. Interviews lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. Interviews were assigned a code for record-keeping purposes. Notes were also taken during the interview. Every effort was made to maintain a between descriptive and reflective notes. If there were unforeseen

circumstances, a participant was interviewed. The participant was asked to write an essay about their experiences, feelings, and perspectives regarding volunteering, with special emphasis on their motivations and values.

Interviews

Each participant was informally interviewed. The interview lasted between 45 to 90 minutes. All questions were asked, recorded, and documented. There were 24 questions: 15 (perspectives), 4 (values), and 5 (motive).

Perspective

1. What are your volunteer duties and responsibilities?
2. How long have you been performing volunteer services?
3. What do you like about your volunteer role? Why?
4. What, if anything, do you dislike about your volunteer role? Why?
5. What advice would you recommend to other veterans who are considering volunteer work? Why?
6. What advice would you recommend to organizations looking to recruit veteran volunteers? Why?
7. What about your military experience prepared you for volunteer work?
8. How would you describe your volunteer experience?
9. How do you avoid burnout?
10. How did you select your volunteer location?
11. What about your location do you enjoy? Why?
12. What about your location do you not enjoy? Why?
13. What, if anything, about your location would you change? Why?

14. What is your overall perception of volunteer work?
15. How do you perceive volunteer work, i.e., as a patriotic duty, a divine calling, a combination of the two, or another way? Explain your answer.

Values

16. What contributes to your commitment and dedication to volunteering?
17. What will cause you to stop volunteering?
18. What do you look for in a volunteer organization? Why?
19. What do you look for in a volunteer supervisor/manager/leader? Why?

Motivations

20. What drives or motivates you to continue volunteering when you encounter conflicts?
21. What is your preferred type of volunteer work?
22. What can you do to encourage other veterans to volunteer?
23. Why do you volunteer?
24. What motivates you to continue volunteering?

Questions one through fifteen were designed to assess veteran's perspective on volunteering. These questions were straightforward and geared towards veterans' thoughts and feelings. Questions sixteen through nineteen were seeking information about veterans' values. Questions twenty through twenty-four were asked about veterans' motivation. What drives their desire to volunteer? What keeps them going even during difficult times?

Document Analysis

The interviews were recorded to compare and validate notes taken during the initial interview. Notes were also taken during the observation. Once the data was analyzed and

compiled in a written format, the researcher asked each participant to review their information for accuracy, clarification, and validation.

Data Analysis

Data was bracketed, clustered, and delineated in units to form a theme. Each interview was summarized. The participants were asked to validate the data for accuracy and make corrections/modifications. General and unique themes were extracted to make a composite summary.

Trustworthiness

The data was consciously bracketed to better understand veterans' perspectives, values, and motivations. The goal was to accurately convey their perspectives. The audio recordings were reviewed to summarize the interview and write the report. Each participant was asked to review their written report for accuracy, correctness, and validation. They were provided a copy of the report if requested.

Credibility

Each participant was asked the same questions. The interviews were recorded, and answers were documented. The interviews were summarized, and a transcript was written. The participant reviewed their transcript to check for accuracy and validate the report.

Dependability and Confirmability

Greenfield and Marks (2004) believed community volunteering benefits seniors' overall well-being. Other research studies affirmed that volunteering is associated with better self-health ratings, decreased mortality, higher levels of contentment, increased life satisfaction, and lower functional dependence and depressive symptoms. Cheek et al. (2015) stated that volunteers apply strategies in a context manner, draw on their experiences to create strategies, and maintain

emotional stability during difficult and stressful situations. These methods are comparable to those used in day-to-day problem solving and are unique in how they are applied to volunteering.

Transferability

The data collected during the initial interview was documented and recorded. Notes were also taken during the interview. The data was transcribed and validated by each participant prior to being submitted in the final document.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. Fictitious names were assigned to the participants to ensure confidentiality. The interviews lasted between 45-90 minutes. The data collected was safeguarded and controlled (i.e., stored in a locked container).

Limitations

All interviews took place virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions. Interview timeslots (date and time) were pre-arranged. Participants were given a link to choose an interview timeslot. Interviews were audio-recorded for the accuracy of documentation.

Summary

A phenomenological qualitative study was conducted on volunteering from a veteran's perspective. The study had three questions: What are veterans' perspectives on volunteering, their values, and what motivates them to continue volunteering? The researcher recruited between 10-and 15 veterans who have retired from the military and had at least one year of continuous volunteer service.

The interviews were audio-recorded; notes were taken during the initial interview, and observations were documented. Collected data was analyzed, bracketed, and consolidated in a written document. The data was validated by the participants to ensure trustworthiness, i.e.,

credibility, dependability and conformability, and transferability. Ethical guidelines were followed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

Since 2002, there has been and continues to be a gradual decline in volunteerism, including veteran volunteers (Hurst et al., 2017). Since volunteering is an integral part of American society, it is essential to know why and address the decline. This phenomenological qualitative study was designed to understand and describe veterans' perspectives of volunteering, including their values, motivation, and answer the following question:

RQ1: What are veterans' perspectives on volunteering?

SQ1: What do veterans value regarding volunteering?

SQ2: What drives and/or motivates veterans to volunteer?

One of the goals of the study was to understand why there has been a decline in veteran volunteering and determine what could be done to reverse the trend. Volunteer participants were interviewed, audio-recorded, and data was collected. The data was examined, and codes and themes were created to describe the phenomenon of volunteering from veterans' perspectives.

This chapter begins with a demographic overview of the volunteer participants, a data collection summary, and a data analysis. It also includes a copy of the individual transcripts, the study results, and a brief data analysis conclusion. The themes and sub-themes are presented in detail, including charts and graphs.

Demographic Overview

I wanted the study to represent the military demographics for gender and race/ethnicity. I posted an email on LinkedIn requesting individuals to participate in my research and used snowball and purposive sampling to identify perspective participants. However, I only received a

total of 13 prospective participants. After reviewing the demographics, I chose 10; three did not have one year of volunteer service.

I interviewed ten participants: six men and four women (Table 1). These included three white, six Black, and one Latino (Table 2). One participant fell in the 30-39 age range, two in the 40-49 age range, three in the 50-59 age range, and four in the 60+ age range (Table 3). Two participants served between five and 10 years. One participant served between 11 and 15 years, and seven served 20+ years (Table 4).

