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Volunteer Behaviour: Implications of Piety, Perceived Academic Stress, and Self-Perception Among Undergraduates in AAUA Ondo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined the roles of piety, academic-related stress, and self-perception in understanding volunteer behaviour which is almost non-existent in academic literature. Given this rarity, this study examined the extent to which piety, perceived stress, and self-perception predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates. The study was conducted as a survey design which made use of standardized questionnaires; Volunteer Behaviour Scales (PSBS); Centrality Religiosity Scale (CRS-20); Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and General Self-perception Scale (GSS). Participants were selected using the accidental sampling technique, a sample of 250 (118 males, 132 females) undergraduates from AAUA, Nigeria participated in the study. Their age ranges from 17-33years (M=2.53, SD=.81). Results of the study indicated that piety positively predicted volunteer behaviour (β = .45; t =7.56; p< 0.01). This study found that self-perception significantly predicted volunteer behaviour (β = .19; t=3.15; p< 0.01). However, perceived stress did not show significant prediction on volunteer behaviour (β = .04; t =-.72; p < 0.01). Based on the outcome of the findings recommended that the National Universities Commission (NUC) should encourage psychologically-based interventions that focus on the development of self-awareness and religious-oriented socialization program within the school community to promote volunteer behaviour among undergraduates.

Key words: piety, perceived stress; self-perception; volunteer behaviour

Introduction

Volunteer behaviour is a type of prosocial behaviour projected to benefit one other than the self, it can be regarded as a conscious effort aimed at being helpful actions that benefit other people or society as a whole, such as serving, sharing, donating, conjoining, and offering of one's service to a common course. Some authors have suggested that these actions may be driven by compassion and self-sacrifice (Eisenberg et al. 2006). Segun-Martins and Dennis (2018) penned that volunteer behaviour engages time, resources, and experience for the advancement of the course of action, person, and/or community. It follows that a volunteer is someone who gives up their time and resource for others benefit. Afolabi, (2013) provided a methodical definition of volunteer behaviour any conducted or planned action/response to help other people. Myers (1983) believes that volunteer behaviour necessitates consideration and support towards other people, or devotion such as those of love, loyalty, service, and piety.

Piety is a behaviour that leans towards devoutness, religious belief, and religious practice. Miller and Thoresen (2003) have recognized piety as religious beliefs and practices terms. Barry, Nelson, Davarya and Urry (2010) described piety in terms of identifying with and showing commitment

toward religion or a system of religious belief. Piety generally can refer to an individual's affiliation with a particular faith, tradition, or doctrine about a divine other or supernatural power, which could be a result of searching for religious identity (Santrock, 1996). Social scientists, perceive piety as a form of social capital, that serves to act as a source of social control, by reinforcing moral or ethical approval (Hardy & Carlo, 2005; King & Furrow, 2004; Smith, 2003). some studies have suggested a significant link between piety and perceived stress, for the reason that it affects stressors and stress coping (Dong & Zhang, 2016).

Perceived academic stress is the feeling or thoughts that an individual has concerning academic outcomes over a given period of time (Dalia & Adel, 2015). Perceived academic stress is about measuring the frequency of stressful events related to academic and their ability to handle such academic stress. The main source of perceived academic stress among adolescent students is their examination or academic stress. University students might experience high stress which falls into four categories: academic, financial, time or health-related, and sometimes self-imposed (Goodman, 1993). Stress is an adaptive response to a situation that is perceived as challenging or

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threatening to the person's well-being (Afolabi & Imohonde, 2002). Stress occurs when an individual is confronted by a situation that they perceive as overwhelming and cannot cope with and this is where an individual's self-perception can make a difference (Behere et al. 2011; Fairbrother & Warn, 2003; Selye, 1967).

Self-perception can be described as the impressions individuals have about their traits and self-image and how these perceived self-images are understood and managed. An individual who is considered to have a good sense of self-perception is likened to one whose judgment of perceptual process is clear and shows a high degree of self-awareness in any given situation (Laird, 2007; Shapka & Khan, 2018). However, researchers have suggested that there is a need for more research in this area to identify the grey areas to be understood (Welchman, 2019).

Statement of the Problem

In Nigeria, some studies focused on volunteer behaviour among adults in different occupations and professions but research studies have seldomly focused on undergraduate populations (Afolabi; 2001). While trying to examine the increase and extent to which people engage in volunteer behaviour, researchers have done few or little investigation on this concept (volunteer behaviour), especially among undergraduates in Nigeria. Previous studies on volunteer behaviour focus attention on healthcare professionals and healthcare workers (Afolabi, 2015; Guevera, et al., 2015). However, this study is directed toward focusing on if piety, perceived stress, and self-perception could predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate piety, perceived stress and self-perception as predictors of volunteer behaviour among undergraduates. Based on the research questions above, the specific purpose of this study was to:

- 1.Examine whether perceived piety would predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates.
- 2.Study whether perceived stress would predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates.
- Ascertain whether self-perception would predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates.