Table 1
Gender

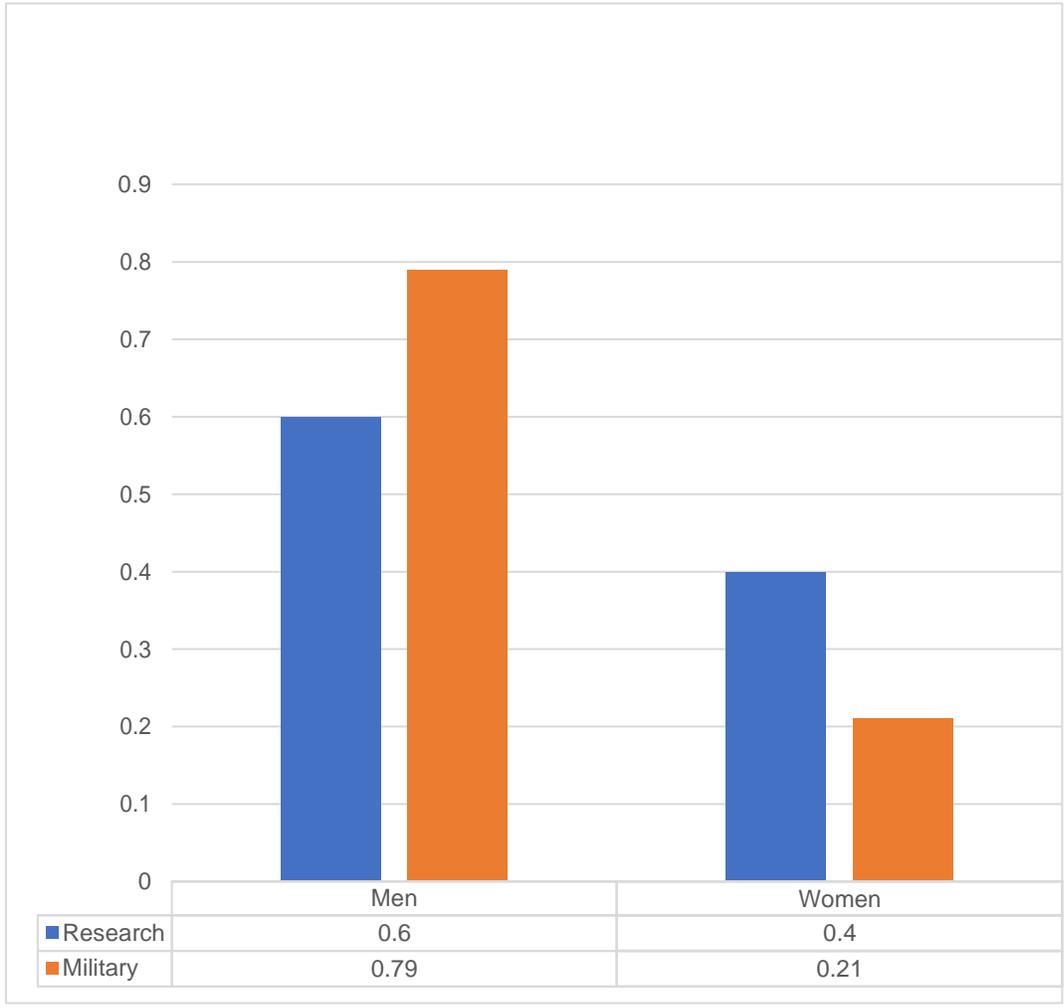


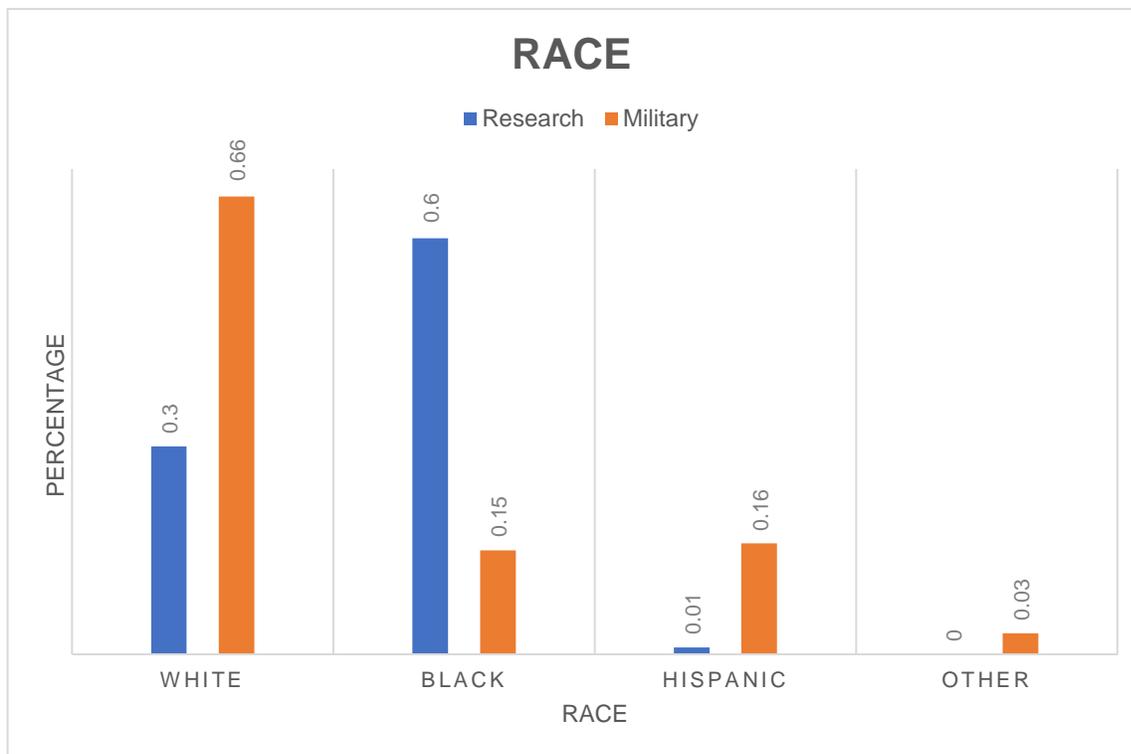
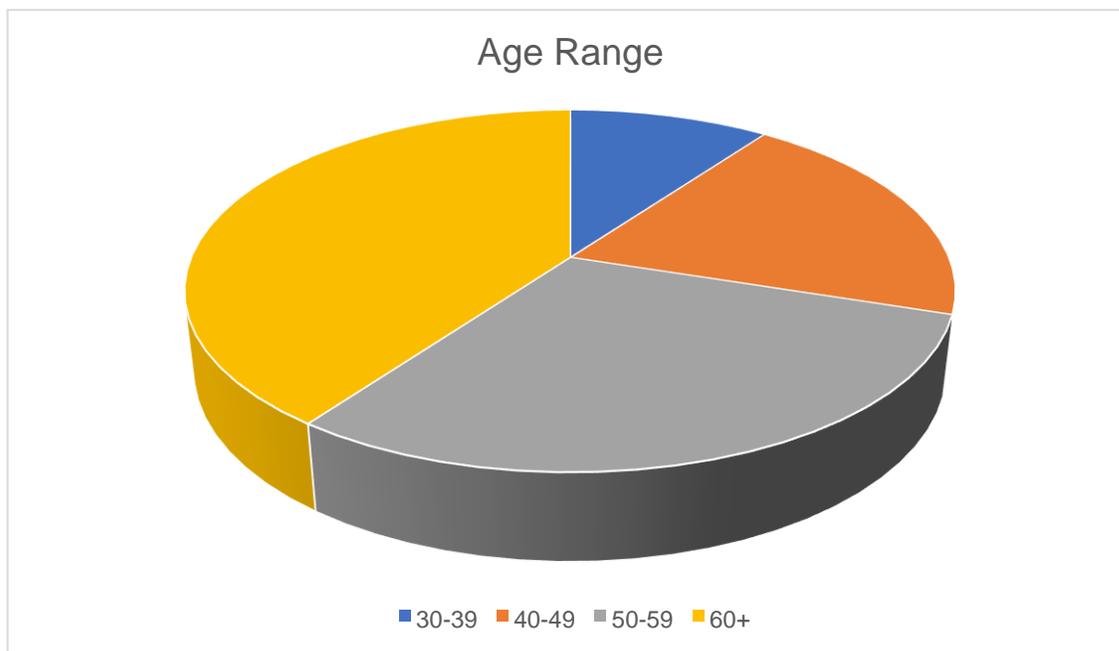
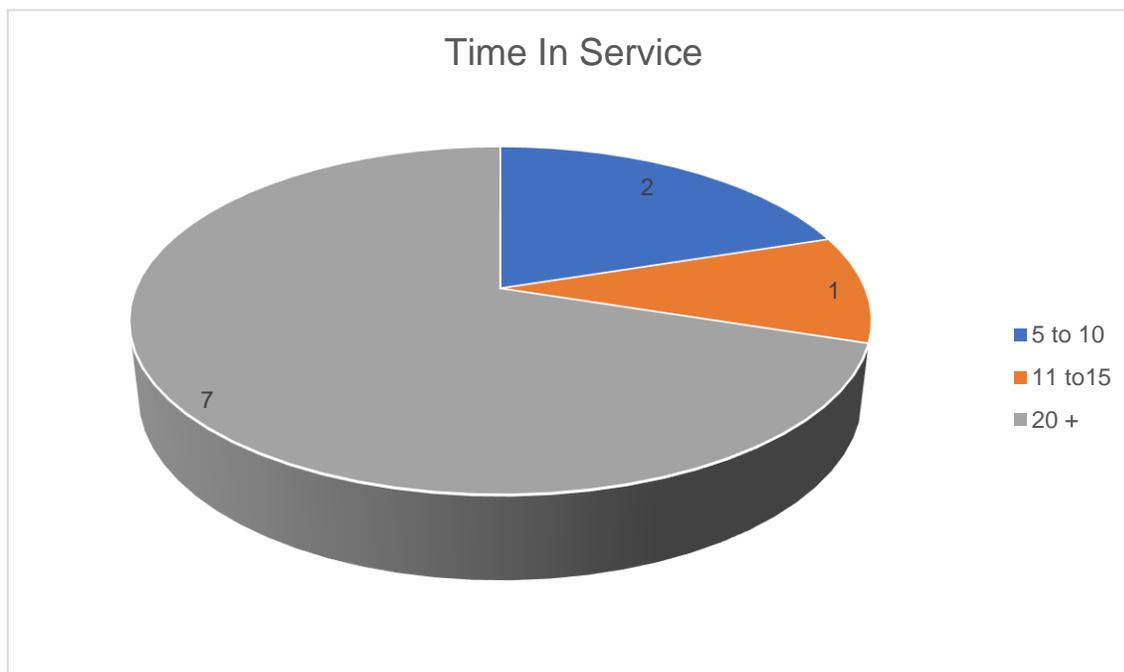
Table 2**Race/Ethnicity**

Table 3**Age Range****Table 4****Years in Service**

Data Collection

I collaborated with the chosen participants, sent each participant a consent form, and received a signed form before scheduling the interview via Zoom. Before proceeding with the interview, I provided an overview and purpose of the research project and reminded each participant that the interview would be audio-recorded. I proceeded with the interview, asking the following questions:

Perspective

1. What are your volunteer duties and responsibilities?
2. How long have you been performing volunteer services?
3. What do you like about your volunteer role? Why?
4. What, if anything, do you dislike about your volunteer role? Why?
5. What advice would you recommend to other veterans who are considering volunteer work? Why?
6. What advice would you recommend to organizations looking to recruit veteran volunteers? Why?
7. What about your military experience prepared you for volunteer work?
8. How would you describe your volunteer experience?
9. How do you avoid burnout?
10. How did you select your volunteer location?
11. What about your location do you enjoy? Why?
12. What about your location do you not enjoy? Why?
13. What, if anything, about your location would you change? Why?
14. What is your overall perception of volunteer work?

15. How do you perceive volunteer work (i.e., a patriotic duty, a divine calling, a combination of the two, or another way)? Explain your answer.

Values

16. What contributes to your commitment and dedication to volunteering?

17. What will cause you to stop volunteering?

18. What do you look for in a volunteer organization? Why?

19. What do you look for in a volunteer supervisor/manager/leader? Why?

Motivations

20. What drives or motivates you to continue volunteering when you encounter conflicts?

21. What is your preferred type of volunteer work?

22. What can you do to encourage other veterans to volunteer?

23. Why do you volunteer?

24. What motivates you to continue volunteering

I actively listened to and engaged with the participants to capture the essence of their volunteer experiences, feelings, and perspectives, with special emphasis on their values and motivation. I probed and asked follow-up questions to seek understanding and gain clarity of their responses.

Data Analysis Process

The interviews were audio-recorded and uploaded to a secure drive. The recordings were used to create transcripts in conjunction with the notes taken during the interview. I gave a biblical name to each participant to protect his/her identity and maintain confidentiality. The individual transcript was emailed to the specified participant for accuracy and validation and emailed back to me with corrections if any.

I reviewed each transcript and analyzed and compiled the raw data. I bracketed the data based on three themes: professional, personal, and love. I further broke down the three themes into sub-themes (Table 5).

Table 5

Data Analysis

Professional	Recruitment	Veterans recruit veterans
	Military Experience	Educated, trained and equipped with essential skills
	Intangible	Inner peace, happiness, joy, rich and rewarding
	Self-care	Balance, flexible, learn to say no
	Organizational Focus	Misleading, deceptive, mission focus, not the need
Personal	Passion	Personal fulfillment, self-gratification
	Family values	Taught the significance of volunteering
	Calling/duty	Integral part of self, duty to serve
Love	Love of God	Expression of love
	Love of people	Labor of love

The themes pertained to the interview questions and captured the participant's descriptions of their volunteer experiences. The sub-themes are related to how the participants expressed themselves during the interview. Pertinent individual statements from each interview were noted and used to delineate specific concepts and views. I also developed a process, and common statements from each interview were captured and used to substantiate the sub-themes/categories.

Individual Participants

This section consists of the individual transcript of each participant to provide an informative description, which is an essential component of qualitative research. Again, I gave each participant a biblical name to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. The participants agreed with this process.

Elizabeth

Elizabeth was a master sergeant in the Army. She served for 21 years and worked in accounting. Elizabeth is a United Way volunteer. She works specifically with the Community Impact Review Panel Board. Her duties include reviewing 501-C3 NPO's funding requests. Her inputs help to determine whether the organization's request is approved. She finds her duties and responsibilities to be both enjoyable and rewarding. It allows her to see how 501-C3 organizations positively impact her local community.

Elizabeth said, "I pay close attention to minority representation on the Board of Directors, 'specially if the organization is first serving minorities. If there's a difference, no minority representation for an organization that services primarily minorities, I note and bring it to the attention of the Board of Directors and the United Way."

This could have an adverse effect on the organization receiving funding from the United Way. She has not had any problems with little to any minority representation.

Elizabeth was pleased to report that the 501-C3 organizations she has reviewed have been well organized and professionally managed. She was very impressed. Another veteran was so impressed with the overall function of the United Way that he encouraged her to get involved. Veterans recruiting veterans is one of the United Way's primary means to recruit veterans. Veterans have a bond, a brother/sisterhood, in which they encourage, respect, and support one

another. Elizabeth also believes that her military training and experience equipped her for the position with the United Way. Elizabeth served in numerous administrative and leadership roles, where she was required to make sound final decisions. Her position with United Way is an extension of her former military duties.

As previously stated, Elizabeth was recruited by another veteran. She did not choose her location. However, she did choose her position in the organization. She specifically chose to work with children and battered women.

She said, "I can personally identify with children and battered women. I have three daughters and always wanted to make sure they were properly treated and cared for, for them to maintain their innocence. Secondly, I understand the challenges battered women face, especially in abusive relationships. I wanted to advocate for children and battered women who either couldn't or didn't know how to do it themselves."

Elizabeth finds serving as a volunteer to be extremely fulfilling. She enjoys working with and helping individuals in the local community. She does not find volunteering to be challenging or overwhelming. She believes that everyone should volunteer once for at least six months to one year.

"It is a wonder way to give back to the community," Elizabeth said. "It has taught me a lot about myself. I enjoy helping others. There is a sense of self-gratification when I freely help others by volunteering my time, talent, and sometimes treasure."

Elizabeth is not concerned about burnout because she has developed an excellent self-care program. She paces herself, eats well, gets plenty of rest, and goes to the fitness center at least three times a week. She believes in and consistently practices self-care.

Elizabeth said, “This is an integral part of me. It’s not a patriotic duty but a divine calling. I volunteer out of love. Where there is a need, I want to be able to help.”

Elizabeth says helping and serving is a part of her calling.

She said, “I’m a servant of God. I’m called to serve others. Serving is also an example of love. When I’m made aware of a need that I’m equipped to handle, I don’t hesitate. I get involve. I believe in rising to the occasion. The only thin’ that will stop me from it is a physical limitation. If I’m emotionally, mentally, and physically capable, I’m going to serve - to volunteer.

However, I prefer volunteering with people who think like me. People who enjoy helping others, who are motivated by an inner drive to serve, to be a blessing to others. Leaders should also have this type of motivation. It is catching and is often passed on to team members. For example, I work with a leader who was extremely passionate about serving others. Her passion gave me desire to serve women and children. This make me important in finding others, especially veterans. I share what I’m doing, where I’m working, and how it is benefiting others. I also talk about how volunteering is helping me. I love giving back to the community. I especially love working with battered women and children. My motivation is strengthened even more when I see growth and development in others. My greatest pleasure is witnessing positive changes and hearing success stories.”

Solomon

Solomon was a major in the Air Force. He served for 22 years. He was a missile launch officer and worked in security analysis. Solomon’s most recent volunteer assignment was with the VA. He initially met with veterans who had little to no outside contact to provide them companionship. As his duties evolved, he started playing games, setting up various activities,

and discussing historical events with the veterans. The veterans especially enjoyed playing Trivial Pursuit. Solomon shared that many of the veterans he was working with were from the Korean War and Vietnam Era. He worked with those veterans for approximately 1.5 years.

Solomon also volunteered with Big Brother/Sisters organizations, church groups, and homeless shelters. He performed duties such as mentoring young boys, tutoring children in math, and assisting with bedding down individuals for the night. He thoroughly enjoyed doing activities to help others.

He said, “My ‘periences were good and rewarding. It was a pleasure for me to give back. I’m blessed and want to share it with others. I believe in the concept of ‘paying it forward. As I help someone, hopefully, they will help someone else. If I could, I’d volunteer every day. However, there’s not enough time in a day because of other things. Unfortunately, volunteering often takes away time from my personal and professional responsibilities. Volunteering is enjoyable and much needed.”

Solomon feels that most people, especially veterans, should volunteer.

He said, “Volunteering gives me a good feeling inside, a happiness and joy that comes with helping others. I ‘specially enjoy seeing others succeed; it’s refreshing. When this occurs, I’m holistically impacted: emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. I believe we can relate to these feelings because we know what it is like to be given opportunities, especially when we’re away from home.”

Many veterans are not volunteering because volunteer organizations either do not know how or choose not to match veterans with their skill set. When veterans are inappropriately matched to a volunteer assignment, they seldom remain in the position for a long time because the position is often boring and unappealing. Volunteer organizations must recognize the

veteran's skill set, know the needs of the position, and match the two together. Solomon also feels his military experience taught him to assess people skills and manage/organize activities, which is ideal for volunteer work. He used his leadership and managerial skills to properly match individuals with duties and responsibilities that would maximize their skills.

Solomon described his overall volunteer experience as very rewarding.

He said, "My focus always on giving, never receiving."

Nevertheless, he received much from the experience, primarily intrinsic things.

He said, "It was a pleasure seeing how much individuals were to get assistance.

Unfortunately, the joy and excitement of it almost caused me to burnout. I found myself spendin' a lot of time helping others after working 10-12-hour days. My commitment and devotion to the caused to me to press ahead. I exhausted when I got home and didn't have the energy or want to accomplish my personal tasks. Fortunately, I learned how to avoid burnout by sharing with other volunteers. I started takin' better care of myself. I no longer compromised my health to help others. I paced myself and took breaks. I even said no when I was not mentally or physically able to volunteer."

Solomon did not necessarily choose locations to volunteer. He saw a need and availed himself to help.

He said, "I first volunteered at the VA in hopes of getting a job. This was my only self-seeking volunteer experience. However, it proved to be the most enjoyable and rewardin' experience. Even though every volunteer organization is committed to servicin' the needs of others, I felt the veterans at the VA hospital had unique needs. The veterans served in combat. Although I served in the military, I was never in combat. However, I was personally able to identify with them because I also served in the military. I enjoyed working at every volunteer

location. The peoples at each volunteer location either had specific needs or dealt with unfortunate incidents that left them in difficult situations. As I look back, I probably wouldn't change anything. I only wish I had more time to volunteer. Time's a precious, but there is never enough of it to go around. If more people would take time to volunteer and assist their others, this world would be a better place."

Solomon said, "I believe volunteering is a combination of patriotic duty and divine calling. Patriotic, I have a duty and obligation to serve not just my country but others. As a divine calling, I'm commanded to serve others. I'm blessed to be a blessing. Volunteering is also in my blood. My parents volunteered lots of ways. I grew up watching my parents get involved and helping others in need. I believed volunteering was a necessary part of life. The dedication and commitment to help others are values that my parents instill in me. My military training reinforced those values. Helping people is instinctive. I don't know how not to help when a need arises. I remember one occasion when my wife saw two men broke down on the highway. I initially didn't want to stop, but my wife told me to stop. We discovered that the two men were stranded and didn't have any money. We drove them to the nearest town and gave them money to eat and get their vehicle repaired. I learned that one of them was a veteran. Unfortunately, hard times left him in a bad way. Although I was apprehensive, I was glad we stopped to help them."

Solomon said, "Volunteering is a rich and rewarding experience. There are countless organizations and individuals who are using individuals during difficult times. I've become suspicious of where to volunteer and who to help. Even though I want to help and get involved, some of the activities of organizations and individuals are misleading. The people appear to be legitimate, but there's a hidden agenda. They're using the situation for their personal financial gain. I don't volunteer or give as freely as I once did. I am extremely particular about who, when,

and where to assist. I prefer to sow seed in good ground. I now look closely at the organization and the leadership. Prior to getti' involve, I research what the organization is doin', who are the gets the help, and what's the organization's track record."

Solomon is motivated to win. He does not like to lose. He is committed to giving his best to do the best job possible. He considers volunteering a job. He wants to make a positive difference. He is all in. He does not have a preference in terms of volunteering but enjoys helping people. He loves touching the hearts, helping them to understand something clearly, at last, move forward, and eventually help others.

Solomon believes one thing volunteer organizations can do to recruit veterans is better to advertise. Although organizations have a need, it does not appear to be well-publicized. If they could afford it, volunteer organizations should have an aggressive ad campaign. Some veterans would like to volunteer but do not know where or who has a need. It is good that volunteers encourage other volunteers, but better advertisement could achieve greater success.

Abraham

Abraham was a sergeant first class in the Army. He served for 24 years. He was in the infantry and worked in food services. Abraham volunteered with the VA. His primary duties were providing escort services for veterans visiting the VA Hospital. Although he was not the supervisor, he served in a supervisory capacity. He has volunteered for over 10 years in various capacities, including assisting the feeding/clothing of homeless individuals, working with the prison population, and serving in local churches. Volunteering gave Abraham a good internal feeling. He enjoys helping people.

When he worked with the VA, he said, “I had a sense of comradery with other veterans. Were able to talk about past experiences, which let us to move forward. I remember meeting a young man who was experiencing some challenges.

However, his family kept him busy to help him forget the past and focus on the future. Even though their intentions were good, they eventually caused him to have a breakdown. It was not until he could talk about the past that he could move forward.

Abraham recommends that veterans considering volunteer work talk with mature veterans who are experienced and well-seasoned. He suggested talking about whatever is troubling or concerns the individual.

“It’s not wise to ignore our problem, but better to address ‘em. Veterans should find positive ways to address their concerns.”

Abraham said the word of God is the best way for him to address his concerns. Abraham also recommends that veteran organizations seeking veteran volunteers need to learn to listen to the veteran. If the organizations listened to the veteran, they were far more committed and loyal to the organization. It is the volunteer organization’s advantage to develop a listening ear.

Abraham believes his military experience helped to prepare him for volunteer work. He daily encountered various people that had different experiences. He was able to communicate with them across the chain of command.

“My ability to ensure and maintain confidentiality encourage them to have repeated conversations. We ‘veloped a tremendous amount of respect for one another and were able to help address and overcome challenges. My talkin’ with the veterans helped me to avoid burnout. We not only took care of one another, but we also encouraged one another to take care of ourselves.”

Additionally, Abraham gave his cares, concerns and/or problems to God. He found peace with God, especially when he took his issues to the altar and left them there.

Abraham selected some of his volunteer locations, while others were assigned based on his experience, knowledge, and skills. He chose locations based on his passion and ability to make a difference. He believed he was most effective in locations isolated from mainstream America, i.e., veterans' hospitals and prisons. The VA hospital was home to veterans, just as the prison was home to prisoners. Even though there were limitations within each setting, Abraham had the individual's undivided attention. The populations were pleased that Abraham came to help them. He thoroughly enjoyed helping them address/meet their need. Abraham did not necessarily dislike his volunteer locations but was hindered by limitations. For example, the VA hospital and prison have strict guidelines for safety and security. Subsequently, he was limited by activities and movement. Nevertheless, he was able to provide much-needed help and obtained favor from the administrators at each location. At the prison, he was able to take inmates off-site to participate in a Scared Straight Program at a local high school.

Abraham's overall perception of volunteering is extremely positive.

He said, "Volunteerin is one of the greatest gifts available to the public if the system and volunteers work to meet the needs of individuals. The primary thing should be on the needs of individuals, not the organization. I believe too many volunteer organizations are profiting because of their services. However, the individuals who need the services are fully benefittin'. Individuals in need could receive much more if volunteer organizations shift their focus from mission to people."