Hypotheses

- H1. Perceived piety will significantly predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates in AAUA.
- H2. Perceived stress will significantly predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates in AAUA.
- H3. Self-perception will significantly predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates in AAUA.

Method

Participants and Sampling Technique

Accidental sampling technique was used to select the participants of this study. A total number of 50 students were selected from each of the five faculties, which resulted in 250 undergraduates for this study; five faculties were randomly selected from the Adekunle Ajasin University Akungba-Akoko Ondo State Nigeria. These faculties include; Sciences, Social Sciences, Management Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Law.

Instruments

Relevant data were gathered through the use of validated questionnaires which comprises five sections (Section A-E). Section A: Socio-demographic information: These include sex, age, level, and religion. Section B: Volunteer Behaviour Scales: Volunteer behaviour was measured with the volunteerism questionnaire advanced by Clary and Snyder (1999) which is an 18-item scale designed to measure volunteer behaviour. The volunteering scale is scored on a 7-point Likert type scale (1 = extremely important to 7 =extremely unimportant). A higher number indicates a motivation of greater importance for that person and thus, motives for volunteering is hierarchically graded based on the scale scores. Examples of items include: 'My friends volunteer', 'Volunteering makes me feel important'. Ehigiegba, et al., (2014) reported a Cronbach Alpha of .91. Section C: Centrality Religiousity Scale (CRS-20); was used to measure piety. The CRS-20 was developed by Huber and Huber (2012). CRS-20 is a 20-item scale (CRS-20) multidimensional scale. These dimensions consist of; intellectual, ideology, public practice, private practice, and experience. The religious dimensions are rated on 5-point scale ranging from 1=never; 2= Rarely; 3= occasionally; 4= Often; 5= Very often. The sample items include: "How often do you think about religious issues?", "To what extent do you believe that God or something divine exists?" and "How often do you take part in religious services?". Huber and Huber (2012) reported three studies reliabilities of the individual dimensions ranging from 0.80 to 0.93, and from 0.92 to 0.96 for the whole CRS-20. The present study made use of the overall composites score and reported a Cronbach coefficient of .92.

Section D: Perceived stress scale (PSS). Perceived stress was measured using a 10-items perceived stress scale developed by Cohen, et al. (1983). The PSS was developed to measure stress on a rating scale of 1-4. The sample items include: "In the last month, how often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly" "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and "stressed" "In the last month, how often have you found that you could not cope with all the things that you had to do" "In the last month, how often have you felt difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them". The PSS has a range of scores between 0 and 40. A higher score indicates more stress. Cohen, et al. (1983) reported Cronbach's α between .84 and .86 for the PSS. Test-retest reliability for the PSS was .85. This study obtained a Cronbach coefficient of .66.

Section E: Self-perception was measured using a 10-item, General Self-Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer and Jerusalem in 1995. The scale was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-perception. The sample items include: "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough" and "If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want". The GSES score ranged from 10-40. However, a high score indicates a high level of sense of efficacy. Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1995) reported Cronbach's alphas between .76 and .90. This study obtained a coefficient of reliability measured at Cronbach alpha .82

Design/Statistics

This study was carried out using a survey design adopted in this study. The independent variables are piety, perceived stress, and self-perception while the dependent variable is Volunteer behaviour. To determine the extent and direction of associations among the study variables, a Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted. Multiple regression analysis was then used to test hypotheses1, 2, 3, and 4. All analyses were conducted using SPSS Wizard.

Results

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Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted to test the relationship among the variables of the study. The results are presented in Table 1.

Variable	Mean	Std. D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.53	.50	1							
2. Age	2.53	.81	15*	1						
3. Level	2.40	1.06	04	.17**	1					
4. Religion	1.23	.59	.00	.04	01	1				
5. Piety	7.29	11.95	.26**	.10	01	.06	1			
6. Perceived Stress	2.54	5.34	.20**	03	.05	.05	.29**	1		
7. Self-Perception	3.68	4.83	.07	.02	.04	.10	.42**	.28**	1	
8. Volunteer Behaviour.	4.93	7.62	.10	.07	04	.07	.52**	.14*	.36**	1

Table 1: Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship Mean, Standard Deviation, and the Relationship among the Study Variables.

Note: ** P< 0.01 (2 tailed) *P< 0.05 (2-tailed) N = 250

Table 1 showed that piety had a significant positive relationship with Volunteer behaviour (r (250) = .52; p < 0.01), Perceived Stress also had a significant positive relationship with Volunteer behaviour (r (250) = .14; p < 0.05), and Self-perception had a significant positive relationship with

Volunteer behaviour (r (250) = .36; p < 0.01). In summary, this implies that piety, perceived stress, and self-perception had a significant relationship with volunteer behaviour. To test hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 multiple regression analysis was conducted.