Abraham perceives volunteer work as a divine calling and a patriotic duty. He said patriotic duty because of what he gained from the military and his desire to give back. However,

primarily as a divine calling because of his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. His faith in God drives his passion for serving others. He loves God and God's people.

He said, "I didn't always trust people or let myself to help them. However, since developin' a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, I've learned not only to trust God but also His people. I serve God through helping people in need. I no longer trust my ability but totally depend on God and follow His leading."

Abraham's commitment and dedication to volunteering are based on his love of people. He finds pleasure in seeing others achieve a higher or different level of success. He is determined to help others get up and stand up and walk in victory. He believes that situations and circumstances have negatively impacted individuals in that they no longer belief in themselves. He desires to help individuals change how they see themselves. He is committed to volunteering if there is a need.

He said, "I'm gonna volunteer 'til my actions no longer helps others. When I stop making a positive difference in the lives of others, then I'll stop it. When I volunteer, I not only wanted to know about about the organization but also the organization. I research the organization's history, mission, and success rate. I want to know that the organization is not only legitimate but is making a positive difference in the community and in the lives of people. I also check to see if the organization is the same with the word of God. I want to ensure the organization is serving people, not itself. Volunteering is important, regardless of the location. Volunteering is a lifeline for countless numbers of people. I want to volunteer with an organization that does positive things, not just talk about them. I want to volunteer for an organization where the leadership treats individuals with respect. Respect is important and should be givn' to everyone regardless of their race, ethnicity, national origin, sex, religion, or socioeconomic status.

Abraham's motivation to continue volunteering rests because he has traveled some rough roads.

He said, "We all experience difficult times and challenges. It's good when others stepped up to help. I wanna to be one of those individuals who step forward to help. I don't believe in quitting or giving up. If the mission is bigger than us, we must be willing to press ahead. The bottom line is I enjoy volunteering, especially working as an escort. It was a pleasure assisting individuals, helping them find their way through the hospital. I also enjoyed talking with and getting to know other veterans. I listened and learned from them just as they learned from me."

Abraham suggested that veterans should know what they want to do in terms of volunteer work. They should also talk with experienced veteran volunteers to learn about the pros and cons of volunteer work. They should have a love for people and a sincere desire to help people.

Abraham has a tremendous love for people. He wants the best for everyone. He enjoys being available to help others, to travel alongside and help them in their struggles.

Abraham said, "Whenever there's a need, I'd love to help. I'm a good listener, ready and willin to listen and speak into the lives of others."

Martha

Martha was a chief warrant officer 5 in the Army. She served for 30 years. She worked in maintenance and administration. Martha has served as a volunteer for over two years in church and civic organizations. However, her greatest passion has been researching disability benefits and helping veterans acquire them as independent volunteers. She works with veterans to assess what benefits they qualify for, such as education, clothing, employment, and other allowances.

Martha said, "I, like other veterans, entered active-duty whole. I didn't have any health issues. However, when I retired, I had several. I think we should be compensated for our time

and service. I decided not only to help myself, but also other veterans gets the disability benefits they not only earned but deserve.”

Knowledge is power. Martha uses her knowledge to not only inform but also assist veterans. She talked about her experience prior to retirement. She worked with a retirement counselor who reviewed her medical records, gave her a prospective disability rating, and agreed to submit the documentation. The counselor did not follow through. When Martha learned of the situation, she was furious.

It provoked her to action. She started working with another counselor and eventually successfully submitted her disability package, learning valuable information. From this experience, she decided to help other veterans struggling to get assistance.

Martha recommended that veterans who believe they are eligible for disability benefits request a full medical/psychological examination, preferably before separating/retiring from the military. They should also contact a disability counselor. As a courtesy, she has placed her contact information on social media, making herself available to assist interested veterans at no cost. Martha finds her volunteer experience to be rewarding. Her focus is on helping fellow veterans.

She said, “I get the greatest joy when I help older veterans who’ve been denied disability benefits for years.”

She believes that many veterans are denied benefits because they are not familiar with the process. They do not know what should be included in the application or how to write it. She believes her military experience was instrumental in helping her acquire administrative and informal briefing skills and leadership experience. Her skills and experience have significantly

contributed to her ability to research, identify, and appropriately document pertinent data required in a disability claim.

Martha prefers working face-to-face with veterans. However, the restrictions of COVID-19 demanded social distancing. Although it has dampened her volunteer activities, she makes herself available through social media. She advertises her abilities via social media and encourages veterans who need help submitting a disability claim to contact her. Martha perceives her work as a volunteer as both patriotic and a divine calling. She is patriotic because she is helping other veterans and has a divine calling because of the inner drive and peace she receives from helping others.

Martha has a heart for people. She said, "It's not about the money. I love helping people."

Again, she emphasized that she did not come into the military broken, but she left broken. She believes she has to help others who were also broken to get the disability benefits they earned. She does not feel that anyone or anything could discourage her from helping veterans. However, she did acknowledge that she does not like dealing with nasty people- people with bad attitudes and/or who are not receptive and do not listen.

Martha believes that volunteer organizations that want to recruit veterans should get veterans to recruit veterans. Veterans have a unique bond and tremendous respect for one another. They are more apt to take the word of another veteran. It is much easier to determine what motivates veterans when conversing with someone they respect and trust. Volunteer organizations/coordinators should be transparent, stating their mission, goal, and objectives. They should let prospective veteran volunteers know what is expected, be flexible, and willing to collaborate with them.

Martha concluded by saying, “I volunteer because of its values. The more I help others, the better I feel about myself. Volunteering is a part of who I am. It is joy to give back without expecting to get paid. However, do get paid via appreciation, feedback, gratitude, and other things. The bottom line is volunteering keeps me grounded.”

Hosea

Hosea was a sergeant first class in the Army. He served for 22 years. He was in the infantry and worked in vehicle maintenance. Hosea is committed to helping whomever and whenever, but he does not consider himself a volunteer.

He said, “I don’t like being associated with the term volunteer. I have volunteered for organizations that treated me like an employee. They expected me to work for several hours on a particular day. Even though I stated what I was willing and able to do. When I didn’t follow through with their request, I was verbally chastised. I had to remind them that I’m not being paid to perform the duties. I’m a volunteer.”

Hosea affirmed that he would be there if someone needed assistance and could help. He enjoys helping others but on his terms.

He said, “I’m flexible and open. However, I chose to retire, which gives me the flexibility to do what I want when I want to do it. If someone asks me to assist and I agree to it. We coordinate on the specifics of my helping. Don’t expect me to do more than we agreed upon. If I choose to do more, that is my decision. The individual or organization should not demand and and or expect me to do more than was agreed.”

Hosea believes that veterans either stop or do not start volunteering because of the expectations of others to include volunteer organizations. He feels volunteer organizations are treating volunteers like employees.

He said, “They expect volunteers to work eight-plus hours days and perform employee-like duties. They also want to chastise volunteers if they don’t fulfill certain performance standards. If the volunteer organization is making these types of demand, then they should hire an employee. I’m willing to help, but don’t put me on your schedule. I’m willing to show up and give you a few hours, but not for an extended period. I enjoy my downtime. I’m now retired and desire to enjoy the fruits of my labor. If I don’t feel like working or helping on a given daytime, as a retiree, that is my prerogative.”

Hosea recommends scheduling multiple volunteers when volunteer organizations need a particular task done. This prevents from relying on one individual to accomplish a task that is often required of an employee. Scheduling multiple volunteers accommodates for no-shows and does not leave the task to one individual. This also precludes volunteers from getting burned out. Volunteers work when it is convenient for them, not the organization. Demanding and expecting a volunteer to work employee-like hours takes away from the joy of volunteering. It becomes like a job. If volunteers wanted a job, they would not have retired.

Hosea said, “I did enjoy volunteering until those organizations started treating me like an employee. I felt like they were attempting to put me back in an environment that I just came out of. The organization was asking for more than I was willing to give. Please do not misunderstand my position. I’ll work whenever there is a need, but I want to maintain my flexibility. Volunteer organizations should learn to embrace and accept what volunteers are offering. If volunteers enjoy what they are doing, there is a good chance that they’ll volunteer more often and work more hours.”

Hosea believes that people volunteer out of the goodness in their hearts. He does not necessarily believe it to be a patriotic duty or a divine calling. It is merely an individual's desire to help others in need and/or give back.

On the other hand, he said, "It may be a calling, a heartfelt desire to help others."

He also believes that some discontinue volunteering because they feel more committed to helping others than the individuals are to helping themselves.

Hosea said, "It is discouraging when you're working hard to help others, and they don't seem to care. I had some bad experiences which has negatively affected my perception of volunteering. I stopped volunteering because of the attitudes and behaviors of others. I found that working with individuals with a bad attitude takes away from the volunteer experience. Additionally, volunteers are often more bothered by volunteer coordinators and other volunteers than the volunteer work. Volunteer coordinators should monitor the volunteer climate and do their best to develop and maintain a safe, secure, and friendly working environment.

Hosea said, "I don't want to discourage other veterans from volunteering. I would encourage veterans to check out volunteering opportunities. Give it a try to see if it's something you may enjoy doing."

He suggested volunteering in various locations and possibly in various capacities. It is probably the best way to find out what fits.

Hosea also said, "As for me, my past experiences have shaped my view of volunteering. Currently, nothing can change my perspective. However, I'm now and will always be opened to helping others, but not necessarily in a formal manner as a volunteer."

Joshua

Joshua was a technical sergeant in the Air Force. He served 20 years and worked in security. Joshua enjoys volunteering in the church and the local community. He takes directions from the volunteer coordinator. He does whatever is requested or needed. He has been volunteering for over 24 years. He enjoys helping others.

Joshua said, “Everybody needs a hand sometimes. It takes a village to raise a child; everyone pitching in to meet the objective. I enjoy being an integral part of the village. I don’t like it when there is no direction or guidance. It’s time-consuming when volunteers must determine or figure out what needs to be done.”

Veterans not only enjoy helping others, but they also want to help. However, it is better when volunteers know what they are willing to do, want to, and know how to do it. They should focus on things they are passionate about and with which they have experience. It would be easier to recruit veterans with a veteran. Veterans have a bond and respect for one another. Veterans know how important it is to convey what is needed and provide appropriate guidance and support. They are also good at documenting shortfalls, developing a plan, and providing input.

Joshua’s military experience prepared him to be flexible, take directions, and get the job done. He has a wealth of experience and can perform various aspects of any given job. He especially likes getting his hands dirty. He is gifted at assessing the job and determining the appropriate course of action. Even though he has had some terrible volunteer experiences, he is committed to his word.

Joshua said, “If I give m’ word, I’ll follow through. If I’m not able to follow through, I’ll quickly make it know and provide an alternative to make good on my word.”

Joshua is not concerned about burnout because he paces himself. He assesses his personal and professional responsibilities and determines how much time he can volunteer. He does not commit to more than he can do. He allots and schedules his time wisely. Before agreeing to volunteer, he identifies the need, determines if he can help and if he is willing to help, and makes himself available.

Joshua said, "I seldom decide where to volunteer. The need normally dictates. When I learn of a need, I assess my ability and desire to help. Normally, if I can help, I help. However, I prefer working and doing things that I am familiar with and both knowledgeable and passionate about. My passion drives me. It makes volunteering more enjoyable. Good fellowship also adds to the process.

Volunteering is best when I know the mission, purpose, and objectives. These provide direction and guidance. I enjoy helping organizations...I prefer helping people. We all need help from time to time. I even occasionally go out and solicit help. I am passionate about serving. It's one of my ways of fulfilling God's call on my life. Yea, I consider volunteering a calling. My belief and faith in God motivate me to serve others. I enjoy the concept of being a good neighbor, selfishly giving of my time, talent, and treasures to help a neighbor in need. I volunteer not just because I believe my neighbors will help. I'll volunteer even if my neighbors don't help me because whatever I do, I do it as unto the Lord. In fact, I have been volunteering all my life. My parents showed and taught me the importance of volunteering. I'll always avail myself to volunteer. I'm driven by the needs of others and a strong desire to make a positive difference.

Volunteer organizations/coordinators need to be transparent. They should convey their mission, need, and desire. Some organizations are misleading. They give the perception of wanting to help others, but their primary objective is financial gain. I choose not to help

organizations like this. I prefer volunteering with local churches and organizations, ones that I'm knowledgeable about. Oftentimes, I'm aware of the need in the local community and am driven and motivated to help. Here is a time when I seldom think about volunteering. I just do it. As I said before, I am gifted in several areas and passionate about helping others. Although I prefer helping in those areas where I'm gifted. If the need is great and I can help, I will.

I would encourage other veterans to search themselves, to remember where they came from. Most of us have been stationed in places where we needed help, and someone came through for us. Let's do the same for others. Seek out people and/or organizations in need and volunteer your time. Volunteering is both rich and rewarding. Do not miss out on the opportunity.”

Jacob

Jacob was a lieutenant colonel in the Army. He served for 26 years. He was a helicopter pilot. Jacob volunteered as a law enforcement chaplain with the Fayetteville Police Department and the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office. His duties and responsibilities included riding along with deputies and police officers and aiding in domestic situations. He has been instrumental in de-escalating several domestic violence situations, aiding in funeral services for fallen officers, and visiting injured officers at the hospital. Jacob has been volunteering for over 20 years-13 with the Fayetteville Police Department and seven with the Cumberland County Sheriff's Office.

Jacob said, “Volunteering gives me a sense of giving back without being compensated. Like, I officiate funerals for officers at no cost. This has been a rich and rewarding experience. I'm free to come and go...volunteer at the sheriff's office and visit the jail or hospital.”

Jacob's recommendation to veterans is to volunteer for something you want to do, something passionate. It will bring a sense of self-gratification/satisfaction.

"It's a blessing to give something back to humanity. It's even more enjoyable when you do it without being paid. I just love it.

When attempting to recruit veterans, volunteer organizations need to be attentive and receptive. Veterans want to be comfortable in the position. The volunteer organizations should provide a detailed job description to include the qualifications and requirements for the volunteer position.

"They should let veterans know what is expected of them."

Jacob feels his military experience was instrumental in preparing him as a volunteer, but the desire goes back to his parents. He grew up in a neighborhood where everyone pitched in to help their neighbor. The community truly cared for and helped one another. However, his experiences in the military further solidified his desire to volunteer. He enhanced his people skills through military training, education, and experiences. He learned to meet people where they were and helped them move from disappointment or hurt to a place of comfort and peace.

Jacob said, "I got lots of personal gratification. I was privy to confidential information and hardened when and how to respond in stressful and traumatic situations. My experiences not only help me assist others but also taught me the importance of self-care, thus preventing burn-out."

Jacob chose his volunteer locations based on his passion. Law enforcement was an integral part of his upbringing. He had several family members who were in law enforcement officers or functioned in some capacity related to the courts and civil service.

Jacob said, “When I first volunteered with the Fayetteville Police Department, an officer was killed in the line of duty. As a minister, I felt it was my duty to engage the family. I went by the officer’s parents’ home and prayed with the family. I also took part in the funeral. Recognizing the impact my services had on the family encouraged me to become a chaplain with the department. It gave me a sense of doing something worthwhile and being able to see the immediate positive impact. I felt like I did something good for a family that was in grief and was able to help them cope.”

Jacob also said, although the position as a chaplain is both rich and rewarding, it is always difficult at times, especially when dealing with the death of an officer. Chaplains should be properly trained; completing seminary is not enough.

“Chaplains need to be educated on law enforcement protocols and cultural awareness, as well as theological training. Volunteer work can be enjoyable if it is something you want to do and are passionate. It’s better to be knowledgeable the duties of where you volunteer. We know what is expected.”

Jacob perceives volunteering as a calling. It requires a caring attitude. He understands and respects the concept of volunteering as a patriotic duty, especially as it relates to veterans. There is a sense of duty and obligation to give something back. However, for him, it is a divine calling.

He said, “I’m a servant of God. I’m committed and dedicated to helping others. I’ll always volunteer unless I am not physically or mentally able. I am not discouraged or swayed by what others think. However, I believe volunteer organizations/coordinators should acknowledge and respect my efforts. They should be open and receptive to my knowledge, skills, and abilities and be willing to place me in a position that is both beneficial for me and the organization.

Volunteer coordinators should know the position and the organization's mission, goals, and objectives. They should be compassionate, flexible, and culturally competent.”

Jacob's encouragement and recommendations for prospective veteran volunteers were to discover what they are passionate about, find an organization that will allow them to fulfill that passion, and coordinate with the organization to volunteer on a trial basis.

“If it works out, continue. If not, find another volunteer organization. It is good to know what is expected of you, what you are volunteering to do. The bottom line is you gotta want to give back. In doing so, you'll not only give but also receive.

Jacob said, “I do it cause I love God and His people. It's not just something I'm commanded to do; it is something I want to and enjoy doing. I especially like volunteering with law enforcement as a chaplain because of the flexibility and the positive impact I'm making.”

Caleb

Caleb was a staff sergeant in the Army. He served for 14 years and was medically retired. He was in the infantry and worked in security. Caleb enjoys cooking for and serving others. He volunteered as a cook for an annual organizational cook-off. The organization sponsors a cook-off twice a year. Caleb and associates plan, prepare and provide food for the employees and their families. He has been volunteering in this capacity for over 12 years.

Additionally, he volunteers at his church, specifically for Sarah's House. He does not cook but serves meals. Caleb considers volunteering a labor of love. It is his way of giving back or helping. He gets extremely excited about helping others, especially when he can cook and serve. Caleb loves everything about volunteering, from making himself available to assist to following through and completing the task. He joked about being in the Army and was told never

to volunteer for anything. However, he ignored the comment. He finds himself to be one of the first individuals to volunteer, especially if it involves serving others (Caleb, 2022).

Caleb's recommendation to veterans related to volunteering is

“Go for it. You never know how much you can impact others until you put the effort. People are hurting; they need a helping hand. Most veterans can lend a helping hand. Don't be selfish or self-centered. Take the time to help those in need. Volunteer organizations could greatly enhance their recruiting efforts if they got veterans to recruit veterans. Find a veteran who is passionate about their mission and allow them to either lead or be an integral part of your marketing team. Veterans have a bond. We share a camaraderie; we respect and often listen to one another. Allowing us to talk 'bout what it is like volunteering for the organization will pay big dividends.

Caleb consistently volunteered while in the military. Those behaviors continued after retiring. It is what he does. He cannot imagine a time when he would not volunteer, except if he is physically or mentally unable.

Caleb said, “My volunteer experiences have been great. I would not do nothing to change them. I love helping people in need. It's rewardin and brings me a peace and joy. I don't think about burnout in volunteering because it's a part of who I am. I hadda learn to pace myself because there was a time when I would work from sunup to sundown. It didn't matter where I volunteer; I volunteer wherever there's a need. I enjoy working with people, regardless of who they are.”

Caleb considers volunteering a labor of love. He does not consider it a patriotic duty because he has always done it, even as a child.

Caleb said, “It may be a divine calling. It is a part of who I am. It’s what I do. I help other people. I seldom volunteer to help large organizations, but I’m always available to help local organizations and individuals. I enjoy seeing the immediate effects of my actions...individual satisfaction, expressions of gratitude, smiles, laughter, you know, things like that. I feeling I have a duty to serve. I believe everyone should serve another at least once. People should find something they enjoy doing and do it to help another person and without pay. There’s a return on your investment that cannot be explained

Caleb acknowledged that he had had some bad volunteer experiences, but he did not and will not allow those experiences to deter him.

He said, “I have learned to focus my attention on the mission, not the organization. My objective is to help people. This is probably the reason I chose to work with local places. I know who is directing the it and what they expect. I either have or quickly develop a personal relationship with the people I’m working with. We share a common objective to meet the needs of those we’re helping.

Caleb is driven by a sense of pride. He genuinely cares about the people he is helping/serving. He said, “I will volunteer even if no one ever say thank you.”

Caleb shared a story of a time when a little boy gave him a hug and said thank you.

He said, “My little boy’s gratitude touched me more than being paid. I cried. I felt a deep sense of thanks. That experience stayed with me and kept me moving forward. It reinforced why I volunteer. I encourage not just every veteran but everyone to volunteer. We all have something to offer, something to give especially to those in need. Don’t think about it, just do it! People have a need. Let’s do what we can to help fulfill the need. For me, it is a labor of love.”

Naomi

Naomi was a staff sergeant in the Army. She served for 12 years. She worked in personnel and administration. Naomi volunteered with several organizations, including the USO, Sarah's House, and the church. Her duties and responsibilities at the USO included working as a greeter and providing support to the families of service members. She worked in this capacity for three years. Naomi also prepared food and fed the homeless and senior citizens and provided Bibles and other handouts to homeless persons. She has been volunteering for more than 20 years.

Naomi said, "I enjoy watching people enjoy the food and fellowship. It is an expression of compassion and support when I assist in the care and feeding of others. I especially like working with military families, encouraging and socializing with them. It reminds me of my time in the military. I love talking about military duties. I encourage family members to stay in touch with new recruits. Working with the USO has been a rewarding experience. Unfortunately, COVID-19 hindered our face-to-face contact, and we discontinued providing the services."