Predictors	β	t	R	R^2	df	F
Piety	.45	7.56**				
Perceived Academic Stress	04	72	.548	.300	246	35.196**
Self-Perception	.19	3.15**				

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis Showing the Contributions of Piety, Perceived Stress, and Self-Perception to Volunteer Behaviour

note: ** P < 0.01, *P < 0.05, N = 250

Results in Table 2 showed that piety significantly predict volunteer behaviour (β = .45; t =7.56; p< 0.01). Furthermore, the result in Table 2 showed that perceived stress does not significantly predict volunteer behaviour (β =-.041; t =-.72; p> 0.01). In addition, results in Table 2 also revealed that Self-perception also significantly predict Volunteer behaviour (β = .19; t =3.15; p> 0.01).

Lastly, the results in Table 2 indicated the contribution of all the independent variables (piety, perceived stress, and self-perception) to the prediction of volunteer behaviour. The outcome of the summary in Table 2 signifies that the combined independent variables when pulled together yield a multiple R of .548 and R2 of .300 [F (246) = 35.196, p < 0.01]. This is an indication that all the independent variables contributed to 30% of the variance in volunteer behaviour. Meanwhile, other variables not considered in this study accounted for 70%.

Discussion

The study investigated the extent to which piety, perceived stress, and self-perception predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates of AAUA. The result in Table 2 confirmed that piety will significantly predict volunteer behaviour. This means that piety predicted the extent to which undergraduates engaged in volunteer behaviour. Therefore, hypothesis 1 which stated that piety will significantly predict volunteer behaviour was accepted. This result was supported by Stamatoulakis, (2013) whose study revealed that piety predicts volunteer behaviour. Pichon, et al. (2007); Shariff and Norenzayan, (2006) corroborated this finding and submitted that piety increases volunteer behaviour. Sukhonta and Sirinan (2013) researched to investigate the relationship between piety and volunteer behaviour, that is, there was a significant relationship between piety and volunteer behaviour.

One plausible reason for this is the fact that religious beliefs tend to encourage doctrines of charity and being one's brother's keeper. The virtues of piety such as those practiced in world religions, for example, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, or Buddism allow for the promotion of love for others and of rendering support and assistance to others.

The outcome of the study showed that perceived stress does not significantly predict volunteer behaviour among undergraduates. The presence of stress does not hinder acts of selfless service (Raposa, 2016) but the prolonged presence of stress and the inability of individuals to engage in the use of coping strategies have been linked to several adverse behaviours. McGinley et al. (2010) also examined stress and helping behaviour. They discovered that the relations between stress and volunteer tendencies were generally positive but varied by type of helping.

In addition, the result in Table 2 revealed that self-perception significantly predicted volunteer behaviour. This finding was in consonance with several authors who reported that self-perception is a strong predictor of an individual tendency to engage in volunteer behaviour (Huo et al. 2021). this implies that undergraduates who reported or experience high perceived Stress showcase low or no volunteer behaviour. Therefore, hypothesis 2 which state that perceived stress will significantly predict volunteer behaviour was rejected. One plausible explanation for this outcome is that individuals who have a high degree of self-perception are more likely to engage in volunteer acts such as volunteer behaviour, it takes some level of self-worth or self-confidence to render help to others. This show that individuals with high self-perception have a higher tendency to engage in Volunteer behaviour. Therefore, hypothesis 3 was confirmed.

Furthermore, the findings of this research showed that the combination of piety, perceived stress, and self-perception together predicted volunteer behaviour (piety and self-perception) while perceived stress did not predict

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volunteer behaviour. This implies that piety and self-perception play an important positive role in undergraduate volunteer behaviour while individuals with a high level of perceived stress experience a decline in volunteer act and vice versa.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study has empirically and demonstrated that piety, perceived stress, and self-perception are strong factors in predicting volunteer behaviour among undergraduates. However, the outcomes show that piety and self-perception significantly positively predicted volunteer behaviour while undergraduates with high perceived stress showed a lower tendency to exhibit volunteer behaviour. Thus, the combination of these three variables (piety, perceived stress, and self-perception) goes a long way to determining undergraduates' engagement in volunteer behaviour.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following suggestions were recommended concerning volunteer behaviour in undergraduates' populations. Given the result of this study, this research suggests that University Management Boards in conjunction with the National Universities Communities should through the Ministry of Education, encourage religious-oriented socialization program within the school community to promote social and moral values in students. Also, students should be made to engage in religious activities. Nigeria is a country with deep-rooted traditional and religious culture that promotes social values and morals. Concerning perceived stress, universities must create enabling environment that help students identify and cope with stress and stressors in other to increase the chances of undergraduates engaging in volunteer behaviour. It is also recommended that future studies should engage a larger pool of participants and other psychological variables should be examined.

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