Naomi believes that every veteran should volunteer. Veterans have been fortunate to serve our country. While serving, veterans received a wealth of training and experience that can be used to help others. Naomi encourages veterans to find their niche, gift, or purpose and do it. She feels even disabled veterans can help others. It will take a disabled veteran's mind off their challenges and will receive joy in helping others. Naomi also believes that veterans are ideal for recruiting other veterans. Veterans have a bond, a sense of camaraderie and tremendous respect for one another. Veterans can share their volunteer experiences, specifically what they do or have done and how volunteering has benefited others and themselves.

Naomi said her military experience better equipped and prepared her to be a good volunteer. She learned the importance of commitment, discipline, leadership, management, organization, and structure. She also developed excellent social and people skills. Naomi is extremely comfortable interacting with all people regarding their socio-economic status.

She said, “When you treat a person with love and respect, more often than not, they will respond accordingly.”

Naomi has truly enjoyed her volunteer experience. She said, “Volunteering brings me joy. When I am not volunteering, there is a dampness in my spirit. I get a sense of peace and fulfillment in volunteering. It is a part of who I am and what I do.”

Naomi acknowledged that an individual could get burned out from volunteering. She said, “I know how much I can handle. I pace myself. I do not overextend myself. I volunteer two to three times per week for a few hours each day. I wanna to give my best, so I can make sure that I’m mentally and physically able to volunteer. Self-care is important to me. I make sure I take care of myself, so I can help take care of others. I don’t allow the organization to dictate my schedule. Although I am flexible, I choose the days and times I volunteer and when, where, what, and how I volunteer. I especially like volunteering with women and children, preferably during the day.”

Naomi’s volunteer has been favorable. She said, “My only complaint has been the restrictions in open communications, especially at the USO. I enjoy sharing with people. I want them to know about what they need to do. The USO attempted to restrict what I could share. I like being able to speak freely, especially about my faith. Some of the people I encountered could have benefited from a relationship with God. The USO didn’t allow me to share about my

faith. Anyways, I enjoyed the experience and would encourage veterans and others to also volunteer.”

Naomi perceives volunteering primarily as a divine calling.

She said, “God commanded his children to serve others. I’m not only obedient to God’s command, but I also enjoy serving others. Even though there is not any monetary compensation, I receive payment every time I volunteer. Someone either says or does something that brings me joy or reminds me how God has blessed me. I also feel it is patriotic to serve others, to lift and encourage people who are going through difficult times. I am blessed when I bless others. I am fully committed and dedicated to give back, to serve those in need, and to help in whatever way I can. When I grew up, my family was always helping someone in the community. My parents’ doors were always open to others. My doors are also open to those in need.

I cannot imagine a time when I wouldn’t volunteer. Only if I am not mentally or physically capable of volunteering. However, I don’t like working with selfish people or organizations. The focus should always be outward towards individuals, families, and groups in need, not to fulfill or satisfy selfish ambitions or greed. My volunteer service is unto God, not man. Whatever I do, I do it as unto the Lord. I’m led by the Spirit of the Lord to serve. I seek God’s guidance of when, where, and how to serve, which often require me to check out what organization’s done, history of giving and serving. Those places who don’t have a good track record or if there is uneasiness in my spirit, I will not volunteer for them.”

Naomi’s bottom line is that whatever she does, she does it as unto the Lord. She is motivated to serve God and His people. She said, “God is not the author of confusion. When there is conflict and confusion in respect to volunteering, she does not get involve. She finds another organization and makes herself available.

Jesus gave me peace, and I receive. Secondly, where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. I want to volunteer in peace and liberty.”

Naomi said, “I encourage veterans to get involve, volunteer. Find a need and volunteer their time, talents, and even treasures. If they do it from their heart, they will thoroughly enjoy it. It will bring a sense of pride, joy, and fulfillment. It will not only put a smile on the face of those you serve but also a smile on the face of the volunteers. I challenge all veterans to do something good for someone else without expecting something in return. Although there is not any finial compensation, there is a compensation that money cannot buy.”

Ruth

Ruth was a captain in the Air Force. She served for nine years. She was an intelligence officer. Ruth volunteers primarily in church and schools. She enjoys working with teenage girls as a coach and mentor. Her duties and responsibilities include showing up for cheerleading practices and ministry events and providing input for songs and other creative aspects of church and school. Ruth has been volunteering for over five years. Her passion is helping and serving. She enjoys interacting with others, being creative, getting involved, and being a part of something bigger than herself.

Ruth said, “Although I enjoy volunteering, I would prefer a consistent schedule. I work with a group that is sporadic. There is no set schedule which makes it difficult for me to participate because it conflicts with my personal schedule.”

Ruth encourages all veterans to volunteer. However, she recommends to not volunteer just for the sake of volunteering.

“Find something that you are passionate about. Allow volunteering to be an integral part of your life. Don’t see it as just a community service project, but as an extension of yourself.”

She feels volunteer organizations should find out what interest veterans and cater to those interest. Communicate with veterans about how they can help the organization and how the organization can help them. Stress the importance of a collaborative, mutually beneficial working relationship. Ruth believes that volunteer organizations that know, understand, and strive to meet the community's needs still more than likely get more volunteers.

Ruth said, “My military experience enhanced my personal and social skills. But my parents taught me the value of helping others. My parents have always given of themselves, their time, talents, and resources to help others. I grew up helping and serving others. When I joined the military, I had a mindset that was directed towards giving back, making a difference in others’ lives. I enjoy being a part of group, especially a group that is committed to helping others in need. My military experience helped my skills and better prepared me to assist others when I separated from the military.”

Ruth is very active and genuinely concerned about avoiding burnout. She meticulously schedules each day, ensuring adequate time for professional, personal, and volunteer activities. She tries not to overextend herself. She believes and practices self-care. Nevertheless, she feels guilty if she does not make time to volunteer, to give back to the community. She is constantly re-assessing her schedule to incorporate time for volunteering.

Ruth said, “I normally choose when and where to volunteer. But there are times when the need tells when and where I volunteer. My preference is to volunteer in the church and at schools working with teen girls. I also enjoy working with my sorority sisters doing things in the community and for people.”

Ruth feels volunteering is very important and much needed. She wishes everyone would volunteer. “Volunteer organizations need to make what they want known to volunteers,

especially veterans. Veterans have a wealth of experiences, and most are willing and eager to help. If volunteer organizations and coordinators talk about things upfront, they'll likely get more volunteers. However, they must treat volunteers with respect, be flexible, and listen to volunteers' inputs and ideas."

Ruth believes volunteering is a divine calling. She feels patriotic duty is subjective, and not everything enforces the concept. For Ruth, volunteering is a passion. She is driven and motivated to serve others.

She said, "I have the energy to press through and make a difference. Like I told you, I grew up in a house where helping others was natural. I was taught that we were blessed to be a blessing. My parents were excited about helping other because God helped them. My parents led by example. If volunteering was not demonstrated or displayed, an individual may find it difficult to embrace the concept."

Ruth also believes that volunteering could be seasonal for some people. There are times when people are highly motivated and will volunteer on the spot. However, there are other times when people are reluctant to volunteer because of personal or professional challenges and/or commitments. Organizations should be flexible and be prepared to take advantage of times when people are receptive to volunteering. Volunteer organizations should not try to force or pigeonhole people into volunteering at certain times or places. When organizations have a "must fill" position, they should use their employees or pay someone to do the job. A lack of consideration, flexibility, and respect prevents volunteer organizations from recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Ruth said, "Volunteering brings a sense of camaraderie, like what I experienced in the military. Volunteers, especially veterans, share similar views and values. They have a bond

which generates a partnership and willingness to work together to help others. Veterans prefer working with organizations and leaders with similar characteristics. Veterans are gifted with skills and abilities that serve well in volunteer organizations. They don't like wasting their time. They are ready and willing to work, especially if the task is clear, organized, and well planned. We are focused on the big picture, the need, and getting it done.”

Ruth said, “I prefer volunteering in the church and working with teenagers at school. I remember when coaches took the time to help me. I want to give back, to make a difference in an individual's life. I feel good when I give back, and I enjoy it. Volunteering causes me to look beyond myself and see the bigger picture. It can be challenging, but it is so rewarding. Volunteering is worth the time and effort.”

Results

This section is the results of the data collection and analysis process. The results are arranged in three themes and ten sub-themes/categories. The sub-themes provide a more detailed description of the participants' volunteer experiences. Professional is the first theme supported by recruitment, military experience, intangibles, self-care, and organizational focus. Personal includes the sub-themes of passion, family, and calling/duty. Love is supported by the sub-themes of love for God and love for people.

Theme 1: Professional

The participants provided their perspectives on volunteering. They talked extensively about their volunteer experience while sharing rich and rewarding moments. They also shared their perspective on volunteer organizations.

Sub-theme 1.1: Recruitment. Volunteering provides veterans a wonderful window of opportunity to continue serving and give back to the local community (Shinners et al., 2018).

Volunteering is an ideal way to help veterans transition and reintegrate back into civilian life (Matthieu et al., 2019). However, recently volunteer organizations have had a challenge recruiting and retaining new veteran volunteers (Alfes et al., 2017). Shinnars et al. (2018) believed veterans could personally identify with the challenges and struggles of people in need. The participants interviewed believed that volunteer organizations should solicit veterans to recruit veterans. Veterans shared a bond, a sense of brother/sisterhood, and esprit de corps. Veterans have tremendous respect for other veterans. They frequently coordinate with other veteran volunteers to share their knowledge and experiences and support one another, contributing immensely to their effective problem solving and emotional stability (Cheek et al., 2015).

Sub-theme 1.2: Military Experience. Veterans have been blessed with knowledge, skills, and abilities while serving on active duty, and many want to give back to the community through voluntary service (Nesbit & Reingold, 2011). The participants interviewed agreed that their military experience enhanced and equipped them to be better volunteers. Volunteering provided the participants an opportunity to use the skills acquired in the military to give back to their local communities.

Sub-theme 1.3: Intangibles. Veterans are not focused on self-centered goals such as being successful and/or fulfilling personal desires but are service motivated, focused on helping others, and firmly believe in their social responsibilities (Potolo & Wilson, 2016). The participants affirmed that volunteering provides them with a good feeling inside, a sense of happiness and joy from helping others. They share an inner drive to serve that brings a sense of peace.

Sub-theme 1.4: Self-Care. Burnout is occupational stress resulting from demanding work-related tasks and relationships (Yanay-Ventura, 2019). Volunteer burnout affects turnover when volunteers leave an organization and need to be replaced. High turnover rates can hinder quality services and resilience (Allen & Mueller, 2013). Compassion satisfaction (happiness or well-being) reduces the risk of burnout (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). The participants were generally not concerned about burnout. Each participant had a process that included exercising, taking time off, and saying no to volunteering when they felt overwhelmed or needed a break.

Sub-theme 1.5: Organization Focus. Research reveals that most volunteer coordinators do not link volunteers' purposes, which may be a possible reason why volunteer organizations are still suffering high turnover rates and why the current volunteer rate is the lowest since 2002 (Hurst et al., 2017). Additionally, the participants interviewed believe that several large volunteer organizations are misleading. Volunteer organizations perceive that they are genuinely concerned about meeting the needs of the people. However, less than 30% of the funds received are allocated to meet the need. The participants interviewed believed these volunteer organizations were deceptive. They prefer working with local and community volunteer organizations. This allows them to meet and develop a relationship with the leadership team, plus over 90% of the funds received are used to meet the need.

Theme 2: Personal

The participants talked about the things they value the most concerning volunteering. They each alluded to how their military experience and family interactions contributed to their volunteer experience. However, they struggled with the concept of volunteering being a divine calling, a patriotic duty, or both.

Sub-theme 2.1: Passion. Each of the participants interviewed found volunteering to be rich and rewarding and considered it a pleasure to give back. They were passionate about paying it forward because others freely gave and provided for them. The participants were also passionate about seeing others prosper, i.e., helping people achieve, succeed, and win.

Sub-theme 2.2: Family. Approximately 80% of people volunteer because of the influence of family or a close friend. Ninety percent continue or increase their level of volunteering when their children get involved. Adults frequently volunteer with family members to be good role models, have fun, spend quality time with family members, and transmit positive values to their children (Palmer et al., 2007). Eight of the ten participants interviewed had parents, other family members, or close friends that encouraged them to volunteer when they were young. Their desire to volunteer continued during and after their military service. Nine of the ten participants agreed that volunteering eventually became an integral part of their life.

Sub-theme 2.3: Calling/Duty

The participants interviewed had mixed emotions. Six participants consider volunteering a calling, three a combination, and one uncertain. They each believe it to be an expression of love that flows from their heart. They are all committed to helping others as if a higher call drives them. As veterans, the participants believe and understand the importance of giving back. It is an honor and their duty to serve.

Theme 3: Love

The participants were motivated by either a love for God, a love for people, or both. They each used the word “love” as the basis for their motivation to volunteer. The participants expressed their love for God, which propels them to volunteer. Some participants even became

emotional as they reflected on their volunteer experiences. A few talked about events that happened and/or a specific moment.

Theme 4: Love for God

Individuals desire personal growth, life satisfaction, and opportunities of participating in interesting work. They want to associate with other people, feel connected with the community, satisfy personal religious beliefs, and/or wish to accomplish a task (Palmer et al., 2007). Eight of the participants said they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. They hold fast to the commandments of loving God and their neighbor, which they believe is demonstrated in service. Subsequently, the participants freely volunteer their time, talents, and treasures to serve God's people.

Theme 5: Love for People

Volunteers are invaluable resources who serve and help others achieve their goals and objectives (Englert et al., 2020). The participants recognized that everyone occasionally falls on hard times. They said we all need help in some form or another. Their compassion and love for people motivates them to serve. They are willing to sacrifice their time to ensure others' needs are met. The participants truly believe volunteering is a labor of love.

Summary

This chapter provided an overview of this phenomenological qualitative study's data collection and analysis process. The data collection section included demographic data in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4 (gender, race/ethnicity, age range, and years in service). The data analysis process evaluated the participants' perspectives, values, and motivation, broken down into three themes (professional, personal, and love) and sub-themes (Table 5). Informal interviews provided a

detailed description of the participant's volunteer experiences. Finally, the results section provided the essence of the phenomenon of volunteering.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

This chapter reviews the purpose of the study and summarizes the findings, a discussion of the findings and the implications concerning the relevant literature and theory. It will also provide the method and practical implications of the findings. It will identify the delimitations and limitations of the study. It will conclude with recommendations for future research.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe how military veterans perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, why they continue volunteering, and/or why they choose not to volunteer. This insight facilitated developing models and procedures to encourage and promote more military veterans to volunteer and facilitate training and retention of veteran volunteers.

Summary of Findings

This study was designed to answer the following questions: What are veterans' perspectives on volunteering? What do veterans value regarding volunteering, and what drives and/or motivates veterans to volunteer? Below is a summary of the findings concerning the existing literature.

The objective of the research question was to find out veterans' perspectives on volunteering. It was further broken down to examine veterans' values and motivations related to volunteering. Theme 1, Professional, addressed the primary focus of the research question, perspectives. Themes 2 (Personal) and 3 (Love) addressed values and motivation, respectively.

Theme 1: Professional. After separating from the military, most veterans desire to continue servicing in some capacity. Veterans have knowledge, skills, and abilities that could greatly benefit local communities. Volunteering provides a wonderful window of opportunity to continue serving and give back to the local community (Shinners et al., 2018).

Nevertheless, some volunteer organizations no longer have a consistent and loyal team of volunteers. Organizations have had a challenge recruiting and retaining new volunteers. These organizations need to seek different ways to recruit and retain volunteers (Alfes et al., 2017). For example, solicit veterans to recruit veterans to volunteer. Veterans share a bond, a comradery; they encourage, respect, and support one another. Their experience and training have equipped and prepared them to function in various capacities, and they can identify with being in difficult and tough situations.

Additionally, volunteering is a way for veterans to continue serving after leaving active duty. Volunteering is filled with intangibles such as enjoyment, fulfillment, and self-gratification. The participants viewed volunteering as a wonderful way to give back to the community. They especially enjoy paying it forward as an appreciation for what has been done for them via their military training and experience.

Theme 2: Personal. Most veterans are passionate about volunteering because it is a rich and rewarding experience. They can personally identify with the challenges and struggles of others (Shinners et al., 2018). Veterans also believe that family connections are important. The participants agreed that commitment and dedication to helping others are values instilled into them during adolescence. They were taught the importance of and have developed an appreciation for volunteering. The participants not only respect and value their family connections concerning volunteering but are excited about continuing the family tradition. Their

parents, guardians, and friends freely availed themselves to help others and/or give back to the community via volunteering. Volunteering became an integral part of family activities and friendly outings. It was more than something to do to help others. It represented their beliefs and values. Nine of the ten participants perceive volunteering as a calling, an expression and/or a labor of love. Some of the participants also considered volunteering as a patriotic duty. They believe it is their duty and obligation to serve others, to give back.

Although the participants appreciate and recognize that large volunteer organizations are helping countless numbers of people, they prefer working with local organizations. The participants enjoy the working relationships they have developed with community agencies and organizations. There is a shared sense of understanding, support, and importance in meeting the needs of individuals and families in the community. There are also intangible benefits that money cannot buy, such as peace, joy, and fulfillment. One participant said, “The more I help others, the better I feel about myself.”

Theme 3: Love. The participants were either motivated by love, a love for God, a love for people, or both. The participant’s faith in and passion for God motivates them to serve others. They have an inner drive to serve and believe they are blessed to be a blessing. Volunteering gives them a good feeling inside, a happiness and joy that comes from helping others. It is refreshing and provides a renewed sense of strength when they see the growth and development of others.

Acknowledging, recognizing, and respecting veterans as viable human capital will help create a concept or plan that brings together local, state, and voluntary organizations to sustain invaluable human capital with limited resources (Halsall et al., 2016). The participations acknowledged that volunteering is one way to enhance the lives of countless numbers of people.

Volunteering helps them make a positive difference in the lives of others. The participants enjoy being individuals who are willing to take the initiative to help, especially in bigger tasks than them.

Discussion

Volunteering is any activity that involves giving unpaid time and doing something that benefits individuals, groups, and/or the environment (Peachey et al., 2014). Prior research revealed that cultural, personal, and social resources and demographics directly impact the number of hours volunteered and the type of volunteer organization (Senses-Ozyurt & Villicana-Reyna, 2016). The study supports and validates existing literature related to volunteering and provides firsthand accounts of some of the challenges of volunteer recruitment and retention.

Theme 1: Professional

Existing literature revealed that volunteer organizations rely on and benefit from volunteers (Englert et al., 2020; Peachey et al., 2014). The tasks volunteers perform are the primary reason for organizational success (Englert et al., 2020). NPOs depend daily on volunteers and aggressively recruit and add volunteers to their ranks (Karl et al., 2008). The participants agreed that volunteer organizations should solicit veterans to recruit veterans. Veterans not only share a bond, but they also trust and respect one another and are more apt to volunteer for work that another veteran has recommended.

Existing literature also revealed that approximately 70% of volunteers reported experiencing a sense of well-being, and 33 % quit after the first year. One hundred percent of the participants experienced a sense of well-being, and no one quit after the first year. Cultural, personal, and social resources and demographics did affect the participants' decision, the amount of time, and where to volunteer.

The participants valued their military experience. They believe their education and training helped prepare them to be better volunteers. Additionally, the participants discovered that volunteering was filled with intangibles such as enjoyment, fulfillment, and self-gratification. They enjoyed using their time and talents to help others which further enhanced their self-confidence, self-esteem, and willingness to continue volunteering.

Theme 2: Personal

The participants were passionate about volunteering because they found it a rich and rewarding experience. The participants acknowledged that volunteering was instilled in them by their family and/or close friends. They especially enjoy paying it forward as an appreciation for what has been done for them via their military training and experience. Nine of the ten participants considered volunteering a calling, a labor of love, and a wonderful way to give back to the community. Some of the participants also considered volunteering as a patriotic duty. They believe it is their duty and obligation to serve others by giving back to the community.

Most participants were willing to continue volunteering and frequently donated more time than originally intended because of the intangibles, feeling respected, valued, and useful. The participants bonded by their volunteer organizations because they encouraged and allowed participants to be flexible, grow, own what they were doing, and share their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The organizations also clearly communicated their vision, values, and mission and created autonomous structures for volunteers that encouraged and supported responsiveness, recognition, freedom, flexibility, and appreciation. Most participants chose to continue volunteering indefinitely; only one has discontinued volunteering but avails himself to assist others.

Theme 3: Love

Existing literature reveals that individual and social factors are motivations for volunteering. For example, higher education and sound employment increase the likelihood of volunteering (Becker & Dhingra, 2001). The participants affirmed that their decision to volunteer was influenced by their perspectives and the benefits and costs of volunteering.

The study revealed that the participants were primarily motivated by a love for God and people. The participant's faith in and passion for God motivates them to serve others. They have an inner drive to serve and believe they were blessed to bless others. Volunteering gives them a good feeling inside, a happiness and joy that comes from helping others. It is refreshing and provides a renewed sense of strength when they see the growth and development of others.

Implications

Veteran volunteers, whom large volunteer organizations recruit, often do not understand organizational socialization. They find it difficult to become effective volunteers because of learning the task and internalizing organizational values. Subsequently, veteran volunteers face ambiguity regarding their task expectations because they lack formal training. They gradually learn about organizational culture and technology on the job (Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, The volunteer stages and transitions model: Organizational socialization of volunteers, 2008).

Veteran volunteers assert and express their preferences and views, which is uncomfortable for traditional organization structures (Hustinx, 2010). They are donating smaller amounts of their time and at irregular intervals. NPOs are forced to entertain volunteers' with flexible and shorter hours (Einolf & Yung, 2018). Volunteers not only want to be properly educated and/or trained; they also want to be valued, heard, and given less bureaucratic tasks and more resources and time to complete the assignment (Gonzalez-Mendez et al., 2020). Volunteer

organizations/administrators must foster and control the volunteer spirit of those who have offered their services for free to meet organizational needs. They must learn to balance energizing and scheduling veterans without trying to control them (Van Schie et al., 2015).

The study revealed that some organizational requirements and structures were incompatible with the volunteer's interest or schedule. Most of the barriers to volunteering were external and related to various activities and events, inadequate or inappropriate appreciation, and lack of information and skills. The participants' availability and willingness to volunteer were hampered by an inflexible organizational structure and dissimilar interests or values.

The study also revealed that veterans either choose not to volunteer or stop volunteering because some volunteer organizations are deceptive, do not match assignments with veteran skills, and do not listen to veterans' input. Veterans prefer working with local community volunteer organizations because approximately 90% of the resources are used to meet their needs. In contrast, larger volunteer organizations keep 70% of the resources. Additionally, veterans want to be assigned to positions that match their knowledge and skills, not just be assigned to fill a need. Finally, veterans convey the dates and times they are willing to volunteer. However, some volunteer organizations randomly schedule volunteers.

The bottom line is, firstly, veterans want to continue serving after leaving active duty. However, most prefer being matched with their skills and abilities. Secondly, veterans want to be received, respected, and treated as volunteers, not employees. Thirdly, veterans are willing to freely give of themselves but with limitations. They are not looking for another job. They merely want to avail themselves to help of their choosing. If volunteer organizations adhere to these guidelines, this can facilitate recruitment and enhance retention.

Delimitations and Limitations

The study's boundaries were designed to attract military veterans who served at least one tour of active duty, received an honorable discharge, and volunteered for one year. The objective was to explore personal accounts of veterans who volunteered for at least one year after serving on active duty to gain insight into what may be contributing to the decline in veteran volunteers. The essence of the study was to understand the veterans' perspectives, values, and motivation concerning volunteering.

The study's limitations were the number of respondents to the request for participation. I received 13 responses, three of which did not meet the qualifications. Although qualified, the remaining ten were not as diverse and comparable to military demographics related to race, gender, and ethnicity—additionally, the constraints of COVID-19 limited social interactions, which only allowed for virtual interviews.

Other limiting factors of the study were my personal beliefs and assumption. As a retired military veteran, I believe that volunteering is a calling, my military experience equipped me with skills to be a more effective volunteer, and veterans can be a catalyst for other veterans to volunteer. I also assumed that other veterans are willing to volunteer provided they are appropriately approached, properly treated, and respected. Even though my beliefs and assumption proved true, they probably swayed my methodology.

Recommendations for Future Research

Some recommendations and directions for future research are exploring veterans' perspectives, values, and motivation for volunteering, aggressive pursuit of veterans to recruit veteran volunteers and better collaboration between volunteer organizations and veterans. More studies should be conducted on veterans' perspectives of volunteering, especially regarding

recruitment and retention, emphasizing veterans' values and motivation for volunteering. Veterans share a bond and have tremendous respect for one another. It would be extremely beneficial if volunteer organizations aggressively pursue veterans and/or use existing veteran volunteers to recruit other veterans. Additionally, volunteer organizations need to enhance their collaboration with veterans to clearly articulate their mission and vision, match veteran skill levels with organizational needs, and ensure veterans are valued, respected, and appreciated.

Summary

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe how military veterans perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, why they continue volunteering, and/or why they choose not to volunteer? The study is a step forward in helping to bridge the gap in the literature concerning veterans' perspectives, values, and motivation regarding volunteering. Two of the most important take-aways from the results of my research are recruitment and retention.

Volunteering provides veterans a wonderful window of opportunity to continue serving by giving back to their local communities and is an ideal way to help veterans transition and reintegrate back into civilian life. However, veterans' decision to volunteer is influenced by the benefits and costs of volunteering and the individual's perspectives, values, and motivation. Volunteer organizations find better ways to recruit veterans, i.e., solicit veterans to recruit veterans.

Veteran volunteers assert and express their preferences and views, which is uncomfortable for traditional volunteer organizational structures. Veterans donate smaller amounts of their time and at irregular intervals because they do not feel valued and respected. Volunteer organizations must entertain veteran volunteers' requests for flexible and shorter

hours, match veterans' skills with organizational needs, and openly display respect and appreciation to veteran volunteers. These asserted efforts could improve recruitment, enhance retention, and minimize the decline in volunteerism.

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Appendix A: Recruitment, Social Media

Attention: I am conducting research as part of the requirement for: doctoral degree in Community Care & Counseling: Marriage and Family at Liberty University. The purpose of my research is to describe how veterans: (i.e., military personnel); perceive volunteering, what are their values related to volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer; why they continue volunteering, and why they choose not to volunteer? To participate, you must be 19 years of age or older, be a veteran, have completed at least one full tour of duty in any of the branches of the US military, received an honorable discharge, and have completed at least one year of volunteer service. Participants will be asked to participate in an interview and review their transcript for accuracy. The interview will be conducted virtually to assess participants' perspectives on volunteering, which will include their motivations and values. The interview should take between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy. One week later, I will send an email, which will include a copy of the interview transcript for the participants to clarify and validate the data collected. Two weeks after the interview, I will send a second email to express my gratitude for participating in my study.

A consent form will be emailed to you prior to interview. Please type your name on the consent form. The type-signed consent form must be returned to via email prior to scheduling the interview.

Appendix B: Participant Consent Form

Title of the Project: Veterans and Volunteering: A Phenomenological Study of Values and Motivations in Serving Others

Principal Investigator: Felix E. Alexander, MA, LCMHC/LCAS/CCS, Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be 18 years of age or older, be a veteran who has completed at least one full tour of duty in any of the US military branches, received an honorable discharge, and have volunteered for at least one year. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to participate in this research.

What is the study about, and why is it being done?

The purpose of the study is to describe how veterans; (i.e., military personnel); perceive volunteering, what motivates them to volunteer, why they continue volunteering, and/or why they choose not to volunteer.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Participate in an audio-recorded, virtual interview. You will be interviewed virtually to assess your perspectives on volunteering, which will include your motivations and values. The interview should take between 45 and 90 minutes. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy.
2. Review your interview transcript for accuracy. Approximately one week later, I will send an email containing a copy of the transcript to clarify and validate the data collected.

How could you or others benefit from this study?

Participants should not expect to receive a direct benefit from this study.

Benefits to society include an increase in veteran volunteer recruitment and retention.

What risks might you experience from being in this study?

The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

How will personal information be protected?

The records of this study will be kept private. Published reports will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- Participant responses will be kept confidential using codes. Interviews will be conducted virtually so that others will not easily overhear the conversation.
- Data will be stored on a password-locked computer. The data may be used in future presentations.
- Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password-locked computer for three years and then erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Is study participation voluntary?

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

What should you do if you decide to withdraw from the study?

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Whom do you contact if you have questions or concerns about the study?

The researcher conducting this study is Felix E. Alexander. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact him. You may also contact the researcher's faculty sponsor, Dr. Thomas Hudgins.

Whom do you contact if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd., Green Hall Ste. 2845, Lynchburg, VA, 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Disclaimer: The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is tasked with ensuring that human subjects research will be conducted in an ethical manner as defined and required by federal regulations. The topics covered and viewpoints expressed or alluded to by student and faculty researchers are those of the researchers and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of Liberty University.

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. You will be given a copy of this document for your records. The researcher will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Printed Subject Name

Signature & Date

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

The purpose of the proposed study is to examine veterans' perceptions of volunteering. The research question guiding this study is: What are veterans' perceptions of volunteering. The question also incorporates two sub-questions: What motivates veterans to volunteer, and what veteran values are associated with volunteering? The participants in this study were retired military veterans with at least one year of volunteer experience. I will explain the purpose of the study to the interviewee, thank him/her for participating, and ask the following questions:

1. What are your volunteer duties and responsibilities?
2. How long have you been performing volunteer services?
3. What do you like about your volunteer role? Why?
4. What, if anything, do you dislike about your volunteer role? Why?
5. What advice would you recommend to other veterans who are considering volunteer work? Why?
6. What advice would you recommend to organizations that are looking to recruit veteran volunteers? Why?
7. What about your military experience prepared you for volunteer work?
8. How would you describe your volunteer experience?
9. How do you avoid burn-out?
10. How did you select your volunteer location?
11. What about your location do you enjoy? Why?
12. What about your location do you not enjoy? Why?
13. What, if anything, about your location would you change? Why?
14. What is your overall perception of volunteer work?

15. How do you perceive volunteer work, i.e., as a patriotic duty, a divine calling, a combination of the two, or some other way? Explain your answer.
16. What contributes to your commitment and dedication to volunteering?
17. What will cause you to stop volunteering?
18. What do you look for in a volunteer organization? Why?
19. What do you look for in a volunteer supervisor/manager/leader? Why?
20. What drives or motivates you to continue volunteering when you encounter conflicts?
21. What is your preferred type of volunteer work?
22. What can you do to encourage other veterans to volunteer?
23. Why do you volunteer?
24. What motivates you to continue volunteering?

At the end of the interview, I will thank the interviewee for agreeing to participate

Appendix D: Participant Demographics Form

INSTRUCTIONS: Please circle the item that applies to you.

Gender: Male Female

Ethnicity: Anglo/White African American/Black Hispanic Other

Age: 18–29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

Level of Formal Education:

HS Diploma/GED

Some college

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Doctorate degree

Branch of Service: Army Navy Air Force Marines Coast Guard Space Force

Years of Service: 0-4 5-9 10-14 15-19 20+

Years Volunteering: 1-5 6-10 11+

Appendix E: First Follow-Up Email to Participants

Dear Veteran,

Thank you for participating in this study. Your responses are extremely valuable to my research.

Attached is the transcript of our interview. Please review it and let me know if there is anything that needs to be changed or corrected. I will be using an alias to protect your identity in the write-up of the study. Again, thank you for your wonderful assistance. May your life be continuously filled with rich and rewarding times. Happy volunteering!

Your Comrade in Arms,

Felix E. Alexander, M.A., LCMHC, LCAS,
CCS

Appendix F: Second Follow-Up Email to Participants

Dear Veteran,

Thank you again for participating in the study. After carefully reviewing your interview's transcript, I have created a list of themes that emerged from the interview and attached it to this email for your review. Your feedback is essential; without your voice this research would not be possible. I want to make sure I have captured the essence of your perceptions regarding volunteering. I cannot begin to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation for your assistance.

May you be fortunate to have good health and a long and prosperous life.

Your Comrade in Arms,

Felix E. Alexander, M.A., LCMHC, LCAS,
CCS